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'THE PERFECT HOSTESS, HE CALLED HER':
READING PHENOMENOLOGY IN MODERNIST LITERATURE

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Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

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Abstract

The question of sexual difference is missing from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology and from Jacques Derrida's theory of hospitality. I address these gaps by using a feminist phenomenological perspective to read modernist representations of the "hostess". I argue for a broadened understanding of "hosting" that encompasses how women use their lived bodies to tend to the social and physical needs of other lived bodies.

In chapter one, I use Virginia Woolf's work to discover the "perfect" party-giving hostess. I suggest that the heroic hosting of party-giving is predicated on a more habitual, daily form of hosting. In the subsequent chapters, I explore the developmental stages in the life of the hostess. In chapter two, I read Woolf and Merleau-Ponty in tandem to witness the initiation of the hosting mentality in the childhood home. In chapter three, I close read descriptions of adolescent girls dancing in Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, and Katherine Mansfield alongside the work of Iris Marion Young, to reveal the objectification of young female bodies as "future hostesses". My fourth chapter focuses on maternal hospitality. Inspired by Luce Irigaray, I argue that D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and Merleau-Ponty problematically appropriate maternal hospitality. Mina Loy contributes a female modernist perspective of the lived bodily experience of childbirth. In my final chapter, I discuss hospitality and death. With James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf, I explore the "funeral-giving hostess". Finally, I conclude with a discussion of "hosting-after-death" as a way to describe the bodily and social care that women perform, or fail to perform, for what I term "lived dead bodies" in Lawrence's work.

Throughout, I contend that failing to adequately recognise women's habitual and heroic hospitality devalues the important work that women perform for other bodies throughout their lives. In doing this, I carve a space for the hostess within traditional discourses of hospitality, and I develop the discussion of female-bodies-in-situation that Merleau-Pontian phenomenology lacks.

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List of Abbreviations

Works by Maurice Merleau-Ponty

- PP – *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print.
- CD – “Cezanne’s Doubt”. *Sense and Non-Sense*. Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus. Evanston, IL: Northwestern Press, 1964. 9-25. Print.
- CPP – *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952*. Trans. Talia Welsh. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2010. Print.
- EM – “Eye and Mind”. *The Primacy of Perception*. Ed. James M. Edie, trans. Carleton Dallery. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964. 159-192. Print.
- HE – “Hegel’s Existentialism”. *Sense and Non-Sense*. Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus. Evanston, Ill. Northwestern University Press, 1971. 63-70. Print.
- IV – *The Visible and the Invisible*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Ed. Claude Lefort. Evanston, I.L.: Northwestern University Press, 1968. Print.
- MN – “Metaphysics and the Novel”. *Sense and Non-Sense*. Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964. 26-40. Print.
- WN – “Working Note”. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Ed. Claude Lefort. Evanston, I.L.: Northwestern University Press, 1968. Print.

Other Works:

- CNP – *The Child as Natural Phenomenologist: Primal and Primary Experience in Merleau-Ponty’s Psychology*. Talia Welsh. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013. Print.
- STP – “A Sketch of the Past”. *Moments of Being*. Virginia Woolf. London: Pimlico, 2002. 78-160. Print.

Introduction

Phenomenology, Modernism, and Art as World-Making

The subject of this thesis is the modernist hostess. She calls to me across the page, her bejewelled, work-hardened fingers beckoning me over to join her party. But before I heed her invite, I have a few invitations of my own that I would like to make. Like any party-goer worth her salt, I aim to lubricate the wheels of this exchange by offering introductions between the guests I know best so that we all might see from the start who knows whom and how those who have not yet met might be induced to join a conversation together.

Taking the latter part of my thesis title as my starting point, the first, and the most obvious, introduction I must make is between the disparate fields of modernist literature and phenomenology. I am not the first to make this connection; these guests have met before. Despite their having been brought together with past success, they are not a common coupling, and “it is odd”, as Carole Bourne-Taylor and Ariane Mildenberg suggest, “that the related patterns between the modernists and phenomenology is a rarely trodden field” (9). Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg’s edited collection *Phenomenology, Modernism, and Beyond* goes some way to treading the path between the literature and the continental philosophy of the early to mid-twentieth century that is of interest here. Making reference to a famous quotation from Virginia Woolf, they claim that it is “because literature is about experience – it is concerned with catching ‘an incessant shower of innumerable atoms as they fall’ – that its contribution to phenomenology is essential” (23). Many of the existing explorations of the “essential contribution” of literature to the philosophy of experience take Husserlian phenomenology as their starting point.

The originator of the field, Edmund Husserl, devised phenomenology as a break with the traditionally rational understanding of the world: a response to the European “crisis” of science that mistook the objectivity of the sciences for the primary engagement with the world. Husserl disavowed the scientific approach and was interested instead in the intentionality of consciousness. Jean-Paul Sartre neatly summarizes the Husserlian idea of intentionality in *Being and Nothingness* when he writes, “All consciousness, as Husserl has shown, is consciousness *of* something” (7)

For Husserl, not only is consciousness intentional, it is also temporally situated:

The present is the focal point of conscious life ... but always against a background of the stream of the world's temporal horizon: 'The world now present to me, and in every waking 'now' obviously so, has its temporal horizon, infinite in both directions, its known and unknown, its intimately alive and its unalive past and future'. (9)

An interest in the experience of temporality as it is lived is an obvious shared point of inquiry between phenomenology and modernist literature. It would be possible here to catalogue many examples of modernist writers representing lived temporality, not least the fine one-day novels of modernism that unite the past, the present, and the future through the narrative of a single day.¹ I plump instead for a rich quotation from Woolf's novel *The Waves* (1931) because of its Husserlian emphasis on the artificiality of schedules and timetables:

But it is a mistake, this extreme precision, this orderly and even military progress; a convenience, a lie. There is always deep below it, even when we arrive punctually at the appointed time with our white waistcoats and polite formalities, a rushing stream of broken dreams, nursery rhymes, street cries, half-finished sentences and sights – elm trees, willow trees, gardeners sweeping, women writing – that rise and sink even as we hand a lady down to dinner. While one straightens the fork so precisely on the table-cloth, a thousand faces mop and mow. There is nothing one can fish up in a spoon; nothing one can call an event. Yet it is alive too and deep, this stream. (197).

Here the nursery rhymes of childhood, the memories of men and women, and the manifold sounds and sights of past days remain in the mind even whilst the narrator of this passage, Bernard, waits, white-waistcoated, ready to attend one of many Woolfian dinners. In this quote, Woolf replicates Husserl's claim that the temporal horizon of the past remains within the focal point of the present through her modernist "stream of consciousness" technique. Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg highlight how, in *Ideas*, Husserl reworks William James' idea of the "stream of consciousness" as "the stream of experience":

Elsewhere he speaks of it as a "flow": "the perception itself is what it is within the steady flow of consciousness, and it is itself constantly in flux; the perceptual now is ever passing over into the adjacent consciousness of the just-past, a new now simultaneously gleams forth and so on". (9)

¹ I am thinking here, of course, of James Joyce's magnum opus *Ulysses* and of Virginia Woolf's slightly later novel *Mrs. Dalloway*.

² In Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg's collection several essays focus on Husserlian phenomenology, including Ariane

Another famous example from Woolf chimes neatly with Husserl's statement:

Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. ("Modern Fiction" 160)

Here Husserl's "steady flow of consciousness", Woolf's "alive and deep stream" becomes "a luminous halo", a "perpetual now" which in its semi-transparency is never stable or fully graspable.

Like the focus on temporality and the stream of consciousness technique Husserl's idea of the "epoché" is a common stepping off point for scholarly ruminations on phenomenology and modernism.² The epoché is Husserl's solution to the problem of objectivity. According to Husserl, humans normally exhibit a "natural attitude" to the world. In this unthinking "natural attitude", we accept multiple hypotheses and variables without any conscious reflection upon them. Husserl argued that, in taking the world at face value, humans forestalled the ability to truly reflect on what it meant to exist in a world with others and with things. His drive to "get back to the things themselves" (81) led him to privilege the epoché. The Husserlian epoché is a complicated idea that underwent several transformations. For the purpose of maintaining a brief outline, I will say only that the epoché is a form of mental "bracketing" out; a suspending of the natural attitude that enables reflection on things in the way that they appear to consciousness. Whilst my rapidity renders an unforgiveable disservice to the importance of the Husserlian epoché for the phenomenological project, my brevity is motivated by a desire to follow Ezra Pound's modernist manifesto to "make it new". Of the work that already treads the ground between phenomenology and modernism, much has been said on the links between the epoché and the modernist distillation of objects and things. Wary of a dull repetition of conversations past, here I leave aside the founding father of phenomenology, inviting one of his disciples to join my circle instead.

Scouting around for a suitable interlocutor, my eye first falls on Martin Heidegger. Heidegger is next in line: the heir to the Husserlian throne. In his work Heidegger directs the epoché towards the un-thought problem of "Being", wanting to highlight how philosophy itself has fallen prey to the natural attitude in its historical

² In Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg's collection several essays focus on Husserlian phenomenology, including Ariane Mildenberg's "Openings: Epoché as Aesthetic Tool in Modernist Texts"; H. W. Fawcner's "Self-Evidencing Life: Paradoxes of Reduction in Modernism, Phenomenology and Christianity;" and Eoghan Walls' "A Flaw in the Science of Transcendence: Hopkins and Husserl on 'Thisness'".

overlooking of the Being of beings. Heidegger is an interesting fellow, but he is not quite the match I am looking for. Besides, Heidegger has some inexcusable associations.³ Best then to leave him for others to scoop into conversation. Circling the room once more, I hit upon a likelier companion. Specifically interested in the body and compelled by art, Maurice Merleau-Ponty may be the man for me. But what will the other people I hope to bring to this *petite soirée* make of this assemblage? Perhaps I ought to try him out on one of them? I'll first make a brief introduction via Edmund and will then encourage Virginia to talk to Maurice.

If Woolf and Husserl have proved to be a successful partnership on the grounds of their shared interest in intentionality and temporality, then Merleau-Ponty ought to sit well alongside Woolf too because his ideas of those matters are derived from Husserl. Merleau-Ponty claims:

It is I who bring into being this world which seemed to exist without me, to surround and surpass me. I am therefore a consciousness, immediately present to the world, and nothing can claim to exist without somehow being caught in the web of my experience. ("Metaphysics and the Novel" 29).

In this statement, Merleau-Ponty locates the intentional consciousness within a temporal horizon but he brings in the addition of the spatial location of a body: he is the "I" that stands at the centre of the web of conscious experience. Avoiding the pitfalls of Husserlian transcendentalism, Merleau-Ponty is interested in how the experience of existing within a body impacts, and is in turn impacted by, the world that surrounds it. One biological feature that compels Merleau-Ponty time and again is the phenomenon of sight. For Merleau-Ponty, perception is paramount.

As a writer, Virginia Woolf is often praised for her intense vision. David Bradshaw, a recent editor of Woolf's work, notes how her preoccupation with perception precedes her debut as a novelist. As early as 1908 she writes in her journal the phenomenological statement that she has grown to "distrust description" and wishes to "write not only with the eye, but with the mind; & discover real things beneath the show" (See Bradshaw 191). Bradshaw suggests that this process of perceptual distillation is to "become her principal aspiration as a novelist" (Bradshaw 191). Like Husserl, Woolf wants to get to the "things themselves", however, like Merleau-Ponty she sees this action as being rooted in the perceptual body. "The ways

³ Heidegger was a member of the Nazi Party from 1933 until its dissolution.

the body is 'lived', is active in creating, and participating in, a world of meanings, is her theme throughout her fictional career" (Poole 198). Roger Poole claims that, in Woolf "phenomenology found its novelist" (198), but what does Woolf get back from this exchange? Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg send back a reply: "Phenomenology gives back to the modernist artwork its dimension of experience, as the act of a subject who relates to the world through language, building blocks, music and paint" (15). It is the emphasis on the experiential and the incarnate that is key here. Because of their shared interest in the ways that bodies experience the world, bringing Merleau-Ponty and Woolf together should provoke a fruitful conversation. But, on what topic? Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg's statement gives a further clue: paint.

In keeping with their shared preoccupation with the visual, Woolf and Merleau-Ponty are both intensely interested in painting. In her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown", Woolf famously describes how "in or about December, 1910, human character changed" (38). Why Woolf chooses to pinpoint December 1910 as a specific time at which "human character changed" is a matter of debate.⁴ One of the possible readings of Woolf's statement is that she is referring to the influence of the exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* that her friend the art critic Roger Fry put on at the Grafton Galleries in London in winter 1910. Fry used the exhibition to introduce the work of Georges Seurat, Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Paul Cézanne to an English audience. Maurice Merleau-Ponty also admires the work of the post-Impressionists. He claimed that in the work of Cézanne, Juan Gris, Braque and the cubist Picasso:

we encounter objects – lemons, mandolins, bunches of grapes, pouches of tobacco – that do not pass quickly before our eyes in the guise of objects we 'know well' but, on the contrary hold our gaze, ask questions of it, convey to it in a bizarre fashion the very secret of their substance, the very mode of their material existence and which, so to speak, stand 'bleeding' before us. ("Art and the World of Perception" 93)

The image of objects "bleeding" before the viewer, demanding their renewed attention and forcing their reflection speaks to the modernist aesthetic project. In Woolf, things

⁴ On a national scale, there are at least three major events that Woolf's statement could refer to: the extended general election which took place between 3rd and 19th December 1910 and which resulted in a coalition government led by Liberal Prime Minister H. H. Asquith; the renewed press focus on the suffrage movement that was triggered by the Black Friday protests of November 18th 1910 and the death of Mary Clarke, sister of Emmeline Pankhurst, a month later; and the Pretoria Pit disaster on December 21st which killed 344 miners.

take on new importance, bracketed out of their natural place in the world; Woolf forces objects to “bleed” before her readers. Jacob’s shoes, a shawl-wrapped sheep’s skull, a pair of gloves; Woolf makes each of these objects speak the “mode of their material existence” by holding the reader’s gaze to them and revealing their status as artefacts of human meaning. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that the objects she focuses her richly perceptual eye upon are often items that are designed to fit closely to human bodies. In “Metaphysics and the Novel”, Merleau-Ponty claims that, “In the silence of a country house, once the door has been shut against the odours of the shrubbery and the sounds of the birds, an old jacket lying on a chair will be a riddle if I take it just as it offers itself to me” (29). So too do Jacob’s shoes become a riddle in the quiet world of his vacant bedroom in the final lines of Woolf’s war novel *Jacob’s Room* “‘What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?’ She held out a pair of Jacob’s old shoes’ (155).

Selecting a point of focus from the group of painters that Merleau-Ponty assembles, it is worth remarking that Merleau-Ponty has a particular reverence for the work of Paul Cézanne. In Cézanne Merleau-Ponty found a painter that spoke to his view of aesthetics and to his understanding of the way that art should represent the world. In his 1954 essay “Cézanne’s Doubt”, Merleau-Ponty claims that the painter wanted “to make *visible* how the world *touches* us” (19 emphasis in original). The seismic impact on Woolf of seeing the twenty-one pieces of Cézanne’s work that hung alongside those of the other painters at Fry’s exhibition is clear. She claims that the whole of human character changed: “In life one can see the change. All human relationships have shifted ... those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children” (“Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown” 38). That Woolf saw the change that post-Impressionism imparted as being visible in human relationships, and particularly within human relationships in the home, is key to the arguments that this thesis will make about modernist hospitality and its rootedness in domesticity. To take a singular example, the influence of the post-Impressionist exhibition on Woolf’s writing, and especially on her presentation of objects, is evident in the famous dinner table scene of *To the Lighthouse*.

Dining with Woolf

In the first part of the novel, in a holiday home on the Isle of Skye, Mrs. Ramsay hosts a dinner party. She reveals Woolf's Husserlian understanding of elastic temporality when she muses on the past of her time in Marlow and the future of the proposed marriage between Paul and Minta, all within the present moment of hosting her dinner party. Philosophical dinner parties are not new. As Kate McLoughlin points out, Immanuel Kant describes how to throw the perfect dinner-party in his work "In Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View" (1798). This early example indicates "the involvement of the concept of dinner parties in philosophy" (McLoughlin 1). Sitting at the head of her table, Mrs. Ramsay's eyes are drawn down its length, coming to rest on the middle where stands "a yellow and purple dish of fruit" (70). In the dish her daughter Rose has created an arrangement of "grapes and pears", a "horny pink-lined shell", and some "bananas" (70). Woolf's use of the word "visibility" suggests the painterly quality of the image (70). Woolf reinforces the idea that the presentation of the fruit is a work of visual art through her description of the images that the arrangement makes Mrs Ramsay think of:

a trophy fetched from the bottom of the sea, of Neptune's banquet, of the bunch that hangs with vine leaves over the shoulder of Bacchus (in some picture), among the leopard skins and the torches lolloping red and gold... (70)

Like the lemons and grapes in Merleau-Ponty's example of post-Impressionist resonance, here Woolf's fruit "bleeds". In the competing images that flicker through Mrs. Ramsay's mind, the next instantly replacing the last, before being itself replaced the bracketed "(in some picture)" emphasises the visual image being painted in this description. Merleau-Ponty claims that the art of painting brings together "Essence and existence, imaginary and real, visible and invisible" ("Eye and Mind" 130). The consequence of this is that "painting scrambles all our categories, spreading out before us its oneiric universe of carnal essences, actualized resemblances, mute meanings" (EM 130). Here Merleau-Ponty highlights the ability of paintings to present the "shower of atoms as they fall": life in its "translucent halo". In Woolf's description of the fruit bowl the imaginary and the real, the visible and the invisible, are blended

together through Mrs. Ramsay's musings on the actual contents of the dish and on the mental associations that the arrangements of those contents provokes.

That the image Woolf chooses to focus this visualisation upon should be a fruit bowl is not incidental. Cézanne had a penchant for produce; in the last years of the nineteenth century he famously painted several renditions of apples in various still life displays. Bloomsbury has a particular role to play in the viewing of those apples in England. Quentin Bell recalls how a hedgerow outside of Charleston, for a short while,

actually housed a Cézanne. It was placed there sometime during the evening of March 28th, 1918. It is a small still life laconically entitled *Pommes*; indeed it consists of six apples upon a table. In the opinion of some critics it is a masterpiece. ("A Cézanne in the Hedge" 154)

As Bell tells the story, the picture arrives in the hedgerow through the machinations of John Maynard Keynes. Following a proposal from Duncan Grant, Keynes persuades the treasury, where he works at the time, to purchase some French art in an attempt to stimulate the repayment of loans owed to the treasury by the French government. He and the director of the National Gallery, Sir Charles Holmes, set off for Paris and return with a small collection of French artworks. However, Holmes chooses to ignore the wishes of Keynes, Grant, and Vanessa Bell and returns without a Cézanne. Taking matters into his own hands, Keynes purchases *Pommes* himself, thereby becoming the first English owner of a work by Cézanne.⁵ On his return to Charleston, Keynes finds himself overloaded with luggage and the Cézanne finds itself in the hedge. The picture's arrival at Charleston is met with rapturous excitement. Bell reveals that Woolf displays a similar intrigue and pleasure in viewing *Pommes* when she sees it in London on April 18th, 1918:

So to Gordon Square; where first the new Delacroix and then the Cézanne were produced. There are six apples in the Cézanne picture. What can six apples *not* be? I began to wonder. There's their relationship to each other, & their colour, & their solidity. To Roger and Nessa, moreover, it was a far more intricate question than this. It was a question of pure paint or mixed; if pure which colour: emerald or viridian; & then the laying on of the paint; and the time he'd spent, & how he altered it, & why, and when he'd painted it – we carried it into the next room, & Lord! how it showed up the pictures there, as if you'd put a real stone amongst sham ones; the canvas of the others seemed scraped with a thin layer of rather cheap paint. The apples positively got redder & rounder &

⁵ Over time Keynes' art collection developed and he privately owned other works by Cézanne as well as works by Delacroix, Matisse, Braque, Picasso, Derain, Friesz, Sickert, Grant, and Bell. His collection is now housed at the Fitzwilliam (Bell 158).

greener. I suspect some very mysterious quality of potation [?] in that picture" (Bell "Cézanne" 157 quoting *DVWi* 140-1).

Bell claims that the viewing of the picture was a "rare treat" for Woolf as she "seldom went in to raptures over visual arts" (157). The strength of Woolf's reaction to Cézanne's painting of a fruit bowl, a reaction that throws all the other art that is present into a distinctly unfavourably light, is perhaps the motivation for her own literary rumination on a similar theme in *To the Lighthouse*. The wide and varying associations that the fruit provokes in Mrs. Ramsay echoes the sense of the endless meaningfulness of the apples and their relationship with one another in Woolf's diary. Woolf's interest in Bell and Fry's discussion of the compositional technique of *Pommes* comes to the fore in the painterly way that Woolf places colours and shapes against each other: "putting a yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape" (72). Apples are absent from Rose Ramsay's composition, but the intoxicating influence of Cézanne's *Pommes* on Woolf's fruit bowl is clear. Further, another of Cézanne's favourite subjects appears when Woolf's blends the image of the fruit with that of a landscape.

In his essay, Merleau-Ponty recalls Cézanne's wife explaining the painter's method of composing landscapes: "He would start by discovering the geological foundations of the landscape; then ... he would halt and look at everything with widened eyes, 'germinating' with the countryside" (17). Having "germinated", Cézanne would endeavour to forget what science had taught him of the landscape and would try instead to "recapture the structure of the landscape as an emerging organism" (17). He would do this by "welding together" all the "partial views" to create a minute view of the world in its "full reality" as Gasquet has it (17):

He did not want to separate the stable things which we see and the shifting way in which they appear; he wanted to depict matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organization. (CD 13)

Woolf mirrors this compositional method of "spontaneous organization" through her description of the landscape of the fruit bowl. Having presented the "stable things" in the outline of the bunch of grapes and the horny pink shell, Woolf dives into the centre of the image. Miniaturising her narrator, Woolf has Mrs. Ramsay set off on an odyssey into the "world" of the fruit bowl. "Thus brought up suddenly into the light it seemed possessed of great size and depth, was like a world in which one could take one's staff

and climb hills, she thought, and go down into valleys” (70). Merleau-Ponty describes how Cézanne performs a similar transition, shifting from the outline to the particulars of the image. Having sketched out the scene, the painter, claims the philosopher, then “began to paint all parts of the painting at the same time” (17-8).

Woolf paints a different part of her picture when she brings in another partial view through Mrs. Ramsay’s observation of Augustus. He “too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit, plunged in, broke off a bloom there, a tassel here, and returned after feasting, to his hive” (70). By focusing on the two variant perspectives, Woolf gives, as Merleau-Ponty claims of Cézanne, “the impression of an emerging order, of an object in the act of appearing, organizing itself before our eyes” (CD 14). Augustus’ view adds to the impression of on-going organisation of the image because his feasting on the fruit is strictly visual; he looks but he does not touch. Figuring Mrs. Ramsay and Augustus as separate viewers of the image also allows Woolf to highlight their subjective differences in perception. “That was his way of looking, different from hers” (70). It is through the shared act of looking that they are, like disparate attendees at a gallery, brought together in appreciation of the visual image: “But looking together united them” (70).

Woolf reinforces the framing that the separate viewers of the image creates through her description of the dining-room windowpanes which “ripple the outside world” creating a sense of order within. By describing the world outside the room’s windows, Woolf highlights the world inside, creating a larger still life that holds the magnified still life of the fruit bowl within it. The focusing of the candles that initiated the sharpening of Mrs. Ramsay’s eye on the fruit bowl provokes in the dinner party guests a feeling of unification:

Some change at once went through them all, as if this had really happened, and they were all conscious of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out there. (70)

That the party should form a distinct “world”, separate from the world “out there” is key to my understanding of modernist parties. But first, what does Maurice make of Virginia?

The history books do not record whether Merleau-Ponty read Woolf. She certainly never read him. His first major work, *The Structure of Behaviour*, was

published in France in 1942, the year after Woolf's death. Unable to prove direct lines of influence, we must content ourselves here with Merleau-Ponty's comments on literature in general to ascertain whether he would approve of the association that I am cultivating. That Merleau-Ponty saw painting as superior to literature in its ability to convey phenomenological revelation is clear from his essay "Eye and Mind" (1964). He suggests "art, especially painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning which is covered over in daily life by the natural attitude" (123). He adds:

From the writer and the philosopher, in contrast, we want opinions and advice. We will not allow them to hold the world suspended. We want them to take a stand; they cannot waive the responsibilities of humans who speak. (EM 123)

As readers we may well agree with Merleau-Ponty's injunction that writers and philosophers ought to convey meaning and pass comment. Yet, if we refuse to allow them to "hold the world suspended" this does not preclude their being able to show us the method in which such suspensions can occur. As Woolf demonstrates in her linguistic painting of the fruit bowl scene at Mrs. Ramsay's dinner table, writers can replicate the painter's approach of singling out objects and divorcing them from their common associations in the natural attitude. Art forms are not then as distinct as Merleau-Ponty's analysis suggests and this is particularly true of Woolf, who brought the visual and the aural into the textual to create, what she called, her "sound-pictures" ("A Sketch of the Past" 80).

Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty's coupling of writers and philosophers indicates the type of cross-disciplinary hybridity that I aim to foreground in this thesis. Describing the end of the nineteenth century, Merleau-Ponty presents the shared motivations of literature and philosophy when he writes:

Intellectual works had always been concerned with establishing a certain attitude towards the world, of which literature and philosophy, like politics, are just different expressions; but only now had this concern become explicit. (MN 27)

Writing in the mid-twentieth century, he claims:

From now on the tasks of literature and philosophy can no longer be separated. When one is concerned with giving voice to the experience of the world and showing how consciousness escapes into the world, one can no longer credit oneself with attaining a perfect transparency of expression. Philosophical expression assumes the same ambiguities as literary expression, if the world is such that it cannot be expressed except

in 'stories' and, as it were, pointed at. One will not only witness the appearance of hybrid modes of expression, but the novel and the theatre will become thoroughly metaphysical, even if not a single word is used from the vocabulary of philosophy. (MN 28)

For Merleau-Ponty, twentieth-century literature and philosophy have the shared aim of presenting how the world is experienced through consciousness. Although Merleau-Ponty claims that their combined 'story-telling' does not allow for a full transparency of this process, his tying together of the literary and the philosophical does privilege the ability of narrative to tell us the stories of our own experience. "The hybrid modes of expression" that he suggests are at work in his own philosophy, which often relies on anecdote, dialogue, case studies, and literary texts, as well as in Woolf's writing with its phenomenological focus on temporality, spatiality, and intentionality.

The hybridity between art, literature, and philosophy that Merleau-Ponty foregrounds can be brought out once more via the conversation between Woolf and Cézanne. For, as well as exhibiting similar compositional techniques, Woolf and Cézanne also share a motivation for their artistic creations. Both seek to refute the proclaimed verisimilitude of the work that came before them. Speaking of the classical artists to Emile Bernard, Cézanne declared: "They created pictures; we are attempting a piece of nature" (CD 12). Merleau-Ponty quotes Cézanne's statement that the old masters "replaced reality by imagination and by the abstraction which accompanies it" (12). Woolf attributes a similar "abstraction" away from reality to the writers who came to prominence in the years immediately preceding her own literary debut. Complaining of the style of H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, and Arnold Bennet in "Modern Fiction", Woolf suggests that their writing paints an objective rather than a subjective experience of the world. "Mr. Bennet has come down with his magnificent apparatus for catching life just an inch or two on the wrong side ... Life escapes; and perhaps without life nothing else is worth while" (159). Woolf prefers writers who step beyond the "natural attitude" and aim at describing life as it is experienced through the incarnate consciousness: from within the "lived stream". Her greatest praise for the new style of writing is reserved for James Joyce. She famously takes issue with the content of *Ulysses*, blaming, what she terms, the "poverty" of the writer's mind. However, her admiration for Joyce's high modernist technique, that aims at a more realistic realism than that which went before it, is clear both through her esteem

in the essay and her adoption of the same style of writing in her own fiction. To her diary, Woolf candidly admits that the style of writing she favours is “probably being better done by Mr. Joyce” (*DVWii* 68-69). Cézanne, Joyce, and Woolf are all anti-traditional, seeking to show life as it is lived, and not as it is commonly described; whether in paint or in ink, all three expose a phenomenological motivation to overcome traditional ways of understanding and representing the world, adopting innovative painterly and linguistic techniques to aim at a new, more real, realism.

That Woolf or Joyce would not use the word “phenomenological” to describe their perspectives does not diminish their association with the ideas that the philosophy conveys. As Kevin Hart claims, “When we approach ‘philosophy and literature’ from the perspective of phenomenology we do not presume narrow philosophical knowledge on the part of the artist” (xii). Merleau-Ponty concurs that writers need not claim a position within the philosophical canon to be thought of as part of it:

The work of a great novelist always rests on two or three philosophical ideas. ... The function of the novelist is not to state these ideas thematically but to make them exist for us in the way that things exist. ... It is nonetheless surprising that when writers do take a deliberate interest in philosophy, they have such difficulty in recognizing their affinities. (MN 26)

Woolf and Joyce do not implicitly recognize their affinities with Merleau-Ponty’s brand of phenomenology precisely because their work anticipates his; both die in 1941, before Merleau-Ponty’s public life as an intellectual was begun.⁶ Even so, the links between modernism and phenomenology extend beyond the narrow couplings that this introduction has so far offered. One reason for this openness to partnership is the fluidity of both disciplines:

If there is a unity of preoccupation between phenomenology and modernism, it is first and foremost the elusive versatility of both concepts that strikes us as being their common denominator: each notion is a multifaceted, labyrinthine and shifting assemblage which is simultaneously applied to a movement, a project or a style. Descriptive rather than prescriptive, open-ended and exploratory, ‘practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking’ phenomenology does foster a comprehensive and heuristic dialogue with modernist aesthetics. (Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg 15-6)

⁶ Joyce and Woolf were almost exact contemporaries, as well as dying in the same year, Joyce and Woolf were both born in 1882.

Phenomenology, notes Hart, “has a remarkable ability to remake itself and to live in fields other than philosophy” (xii). As the long quote above reveals, the permeability of modernism is key to enabling its receptiveness to phenomenological readings. Modernism is never completely defined, nor is it truly definable; this ambiguity means that the modernist aesthetic is slightly different in each modernist writer’s work. Yet affect, meaning, selfhood, and negation are all common threads that are taken up in various ways by Woolf and Joyce as well as by other modernist writers. What is more they are themes that not only draw the modernist project together, but that also bring modernism closer to phenomenology. Appearing almost contemporaneously with one another, modernism and phenomenology are products of a similar historical moment, faced with the prospect and the realities of global war, both disciplines strive to make sense of a world rent by almost unthinkable non-sense. Through the fostering of different modes of thought, and in turn, the association with disparate groups of people, philosophers and artists of the early twentieth century try to find ways to cement the disjointed, disrupted experience of modern life back together. Similar attempts at social unification are made through the literal coming together of people in the public and private spheres. Parties are a cogent symbol of these attempts to bond because parties offer a kind of unity in a fractured world. In “Man Seen from the Outside”, Merleau-Ponty writes, “We should no longer pride ourselves in being a community of pure spirits; let us look instead at the real relationships between people in our societies” (89). Reading parties offers us a way to encounter the “real” social relationships Merleau-Ponty’s statement privileges.

Now then I turn to the first half of my thesis title and explore modernist hospitality. As with the links between phenomenology and modernism, the critical ground of the modernist party is broken already. I tip my hat to those who have hosted the modernist party before me and I acknowledge my gratitude in being their guest. In her work “The Modernist Party as Pedagogy”, Kate McLoughlin notes how “parties resonate with three major preoccupations in modernist studies: the idea of space/place, the concept of the everyday, and the phenomenon of networking” (91). All three concerns are of import here, but the final example of “networking” is primary. Like Merleau-Ponty, the modernists are concerned with how human experience is relative to a body’s existence in time and space and, therefore, with how

the environment configures, modifies, or alters the experience of incarnate consciousness. Rather than focusing on the world in its totality, modernists often write parties as a way to create smaller and relatively self-contained worlds which in turn allows them to carry out their explorations into the nature of communally constructed experiences. What is central to modernist representations of parties, then, is a discussion of the structures of human existence and it is this fascination with structure that marks Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology too. His first major work is entitled *The Structure of Behaviour* (1942) and is a monograph on the bodily schema. In his second, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), he locates the personal bodily schema within an interdependent network of bodies when he claims that "the descriptive phenomenologist's task is to reveal the sense 'where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's interact and engage each other like gears'" (See Young 8). Parties are a place in which these intersections and interactions can occur. Maud Ellmann recalls Henry James' famous declaration that, "Really ... relations stop nowhere", and remarks that Woolf is one of the writers that share his notion of "the human subject as enmeshed in relations of exchange" (1). Party hosting offers one way of thinking explicitly about the relations of exchange that constitute intersubjective experience.

Thinking about hosting parties enters us into the critically established world of hospitality. Judith Still remarks, "We all think that we know something about hospitality – it's an everyday experience. Yet it has also been a burning topic of philosophical and political debate over the last couple of decades" (1-2). Jacques Derrida's theoretical work on hospitality has helped to generate a thirty-year critical trend in reading hospitality as an experience that is essentially an engagement between the socially and culturally powerful "one" who is at home in a nation state and a subordinate "other" who is a stranger / foreigner. This has prompted a surge in writing on the hospitable that explores the experiences of refugees, exiles, and immigrants. This work remains of enormous value and importance, especially in the current climate of a global refugee crisis of unprecedented proportions and in the face of the rise of populist political movements that threaten the security and safety of any people deemed to be on the negative side of the hospitable exchange. To turn from the pressing imperative to redouble the effort to stem the tide of misinformation and misdirection of the current political climate is not to devalue the vital work that still

needs to be undertaken in regards to unconditionally hosting the foreign other. It is one of the greatest questions of our time. But my interest lies elsewhere, on a subject less frequently explored, in the backrooms of the debate on hospitality.

I turn from the question of the rights of the guest in search instead of the hostess. The question of sexual difference is, as Judith Still has argued, “critical to hospitality” and it “features less often in discussions around hospitality than do questions of race and nationality” (2). The focus on the host as master – and in Derrida’s work it is always the host and never the hostess – has occluded the problem of sexual difference in hospitality. Looking to literature, it becomes clear, however, that women are rarely absent from the hospitable table. As Still’s work shows, from *The Odyssey* and The Bible onward, women are represented as hostesses. Whilst they may not figure greatly in the discussions of war and statehood that the discourse on hospitality has traditionally explored, they are often present within the private sphere of the home offering a more domesticated version of hospitality. Luce Irigaray notes how throughout history, women have acted as “the guardians of the ancient laws of hospitality” (42). Still adds to this the idea that men and women “have historically had (and, I would argue, continue to have) very different experiences of hospitality both as hosts (more often hostesses) and as guests” (22). We can learn more about the specificities of what it means to be a hostess in the early twentieth century from literary descriptions.

Keen to make the distinction between the Derridean discourse of hospitality, and the gynocentric idea of the hospitable that is central to my concerns, I privilege the term “hosting” above hospitality in this thesis as a way to foreground the usually silent actions of women performing hospitable acts. Still takes as her starting point the fact “that it does not make sense to suggest that a spouse offers hospitality to his/her spouse in the home they share, or that they offer hospitality to their dependent children, or to an employee paid to live in” (11). In my work, I use the term “hosting” precisely because I want to show how women enter into relations of exchange that often put them at a disadvantage, even with the members of their own family or household. In his introduction to *Sense and Non-Sense*, Herbert Dreyfuss makes a comment that reveals how the interpersonal structures that hosting reflects are of supreme importance to Merleau-Pontian philosophy. He claims that rather than questioning how separate minds can come to an understanding of one another

Merleau-Ponty “gives us a description of the way I, as an embodied being, am related to other embodied persons” (xi). Douglas Mao ties Woolf to this concern when he suggests that she is linked to existential philosophers by her “tendency to think about the body ... in terms of further questions about intersubjectivity” (*Solid Objects* 53). The focus on the body in interpersonal exchanges brings up the elephant in the Merleau-Pontian concept of the lived body with which I began my discussion.

It is an elephant that perhaps accounts for the silencing of the hostess, and here Maurice and Jacques have something to learn from Virginia. For whilst, like Woolf Merleau-Ponty believes that it “is through my body that I understand other people just as it is through my body that I perceive things” (*PP* 186), the disparate constitutions of bodies eludes him. Throughout her work Woolf writes of men and women, young and old, and captures the different ways in which the people she describes inhabit and are shaped by their differing bodies. Merleau-Ponty’s inability to distinguish *between* lived bodies is a major weakness in his concept of the “lived body” that drastically reduces its authority. So whilst, as Elizabeth Grosz suggests:

Many feminists have found support for their various projects in Merleau-Ponty’s particular brand of phenomenology ... it is significant that of all the feminist writings on his works with which I am familiar, even those feminists strongly influenced by him remain, if not openly critical, then at least suspicious of his avoidance of the question of sexual difference and specifically, wary of his apparent generalisations regarding subjectivity which in fact tend to take men’s experiences for human ones. (103)

Sandra Bartky, one of the first women to explicitly define herself as a feminist phenomenologist, widens Grosz’s and others claims of phallocentrism when she writes, “philosophy in the West has been dominated by conceptual hierarchies that are covertly gender-coded” (6). The covert gendering of philosophy can be seen to be at work in Derrida’s foregrounding of the host and in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*. Throughout Merleau-Ponty’s text it is the experiences of the male patient Schneider, the friends Peter and Paul, and the philosopher himself, to which the reader is privy. The one specifically female experience that is related is that of a girl who tellingly is unable to speak. Taken away from the man that she loves the girl of the case study loses her voice and, importantly, it is only the restoration of the male that rehabilitates her and allows her to speak once more. Thus, whilst Merleau-Ponty never explicitly states his privileging of the male body, he does fail to acknowledge any

distinction between the sexes in his concept. Nor does he state that the lived body is in some way a unified category that is devoid of gender (something which his own adherence to the body in its sexual being refutes). But before giving up on Merleau-Ponty and turning away in search of new conversational partners who may better appreciate the question of sexual difference, attempts at rehabilitation must be made. For the “lived body” is not a useless concept. Although it is by now an old idea it still has much to offer those who wish to develop the scope of phenomenology. Iris Marion Young, whose work extends Merleau-Ponty’s work on embodiment in new and more inclusive ways, argues that the

idea of the lived body ... does the work the category “gender” has done, but better and more. It does this work better because the category of the lived body allows description of the habits and interactions of men with women, women with women, and men with men in ways that can attend to the plural possibilities of comportment. (18)

Setting up an imagined dialogue on the lived body between Merleau-Ponty and Woolf we might take Woolf’s question from “Professions for Women” as a starting point. “What is a woman?” she asks. Her reply is, “I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know” (60). However, Eva Simms and Beata Stawarska privilege an artistic solution to the problem of “the myth of a sexless, individualistic ego” (8). They suggest, “phenomenological reflection” can be enriched “with a case study or other data gathered by researchers, or even with the insights expressed by artists and writers” (8). Woolf may claim not to know what a woman is, but her writing, in its replication of the world, provides a place to explore female embodiment. It is a concern that extends beyond Woolf’s work because, as Bonnie Kime has noted “modernism was inflected, in ways we can only now begin to appreciate, by gender” (3). Looking for women’s bodies in modernism, we return to the home: the place of the domestic hostess.

Woman’s domestic role underwent change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The last decades of the nineteenth century saw the rise of the phenomenon of the “New Woman”; affluent and independent women whose social position or education meant that they were able to exercise varying levels of agency over their own lives. In the United Kingdom in 1897, two British suffragist societies united to create the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). In 1903, a splinter group of suffragists, led by Emmeline Pankhurst, split from the NUWSS to

form the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Public and political support for women's suffrage developed over the 1900s and 1910s, but the slow progress prompted the WSPU to engage in increasingly militaristic protests and actions. Nonetheless, the outbreak of the First World War turned the tide as the WSPU, and most of its members, chose to publicly support the war. The majority of the suffragettes laid down their banners and went to work alongside millions of other women in the munitions factories, in public services, and on the land. This was not the first time that women had left the home for the workplace; some women were already working in professional non-domestic roles prior to the outbreak of war, but the mid-1910s saw enormous and unprecedented numbers of women going out to work. Those who returned to their domestic roles in peace did so with varying levels of satisfaction.

The actions of women during the First World War increased political support for women's suffrage and the passing of the Representation of the People Act 1918 gave the right to vote in parliamentary elections to women who were over the age of thirty and who also owned property, were university graduates, or who were members of or were married to members of, the Local Government register. The first parliamentary election in which those women could vote took place in December 1918, a month after the Armistice that brought the First World War to an end. It is perhaps no coincidence that the decade that followed that war, the 1920s, should be infamous for its parties. Throwing parties gave the inhabitants of war-torn societies a way to reinforce a sense of community, of freedom, and of much-needed fun. However, as well as promoting social unification, parties were also a way to reinforce woman's traditional place within the domestic home. Therefore, although some women earned the vote, and many others took up employment outside the home, social inequality between the sexes was far from abolished in the first quarter of the twentieth century and the ideological notion of the "perfect hostess" that the parties of the 1920s reinforced was one way in which women continued to be measured by their domestic capabilities.

Hence the historical imperative to be a "good hostess"- that is, a socially appropriate mother, wife, lover, or daughter – remains in the first decades of the twentieth-century, but what it means to fulfil those roles is a source of increasing social, political, philosophical, and psychological debate in the years in which

modernism and phenomenology rose and waned. These rapid shifts in women's roles and the public and systematic questioning of what it meant to be "a woman" and what "a woman's role" was, is one reason why representations of the home and of hosting are so prevalent in modernist literature. Exploring how modernist women were encouraged to perform, and are represented as performing, the role of hostess tells us then not only about hosting in the first decades of the twentieth century, but gives us insights into the frameworks of hosting that have governed women's social, familial and conjugal positions throughout history and that continue to impact upon female agency in the modern day. Being a "bad hostess" continues to carry social condemnation today because being a "bad hostess" is still implicitly linked to failings in a woman's ability to perform her "social duty" as mother, wife, lover, or daughter.

Having now got to know some of the guests and set up conversations that I will return to later, I leave off here to follow my obligations to the hostess. Bowing to her invitation, I acknowledge her demands upon my attention by beginning my first chapter with a discussion of the image of the "perfect" modernist hostess. Starting with one of modernism's most famous hostesses, Clarissa Dalloway, I read Woolf's representation of the hostess in *Mrs. Dalloway* against Merleau-Ponty's work on embodiment to explore party-giving. I argue for an understanding of party-giving as an act that resonates out of a lived body and that tends toward the creation and maintenance of networks of other lived bodies. I suggest that the extraordinary hosting of party-giving is predicated on a more habitual, daily form of hosting that is also present in Woolf's work. Working with Campbell's concept of the "monomyth", Merleau-Ponty's accounts of heroism, and recent work into the embodiment of heroism, I argue that the party-giving hostess displays a contemporary heroism in that she undertakes a perilous, internal journey that allows her to engage in the socially reparative work of unifying people. My heroine fights not with the sword but with the soup tureen and receives not lasting epitaphs and eternal honours, but a fleeting ephemeral fame as the "perfect" hostess. In my first chapter, I counter the heroic and the habitual only to show their interrelatedness, and to reveal how the heroics that the party-giving hostess performs extend out of her habitual hosting. In the subsequent chapters, I explore the developmental stages in the life of the heroically habitual hostess.

In chapter two, I again bring Woolf and Merleau-Ponty into conversation to witness the initiation of the hosting mentality in the childhood home. I suggest that Woolf and Merleau-Ponty both present strikingly similar descriptions of the primary engagement with the world as it is experienced in early childhood and that the inauguration of separate gender identities brings to a close. I explore how children are socially prepared to adopt the role of the hostess both through their play and through the structures and possibilities of their childhood homes. My discussion of childhood reveals how Woolf foreshadows the work that Merleau-Ponty undertakes in his *Sorbonne Lectures* at the same time that it sets the ground for an understanding of the artificiality of the hosting mentality.

In chapter three, I invite new guests to join the discussion as I move from childhood to adolescence. By close reading descriptions of party-going adolescent girls in Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, and Katherine Mansfield, I consider how the hosting mentality extends and further impacts women's modes of embodiment in adolescence. I argue that, in party-going, adolescent girls become subject to the distortive effects of the sexual economy, adopting "for others" modes of embodiment that counter the freedom of their habitual movements and reinforce their subordinate social positions. In this chapter, Iris Marion Young's feminist reworking of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of embodiment is key to my presentation of how men and women curate the embodiment of female adolescent guests at the modernist party.

My fourth chapter shifts the terms of the debate, as I ask; what happens once women take up the embodied position of maternal hospitality? For an answer, I look to D. H. Lawrence's descriptions of pregnancy and to the representations of birth that Lawrence, James Joyce, and Mina Loy present, to decipher how women's bodies form the blueprint for all later hospitality through the literal act of hosting another inside their pregnant body. Inspired by Luce Irigaray, I further argue that Lawrence and Merleau-Ponty usurp the language of pregnancy to present a problematically metaphorical maternal hospitality.

Lastly, in my final chapter, I break with party-going convention and bring up the subject of death. I follow my developmental structure to its natural conclusion by returning to Clarissa Dalloway to discuss the hostess contemplating her personal death. Ending as I began, I unite Woolf and Merleau-Ponty once more to reveal how Woolf's conception of death as positive and life-affirming chimes with Merleau-

Ponty's few remarks on the subject. I then turn to the question of the dead body. The dead body, like the female body, is noticeable in its absence from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of embodiment. I look to modernism to fill in this curious gap. With James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf, I explore the heroic hospitality of "funeral-giving". Finally, I conclude with Lawrence and a discussion of "hosting-after-death", using that term to describe the habitual bodily and social care that women perform, or fail to perform, for dead bodies.

Throughout my thesis, I contend that failing to adequately recognise women's habitual and heroic hospitality devalues the important work that women perform for other bodies throughout their lives. In doing this, I carve a space for the hostess within the discourse of hospitality, whilst I further the discussion of female-bodies-in-situation that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology lacks. And now, if I can catch her attention, I will begin a conversation with my "perfect" modernist hostess.

Chapter One

Phenomenology and The “Perfect” Modernist Hostess

she would marry a Prime Minister and stand at the top of a staircase; the perfect hostess he called her (she had cried over it in her bedroom), she had the makings of the perfect hostess, he said. (*Mrs. Dalloway* 7)

Setting the Scene

In my introduction I set out my fundamental argument that hosting is a bodily act. Those who host use their bodies to meet the physical needs of their guests, providing protection, care, and preservation to those that they invite to share their space. To host a party is then to curate a network of exchanges between bodies within a specific shared environment. Virginia Woolf and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are both interested in how the environment or situation of the lifeworld shapes the experiences of lived bodies: parties offer an ideal way to witness this process in miniature. At a party the invited guests and their host or hostess come together within the horizons of a specific time and place for the purpose of merry-making. With their guest lists and rules of engagement, parties magnify the social rules that govern everyday life. The feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young suggests that phenomenology views experience as occurring within “a specific sociocultural context” (16). Douglas Mao likewise focuses on situation, when he highlights Woolf’s sensitivity, shared with Henry James, “to the ways surroundings resonate through souls” (*Fateful Beauty* 13). For Woolf, writing parties is a world-making act: her parties are microcosmic representations of the larger social world and this allows for her explorations of bodies as they act in social situations. In this chapter, I briefly discuss Woolfian parties before turning to my eye to the giver of the party: the “perfect hostess”. Reading *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, I suggest that the “perfect” hosting of party-giving is an extraordinary act based on a more habitual form of hosting that women exhibit in their everyday engagements with other people. I begin with a discussion of Woolf’s presentation of the social limitations of the roles of the extraordinary and the habitual hostess. Having

established the negative understanding of hosting, I then read Woolf's hostesses against Merleau-Ponty's account of heroism to argue for a positive understanding of female hosting. This phenomenological analysis recasts the extraordinary hostess as a heroic hostess and reveals that both the habitual and the heroic hostess are sources of social unification, creativity, and preservation. Studying Woolf's multiple presentations of hostesses allows me one way to introduce the discussion of female embodiment that is lacking in Merleau-Ponty's account of the lived body.

Taking seriously Merleau-Ponty's argument that the lived body is a body in situation, I begin my discussion of the hostess here with an exploration of the world of the party. Merleau-Ponty reveals his belief in the inescapable relationship between experience and place when he writes, "being is synonymous with being situated" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 252): there is no existence without situation. In her seminal essay on feminine spatiality, Young outlines her

conviction, derived primarily from Merleau-Ponty, that it is the ordinary purposive orientation of the body as a whole toward things and its environment that initially defines the relation of a subject to its world. (30)

Writing parties allows Woolf to explore the relationship Young presents between embodied experience and the environment in which that experience takes place. Woolf's creation of literary parties has the potential to be world-making, in part because writing is in itself a world-making act:

If one considers that things appear only as a horizon, that is to say, in a changing configuration, which varies according to the point of view and the moment in time, and which prompts the viewer to guess as much as to perceive, then the world that is created by each writer is neither a different world, nor a mere fiction, but a response to our real world as it is perceived. (Collot 326)

As an act that extends out of a lived body acting in situation, and that intends other lived bodies in its potential audience, writing replicates the perceptual apprehension of the shared world. In her drive to write the experience of an "ordinary mind on an ordinary day" ("Modern Fiction" 160), Woolf's artistic aim is a realistic representation of the experience of the world as it occurs through an incarnate consciousness. Furthermore if, as Michel Collot argues, writing remakes the world, then writing parties specifically remakes the social world. Pheng Cheah highlights the communal hospitality of the world when he writes, the "right to hospitality has its ontological

basis in the fact that human beings only exist amidst plurality. Our being is always a being-with others, always a being within a world" (65). Parties replicate this experience of being-with others in a shared world in miniature. Furthermore, Christopher Ames comments on the "world-making" potential of parties when he writes, "beneath the many manifestations of the festive spirit, there exists a recurrent and inescapable need to create new worlds in which we can celebrate and affirm our life in this world" (18). He adds to this, the "dramatic possibilities of party scenes allow for the vivid portrayal of the social self" (29). Guests arrive at the literary party and they interact with one another and with their host/ess in keeping with social injunctions around hierarchy, agency, power, class, and etiquette. Therefore, writing fictional parties provides Woolf, as it does other modernist writers, with a way to explore the "continuing conscious psychological operation of reorganization and reinterpretations" (Philipson 124) that marks human existence, as it occurs within individual bodies residing in communal time and space.

"Party-giving" – the deliberate act of throwing a gathering for invited guests – regularly appears in Woolf's work. In a diary entry dated April 27, 1925, Woolf explores the idea that experiencing a party involves a definite state of mind:

My present reflection is that people have any number of states of consciousness and I should like to investigate the party consciousness ... These states are very difficult (obviously I grope for words) but I'm always coming back to it. The party consciousness ... (DVWiii 12)

Woolf's husband reinforces her sensitivity to the idea of parties when he recalls her reaction to parties in his autobiography of the years 1919 to 1939, *Downhill All the Way*:

The idea of a party always excited her, and in practice she was very sensitive to the actual mental and physical excitement of the party itself, the rise of temperature of mind and body, the ferment and fountain of noise. (See McNichol 11)

Leonard Woolf's autobiographical statement foregrounds the bodiliness of both party-giving and its complimentary act party-going; there is a mental and a physical warming up – a "rise in temperature" – that is caused by the sensual experience of the noisy clamour of the party. Consequently, for Woolf, parties are experiences that are lived viscerally through the body. Therefore, the "party consciousness" is, first and foremost, an incarnate party consciousness.

Three weeks after writing the diary entry detailing her fascination with the “party consciousness”, Woolf publishes her famous party novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. Set on a single day in June 1923, the novel opens with Clarissa Dalloway’s preparations for her party and extends through the action of a full day before culminating in the description of the evening party. Whilst Mrs. Dalloway’s party is certainly a well-known and well-studied example of a Woolfian party, it is vital to note at the outset that *Mrs. Dalloway* is not the only Woolf novel in which the “party consciousness” is of importance. Parties appear regularly throughout Woolf’s fictional work. Tara Stubbs makes the claim that the modernist party is a “malleable motif” (2), and this certainly holds true for Woolf’s writing on the subject. Woolf’s parties take many forms: dances appear in *The Voyage Out* and *Orlando*; *Orlando*, with its broad historical scope and its bacchanalian bent, also provides a historical survey of party styles as they developed through the second half of the last millennium; evening parties feature in both *Jacob’s Room* and *The Years*; *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves* both include dinner or dining parties; *Night and Day* focuses on the more banal gathering of “tea” alongside intellectual social meetings in the rooms of Mary Datchett; and, finally, *Between the Acts* contains the theatrical party of an incomplete pageant. The embodied actions of dancing, eating, tea-drinking, and acting that play out at these parties brings the bodiliness of Woolf’s parties to the fore once more. And it is not just in the novels that Woolf takes her reader to the party – partying takes place in her shorter fiction too. In her edited collection of seven of Woolf’s short stories, all written between 1922 and May 1925 when Woolf was writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, Stella McNichol shows how Mrs Dalloway’s party “spill[s] over and beyond the actual novel itself” into Woolf’s shorter fiction which read as “party texts” (*Mrs. Dalloway’s Party* 9).⁷ For Woolf, parties are not a peripheral plot device but a pervasive, central concern.

Woolf’s personal writings reveal that she is both sustained and mortified by social engagements. This ambiguous relationship with parties is reflected in her writing on the subject. Commenting on the so-called “party texts”, Bryony Randal suggests, “what sounds as if it might produce texts characterised by glamour, even frivolity ... actually prompts a series of texts riven by conflict, tension and anxiety” (98). Woolf’s personal tempestuous relationship with the acts of party-giving and

⁷ I examine Woolf’s representations of adolescent bodies at the party in her shorter fiction in chapter three of this thesis (103-108).

party-going, often linked to a fear of being perceived to be wearing the wrong thing has been well documented. Whilst fearful of recovering already well-trodden ground, I mention Woolf's own ambivalent relationship with parties here because it reinforces my argument that the party consciousness is incarnate – for Woolf, clothing the body in the wrong attire is a deeply painful *faux pas* – but also because I feel it goes some way to explaining why Woolf presents party-giving as both a positive and as a negative act. However, before looking more closely at Woolf's dualistic representation of female party-giving, I wish to refine my Merleau-Pontian focus on situation.

Whilst Woolf often presents different types of party in her adoption of the “malleable motif” of modernist parties, her parties share a common theme in that the majority of them take place within a private residence. This party environment is historically relative as Christopher Ames notes:

The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the use of the word *party* as ‘a gathering or assemblage for social pleasure or amusement ... especially of invited guests at a private home’ from 1716. (5)

Prior to the eighteenth century, parties focused on communality and usually occurred within public spaces; however, from the eighteenth century on, parties were socially selective and largely held in private homes.⁸ In Woolf's party texts and in her novels many of the central formal parties – including both peripheral events and those held by Mrs. Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Durrant, Delia Pargiter, and the Olivers – take place within the walls of one or other of the character's homes. Home in Woolf's work is often a world in which the private female dominates in comparison to the public male world. Further, as Geneviève Morgan points out, “Woolf saw the home as the locus of all great aesthetic, social, and political change” (92). The home is central to discussions of embodiment because it is the environment in which the everyday experience of the body is lived. For the more fortunate Western home owner or dweller, wherever else the day may take us the vast majority of our days begin and our nights end with our bodies at rest in our personal homes: home is the nucleus of our incarnate experiences. Hosting parties there transforms the space in which the lived body is at home into a place in which it must welcome other lived bodies. Kate

⁸ See the introduction to Ames's work for a discussion of the way that modern parties are rooted in communal carnivals, like the festivities that Woolf describes in the first half of *Orlando*.

McLoughlin discusses how the ordinary and the extraordinary combine in party-giving when she points out,

parties are special occasions, interruptions in daily routine, but are also events at which quotidian trivialities are swapped in the form of small talk and banalities loom large. ("The Modernist Party as Pedagogy" 92)

In party-giving, the everyday environment of the home becomes the extraordinary environment of the party world. Quoting Douglas Goldring's memoir of a party McLoughlin describes how "the party assumes a longitudinal shape, both extraordinary and habitual" ("Pedagogy" 92). Here I would add that the act of hosting is equally "extraordinary" and "habitual".

Clarissa Dalloway, Lion-Hunter: The "Perfect" Party-Giving Hostess

The extraordinary form of hosting is that of party-giving. As I noted in my introduction to this thesis, parties are pervasive in the modernist era and a plethora of hostesses send out the invitations to these many parties. Additionally, the early twentieth century bore witness to the rise of the professional hostess. Geneviève Morgan describes how the "prominence of the great society hostesses" in Woolf's time gives her "a way to conceptualize her art in the lexicon of the age" (91). Morgan also reveals that Woolf and her circle attend some of the "lavish parties" thrown by the "great hostesses" Lady Emerald Cunard, Lady Sybil Colefax, and Mrs. Nancy Corrigan; these were parties where the hostess "carefully selected and assembled their guests their entertainment and their menus" and made a "profession out of hosting" (91). From 1904 onwards, the Stephen sisters themselves play host to the other members of the Bloomsbury Group on Thursday evenings at their Gordon Square home. From 1908, it is Lady Ottoline Morrell that acts as the hostess of Bloomsbury, giving her "at home" parties in her London residence in Bedford Square and, later, on her Garsington estate. It is against this background of professional and personal extraordinary hosting that Woolf's presents her "perfect hostess" Clarissa Dalloway.

In a diary entry in May 1923, Woolf links the professional hostess to the novel that she is writing. Using her journalistic shorthand for Ottoline Morrell, she describes with characteristic acerbity, how she wanted to "bring in the despicableness of people

like Ott" into the novel that becomes *Mrs. Dalloway* (DVWii 245). The first thing to say of the "perfect hostess", then, is that it is not a wholly desirable position: vacuous, vacant, and vainglorious, the perfect party-giving hostess has many unattractive qualities. Clarissa the silk-clad mermaid is certainly all of those things. Her effervescent, insubstantial nature irritates Peter Walsh when he witnesses her effusively and insincerely greeting her guests. Sally Seton's youthful comment that Peter must rescue Clarissa from a life of "mere" hosting reinforces the impression that the life of a "perfect hostess" is not a desirable one. As the quote that opens this chapter proclaims, Clarissa cries over Peter's claims that she has "the makings of the perfect hostess" (7). To be a perfect hostess, or to be accused of being one, is then a source of shame and pain. Woolf brings the failings of the hostess to the fore when she describes her relationship with some of the great real-life society hostesses of her day in her autobiographical piece, "Am I a Snob?" Woolf delivered this meandering talk - part-tribute, part-satire - to the Memoir Club in December 1936. Begun by Molly MacCarthy in 1920, the twelve members of the Memoir Club took turns to peruse autobiographical introspections about their lives. That Woolf should treat the subject of her relationship with the society hostesses in one of her writings for the club is ripe evidence for her privately proclaimed fascination with the "party consciousness".

As the title suggests, the premise of the talk is Woolf's search within her own character for tell-tale signs of snobbery. Having dismissed the idea that some of the other members of the group could be snobs, Woolf gives an indication of what it is that she takes a snob to be:

The essence of snobbery is that you wish to impress other people. The snob is a flutter-brained, hare-brained creature so little satisfied with his or her own standing that in order to consolidate it he or she is always flourishing a title or an honour in other people's faces so that they may believe, and help him to believe what he does not really believe—that he or she is somehow a person of importance. (64)

Admitting that she recognises this fault in herself because of her tendency to leave her most impressive post on public display at the top of the pile, Woolf then transitions into a perusal of her personal relationships with the potentially snobbish great ladies of her day. Having completed her preamble of Ladies who host via Lady Bath, Lady Suffield, and Lady Oxford, Woolf alights upon Lady Sybil Colefax, whose invitation to Argyll House she finally accepts (as she teasingly exaggerates) on the fiftieth time of

asking (68). Woolf uses her own experience largely as a foil to throw Lady Colefax in sharper relief and, as quickly becomes clear, Sybil Colefax fulfils the criteria of snobbery that Woolf has set out. Lady Colefax's snobbery is best revealed in an anecdote in which Woolf travels alongside her shortly after the hostess has lost most of her wealth in the 1929 financial crash. In answer to Woolf's question asking whether she had known Henry James, Lady Sybil animatedly replies:

"Know Henry James!" Her face lit up. It was as if I had touched on a nerve, the wrong nerve, I rather felt. She became the old Sibyl again—the hostess ... "Mount Street," she said to the chauffeur and got in. "H.J. said to me," she resumed, "I feel it is my duty to go to Vienna in case I can be of any assistance to those two bereaved ladies..." And the car drove off, and she sat by my side, trying to impress me with the fact that she had known Henry James. (77)

As consummate "hostess", "old Sibyl" is not a desirable companion; she touches the wrong nerve, she tries to impress, and she is wholly at odds with the type of intimacy that Woolf was trying to cultivate with her travelling companion before "the hostess' mentality took over. Henry James is one guest on the long list of names that Woolf attributes to different hostesses in the piece. Peter Conradi points out how, by "aestheticizing experience, the hostess may come to view people as more or less precious objects to be collected" (429). The hostess as collector figures Woolf, the guest, as the collected. Brought out at parties like a very special stamp, Woolf is one of an array of cultivated guests that the snobbish hostess invites for the primary purpose of heightening her own prestige. There is a name for such hostesses: they are the "lion-hunters". Like the hunter in the bush stalking his prey, Lady Colefax tracks down her quarry, sending invite after invite, until at last her victim is exhausted and defeated, surrenders and accepts. Leonard Woolf called Sybil Colefax "an unabashed hunter of lions" ("Snob" 68). However, Woolf's memoir makes clear that to be called a "lion hunter" is no more a compliment than to be called a "perfect hostess". Like Clarissa, Lady Colefax cries over the claims that she is a "climber" and a "lion hunter" ("Snob" 70). She, in turn, directs the insult outward calling Lady Cunard "a mere lion hunter; a snob" ("Snob" 70). It is the lion-hunter's tendency to view her guests as trophies that Woolf most rejects in Lady Colefax, and it is a characteristic that she gives to her famous hostess Clarissa Dalloway.

Not quite a lady herself, Clarissa nonetheless has the social power to lure some impressive lions to her party. The biggest lion with the fiercest mane is the sitting Prime Minister. He arrives almost literally caught in a net; all “rigged up in gold lace” (169). Whilst Woolf ridicules the Prime Minister by claiming that he looks as though you “might have stood him behind a counter and bought biscuits” from him, he still retains the admiration of the guests for being a “symbol of what they all stood for English society” (169). And, as the trapper of such a gold-gleaming lion, Clarissa gains some of that admiration too. This is important because her social position is of great value to Clarissa. She loves “with an absurd and faithful passion, being part of it, since her people were courtiers once in the time of the Georges” (5). She is vain of her own position and that of the lions that she displays at her parties. As Peter Walsh remarks:

The obvious thing to say of her was that she was worldly; cared too much for rank and society and getting on in the world ... and these great swells, these Duchesses, these hoary old Countesses one met in her drawing-room, unspeakably remote as he felt them to be from anything that mattered a straw, stood for something real to her. (75)

As is the case with Lady Sibyl Colefax, the “hostess” in *Clarissa* pushes her to act inauthentically, desperate to impress she acts on the imagined imperative of other people’s admiration rather than on the basis of her own desires:

How much she wanted it – that people should look pleased as she came in, Clarissa thought and turned and walked back towards Bond Street, annoyed, because it was silly to have other reasons for doing things ... half the time she did things not simply, for themselves; but to make people think this or that; perfect idiocy she knew ... for no one was ever for a second taken in. Oh if she could have had her life over again! she thought, stepping on to the pavement, could have looked even differently! (10)

Given the choice, she would have been

dark like Lady Bexborough, with a skin of crumpled leather and beautiful eyes. She would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately; rather large; interested in politics like a man; with a country house; very dignified, very sincere. (10)

It is key to my argument that hosting is a bodily act that Clarissa’s primary desire is to possess *the body* of the hostess she most admires; she wishes to appear to the world in the way that Lady Bexborough appears through her body. She also wants to replicate Lady Bexborough’s mode of moving that body; she longs for movements that are “slow

and stately", not jerky and birdlike, as she fears her own gestures to be. Finally, she desires the interests and the accoutrements of the higher-class position that Lady Bexborough has, which move her beyond the claims of femininity allowing her to become "like a man". Instead of talking politics and roaming around a country house Clarissa must use her body to fulfil the imperatives of hosting and tend to the needs of others: she organises food; arranges seating; aestheticizes both her home and her body; prepares conversation; and curates introductions. Lady Bexborough may be the woman Clarissa "admires most" (9), but we are not told whether the admiration runs both ways. Clarissa is not numbered amongst the "Duchesses", the "Countesses", or the "Ladies". Without a title she is simply "Mrs. Richard Dalloway" and this increases her admiration for those who bear titles at the same time that it diminishes her attraction for them. Lady Bruton, "whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing" (30), does not wish for Clarissa's husband to bring his wife to the gathering and this rejection wounds the society-seeking Clarissa who, nevertheless, must play the hostess to Lady Bruton at her own party in order to maintain her husband Richard's social connection.

Mrs. Dalloway is not the only one of Woolf's hostesses who gives parties to shore up her husband's position. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay throws her dinner party to bring together the lions – the scholar, the poet, and the painter – that she and her husband have temporarily settled under their roof. However, although Mrs. Ramsay leads her lions to water, she cannot make them drink. Charles Tansley, one of the bright young men of Oxford, refuses to play the hostess' game at the dinner table:

he was not going to talk the sort of rot these people wanted him to talk. He was not going to be condescended to by these silly women. He had been reading in his room, and now he came down and it all seemed to him silly, superficial, flimsy. (62)

Compared to the decidedly male life of letters, the hostess' interest in food and fashion is a trifling affair: "Why did they dress? ... They did nothing but talk, talk, talk, eat, eat eat. It was the women's fault. Women made civilization impossible with all their 'charm', all their silliness" (62). Mr. Bankes' thoughts on the "silliness" of feminine hosting, in contrast to masculine intellectualizing, mirror Mr. Tansley's: "How trifling it all is, how boring it all is, he thought, compared to with the other thing – work. .. What a waste of time it all was to be sure!" (64). Insubstantial and insignificant

hosting may be a preoccupying pastime but it cannot, according to the men, be condoned as “work”. In the middle of her dinner party, when all is going well, the hostess Mrs. Ramsay rises to the conversational challenge and derides with “warmth and eloquence” the “iniquity of the English Dairy system” (74). Keen to defend her perspective, she is about to bring in her discursive evidence when first her children and then her husband, begin to laugh at her. Subject to their mockery, she “veil[s] her crest ... dismount[s] her batteries” and gives up her challenge (74). The self-effacement that Mrs. Ramsay displays in her capitulation to her family’s laughter is a hallmark of the Woolfian party-giving hostess. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Peter Walsh remarks on Clarissa’s ability to denude her social interactions of the personal: “‘How delightful to see you!’ said Clarissa. She said it to every one. How delightful to see you! She was at her worst – effusive, insincere” (165). In the same novel, Woolf highlights the facelessness of the hostess again when she describes how the bells of St. Margaret’s come in:

like a hostess who comes into her drawing-room on the very stroke of the hour and finds her guests there already. I am not late. No, it is precisely half-past eleven, she says. Yet, though she is perfectly right, her voice, being the voice of the hostess, is reluctant to inflict its individuality. (49)

In comparison to the strident masculine bells of Big Ben, which casts its leaden circles in the air with unabashed surety throughout the day, the feminine bells of St. Margaret’s are timid and hesitant, unwilling – like the hostess that they mirror – to draw too much personal attention. Whilst Big Ben, a classic symbol of patriarchal parliamentary power, has four faces, the example of St. Margaret reveals that the hostess ought to have none.

Woolf further suggests that the hostess must minimise her individuality when Clarissa views her reflection in the mirror and ponders how she “tried to be the same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her – faults, jealousies, vanities, suspicions” (37). That Clarissa Dalloway should ponder her reflection in the mirror is especially important for this discussion because of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s interest in mirrors. In his essay “Eye and Mind”, Merleau-Ponty privileges the ability of the mirror to reflect the visibility of the world and suggests that many painters include mirrors in their paintings because of a specific desire to show the visibility of the world in action. He claims that mirrors reflect the reciprocity of visibility:

The mirror emerges because I am a visible see-er, because there is a reflexivity of the sensible; the mirror translates and reproduces that reflexivity. In it, my externality becomes complete. (EM 129)

Mirrors and other reflective surfaces appear with regularity in Woolf's work.⁹ In agreement with Merleau-Ponty's claim, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa's reflection in the mirror fixes the surface of her body as she prepares to play the role of the extraordinary hostess:

How many million times she had seen her face, and always with the same imperceptible contraction! She pursed her lips when she looked in the glass. It was to give her face point. That was her self – pointed; dart-like; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point. (36)

As Clarissa considers her fixed representation in the mirror, Woolf reveals how the body acts as a point of contact between the self and other people. With some assiduity the disparate and incompatible parts of Clarissa's psyche are brought together creating a singular representation of her as "one woman" for other people. In her posed, pointed presentation, she becomes "that face, that flat, closed being" that Merleau-Ponty discusses in his essay (EM 129). This description runs counter to Peter's recollection of Clarissa Dalloway as a young woman riding a bus and proclaiming that she "felt herself everywhere; not 'here, here, here'; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere" (151). Clarissa's youthful perception is like a diamond glittering in sun: the seeing thing that is her lived body refracts outwards in multiple directions and numerous lines of sight. However, in Woolf's description of the older woman preparing to play the hostess, the seeing thing of her lived body contracts into the thing seen: a solid object encased within fixed boundaries observable and open to external objectification. No longer "everywhere" as before, the hostess is trapped "here" in the immanent situation of party-giving.

That Woolf chooses to represent the party-giving hostess Mrs. Dalloway as a diamond is no coincidence. Intensely interested in class, Clarissa wears her privilege

⁹ To give just three examples: in *To the Lighthouse* Mrs. Ramsay considers her reflection in the mirror as her children help her to select her jewellery for the dinner party; in *The Waves* Jinny explores her body in its sexual being as she examines her reflection in a train's window pane (48); and finally, Woolf's short story "The Looking-Glass" features a "mirror in which no one is present" – a technique that Merleau-Ponty specifically commends in Dutch painting in his essay (EM 129).

ostentatiously and hosts servant-rich parties for the wealthy and the socially powerful. She is interested in the preservation and presentation of the superficial. She buys her own gloves and flowers, and mends her own dress chiefly because she is keen to put forward the proper external appearance. Clarissa's embodiment is strangely reminiscent of a diamond too; her features are described as pointed and birdlike, hard and angular, so that her body echoes the diamond self that she assembles in the mirror. It was also a diamond that secured the social position of the hostess for Clarissa. Instead of a life with Peter Walsh, Clarissa chose to wear a diamond on her finger and accept the social status of marriage to Richard Dalloway. It is the acceptance of the role of Mrs. Richard Dalloway that Peter fears has turned her into the 'perfect hostess'; a position which involves adorning oneself in gems but which – for Peter at least – appears to be merely superficial. Her creator likewise feared that Clarissa Dalloway as a character was too insubstantial, too "tinsely", too "glittery" (*DVWii* 272); a translucent representation that, like a diamond, contains only itself. Woolf specifically links the diamantine self to the act of hosting when she reinforces the image as Clarissa stands on the landing listening to the sounds of the preparations for her party and assembles "that diamond shape, that single person" (37). The "single person" of the party-giving hostess contrasts with the expansive subjectivity that Clarissa earlier claims for herself as she considers the idea of personal death whilst she dreamily gazes into Hatchards' shop window:¹⁰

on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part ... of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best ... but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. (9)

In "Eye and Mind", Merleau-Ponty also presents how the reflection reveals the fluidity and communality of intersubjectivity:

The mirror's phantom draws my flesh into the outer world, and at the same time the invisible of my body can invest its psychic energy in the other bodies I see. Hence my body can include elements drawn from the body of another, just as my substance passes into them; 'man is a mirror for man'. (129-130)

Like Woolf, Merleau-Ponty argues for an understanding of the self as a composite of other bodies and other selves; a process that is on-going despite the seeming fixity of

¹⁰ For more on Clarissa Dalloway's consideration of death see chapter five of this thesis (153-157).

the objective reflection of the “flat” diamond self. However, not only does man act as “a mirror for man” as Merleau-Ponty claims, but, as Woolf reveals, “woman” is a mirror for man too. Woolf presents this idea in a famous statement that she makes in “A Room of One’s Own”: “Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (37). Thus, the “perfect hostess”, who spends her days decorating her home with flowers and mending her dress, and who assembles worthy guests to reflect her husband’s social position before tending to their needs and bending to their demands, gives to her chosen guests a delightfully heightened sense of their own self-worth. In their echoing reflection, the faceless timid bells of St. Margaret’s makes the larger bells of the four-faced Big Ben all the more emphatic, mirroring the counterpoint between the hostess who renders herself invisible and her parasitic guests who use her body to feel twice as tall.

However, the guest is not the only parasite in this equation. Not only is the upper class “perfect hostess” pettily proud and insincerely unobtrusive, she is also problematically parasitic in her employment of lower class women. In her essay “The Home: Its Work and Influence” (1903), Charlotte Perkins Gilman notes how historically, “As industry developed ... women were confined more and more closely at home” (60). She continues, “later civilisations”, by which she means her turn-of-the-century contemporary moment, have let women out to play “but not to work” (60). The Great War changes the fortunes of female employment; women fill soldiers vacated roles and they take up new positions within the swelling industry of munitions. Yet the end of war and the return of the men shift female employment once more so that, whilst many women continue to work in new industries, more return to the domestic work that has been their main source of employment throughout history. In her essay, Gilman comments on the class distinction that determines where female bodies spend most of their time: “The parasitic female of the upper classes is allowed the empty freedom of association with her useless kind; but the housewife is still confined to the house” (60). The confinement of the lower class woman to the home is more troublesome than the repetition of the upper class woman’s characterisation as trifling and ineffectual. Damagingly, the upper class “useless” women are parasitic on the labour, and therefore on the bodies, of lower class women when they use servants when hosting their parties. Clarissa Dalloway’s status as a successful hostess (and the

reputation of most of the other women who play the hostess in Woolf's worlds] reveals this parasitism.

The hostess depends upon a “mystery or grand deception practiced by hostesses in Mayfair from one-thirty to two” which pretends that the food is not paid for, and the guests are not dependent upon servants to cook it and serve it to them (103). Kate McLoughlin locates this concern specifically within the modernist moment when she points out that the

party as performance, as display, as do, becomes more than ever an exercise in public relations in the modernist period, when that industry was invented. To give or go to a party is to signify information about wealth, class and status, to participate in a complex nexus of manufacture, commodification and advertising. (*The Modernist Party* 6)

The “grand deception” of the party-giving hostesses makes the women who work for those extraordinary hostesses part of the network of commodification that McLoughlin identifies. Through their labour they act as magnifying glasses for their upper-class employers, reflecting the hostess back to her guests at twice her regular size. The homes they work within may not be their own, but, in their domestic servitude, the cooks, cleaners, and servers that the hostess employs remain caught within the confines of domesticity. Faced with the insurmountable pile of dirty “plates saucepans, cullenders, frying-pans ... soup tureens, and pudding basins” which “seemed to be all on top of her” (163), Mrs. Dalloway's cook Mrs. Walker responds with apathy to the Prime Minister's presence. Her indifference to the fact that the Prime Minister will partake of her food reveals that the “grand deception” of the hostess prohibits her from glorying in such an achievement. This exposes the social inequality of early twentieth-century English society, which allowed the upper classes endless leisure at the expense of the lower classes' hard work. Therefore, in her party-giving, Mrs. Dalloway is both hostess and parasite, embodying the role of the first whilst applying the methods of the latter. An often-quoted diary entry from June 1923 reveals that Woolf's juxtaposition of these upper and the lower class women is deliberate. Writing about the composition of *The Hours*, as the novel was then called she describes wanting to “criticise the social system, & to show it at work, at its most intense” (D*VWii* 248). This diary entry leads Alex Zwerdling to suggest that Woolf “was a prosaic novelist as well as a poetic one, a satirist and social critic as well as a visionary” (69). Inspired by Mrs. Walker's mounds of dirty dishes, Woolf's declared

desire to reveal the social system at its most intense, and Zwerdling's focus on the prosaic as well as the poetic, I turn now from the glittering parade of party-giving, and consider how women host within the home when the last of the guests have left, and the flowers have crumpled and died, when the candles have all gone out, and the everyday and the habitual reigns once more.

The Habitual Hostess: The Case of Mrs. Ramsay

In my introduction to this chapter, I suggested that hosting in Woolf could be read both as an extraordinary and as a habitual bodily practice. I began with a discussion of the extraordinary hosting of party-giving because the prevalence of parties in Woolf's work commonly draws the critic's eye towards that form of hosting so beginning with the party-giving hostess allowed me to explore some of the existing criticism on Woolf's hostess. However, it is Woolf's representation of daily hosting – of the habitual use of the female body as hostess – which could prove to be the most phenomenologically compelling. Writing of daily embodiment, Merleau-Ponty comments that “our body comprises as it were two distinct layers, that of the habitual body and that of the body at this moment” (*PP* 82). He adds, “it is an inner necessity for the most integrated existence to provide itself with a habitual body” (87). Bryan Smyth explains the “bidimensionality” at work in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account of embodied existence. According to Smyth's interpretation, our “organismic nature” is composed of

a “habitual” level and an “actual” (in the sense of “current” or “present”) level. The latter is the locus of personal ipseity and reflective intentional life in general, while the former designates the deeper “prepersonal” background of that ipseity – the anonymous accretion of sedimented habitualities and variously internalized experiences that develops dynamically across time and which transforms the biological organism in enduring and intrinsic ways. (“Hero” 10)

More simply, but less precisely, the “actual” body is the body as it presents itself phenomenally, the “habitual” is all the deep-rooted information and experience that forms the foundation for that bodily representation. As Smyth argues, “body techniques” all form part of the habitual embodiment, and include “mannerisms

postural schemata, modes of comportment, speech patterns, and so on", gender, and social class ("Hero" 10). The consequence of the imbedding of these "body techniques" is that "this deep layer of embodied existence internalizes and thus comes quite literally to incarnate certain aspects of its social milieu" ("Hero" 10). Beth Preston comments that the "the centrality of the notion of habit to" Merleau-Ponty's "philosophy of the body cannot be overemphasized" (178). I would add that the importance of habit is of even weightier importance in feminist attempts to apply Merleau-Ponty's account of embodiment. Woolf presents the coming together of the "habit-body" with the "body of the moment" in Clarissa's contemplation of her reflection: catching sight of herself in a mirror, Clarissa prepares herself for her party by transforming her amorphous "habit-body" into the "dart-like; definite" diamond self of the "body at the moment" (37). Nonetheless, it is her habitual understanding of her gender and class position that governs what form the "definite" self of the party-giving will take. It is my argument here that women's "habit-bodies" socially condition them to act as habitual hostesses - offering a form of bodily hospitality that both mirrors and underpins the extraordinary hosting of party-giving.

Exploring the phenomenological specificity of habit, Beth Preston remarks that:

For Merleau-Ponty, habit occupies a middle position between the reflex, which repeats actions in a verbatim and involuntary manner under specific conditions, and explicitly formulated knowledge, which requires a voluntary decision as to whether and how it is applicable in a given situation, but which by the same token enables its possessor to figure out what to do in novel situations. Habit is neither simply involuntary nor strictly voluntary. (178)

Party-giving and party-going are the "explicitly formulated knowledges" of hosting and guesting, however, beneath this extraordinary hosting there is an often unremarked form of habitual hosting which forms a primary form of social and interpersonal engagement in daily life. Both these directed and habitual forms of hosting are apparent in Woolf's work, and the deliberate nature of the former often contrasts revealingly the un-thought (yet still conditioned) aspects of habitual hosting. To be the perfect hostess means to host perpetually, with and without explicit thought. Woolf unites extraordinary and habitual hosting in the same diary entry from May 1923 in which she describes the "despicableness" of party-giving hostesses like Ottoline Morell. She continues the entry with the comment, the "truth is people

scarcely care for each other. ... What I dislike is feeling that I'm always taking care, or being taken care of" (*DVWii* 245). Here Woolf's specific distaste for the extraordinary hostess morphs into a more general discomfiture with the very idea of bodily hosting; she finds suffocating the perpetual hospitality that marks out womanhood.

Zwerdling points out how "taking care" of others was an all-consuming imperative for the Victorian woman:

By the end of Victoria's reign the whole 'family system' had begun to seem a crushing burden that offered no space for individual freedom. For women particularly, the large Victorian family created a formidable, exhausting set of obligations. A wife's duties were not limited to her husband and the numerous children she was likely to bear but extended through the whole kinship network down to the remotest collaterals. (154)

In her essay, "Professions for Women" (1931), Woolf comments on the "exhausting obligations" that the Victorian woman faced in the home. She describes how, when she first came to write, she had to do battle with the Angel in the House.¹¹ The Angel in the House is the social model of what a woman ought to be and, like the good or "perfect" hostess, is a woman who is willing to open herself to the parasitic demands of others in order to maintain the status quo. Woolf relates how she was

intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it — in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. ... In those days — the last of Queen Victoria — every house had its Angel. (58).

The Angel in the House must suppress her own bodily desires to meet those of other bodies: she will take the least of the food or more of the draught in deference to the comfort of others. Like the extraordinary hostess, the Angel in the House must neutralize the elements of her character that mark her out as an individual; in this effacement she is as "insincere" as Mrs. Dalloway standing at the top of her stairs welcoming guests. Woolf's statement that "she never had a mind of her own" and that she "preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others" exposes just how habitual the performance of the role of the Angel in the House has become for

¹¹ The name the "Angel in the House" is taken from a popular contemporary narrative poem by Coventry Patmore in which an idealized woman, skilled in the arts of domesticity and virtue, is presented.

the Victorian woman. In this essay then, Woolf reveals how the hospitable acts of woman are not just performative and occasional (as they are in extraordinary hospitality), but can also be habitual and pervasive. In "Professions for Women", Woolf draws a line under the Angel in House, suggesting the angel's power fades with the old queen and is finally eradicated by the emergence of professional women writers. Nonetheless, a less extreme version of the Angel of the House remains within the idea of the habitual hostess. The notion of idealized, self-sacrificing femininity appears in one of Peter Walsh's many errant twentieth-century musings on the nature of womanhood. Looking at the sky and branches, symbols of a natural world readily associated with femininity, Peter:

rapidly endows them with womanhood; sees with amazement how grave they become; how majestically, as the breeze stirs them, they dispense with a dark flutter of the leaves, charity, comprehension, absolution, and then, flinging themselves suddenly aloft, confound the piety of their aspect with a wild carouse. (56)

This emphasis on the charity, comprehension, and capriciousness of idealised womanhood brings to mind Woolf's fullest description of the habitual hostess: Mrs Ramsay of *To the Lighthouse*.

Based on her own mother Julia Stephen, not only is Mrs. Ramsay the hostess of the famous boeuf-en-daube dinner party, she is also the archetypal Woolfian habitual hostess. Married to the emotionally parasitic Mr. Ramsay, and fulfilling the Victorian imperative of tirelessly tending to the sick and needy, Mrs. Ramsay habitually hosts her family and members of her community through her body. In a key scene, Mr Ramsay demands his wife provide him with sympathy and assurance of his brilliance. Unthinkingly her body sends forth its habitual hospitality to give him what he needs:

Mrs. Ramsay, who had been sitting loosely, folding her son in her arm, braced herself, and, half turning, seemed to raise herself with an effort and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force. (27)

Out of her body, Mrs. Ramsay sends forth the reassurance and confidence her husband craves, effacing herself to raise him up higher: "She did not like, even for a second, to feel finer than her husband" (28). She exhausts her bodily and mental energy to allow him to restore his own, and then "folds herself together", pulling in the "petals" of her

body that temporarily closes in complete exhaustion (28). Like Clarissa, Mrs. Ramsay considers her own reflection:

But indeed she was not jealous, only, now and then, when she made herself look in her glass, a little resentful that she had grown old, perhaps, by her own fault. (The bill for the greenhouse and all the rest of it). (72)

She sees the consequences of her role as the habitual hostess on her body in her fixed representation in the looking-glass:

When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better – her husband; his money; his books. But for her own part she would never for a single second regret her decision, evade difficulties, or slur over duties. (5)

Despite the demands of her husband, with his catalogue of possessions and requirements and his inability to help her shoulder the burden of their family, Mrs. Ramsay takes the blame for her premature ageing squarely upon her own shoulders, giving everything to her family until there is “scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by” (28). Her children recognise and reject the surrender that their mother’s perpetual habitual hosting entails. Sitting at the dinner table, her daughters Prue, Nancy, and Rose silently “sport with infidel ideas” of a life different from their mother’s: “in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other; for there was in all their minds a mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the Bank of England and the Indian Empire, of ringed fingers and lace” (5). Like Woolf who rejected the role her Victorian mother played and who claimed to kill the Angel in the House through her writing, the daughters of Mrs. Ramsay dream of a life beyond perpetual caretaking. However, the call of the habitual hostess is not so easily silenced. There is for the Ramsay girls “something ... of the essence of beauty” in their mother’s hosting actions that makes her appear “like a queen raising from the mud to wash a beggar’s dirty foot” (5). Mrs. Ramsay’s abasement of herself in the role of habitual hostess holds for her daughters an ambiguous glamour that they struggle to deny. And, further, this feminised, ideal, habitual hostess has an appeal beyond Mrs. Ramsay’s daughters.

Across the dining table from the Ramsay girls sits the artist Lily Briscoe, a female guest, who continually attempts to deflect the role of the habitual hostess. She knows that Mr. Tansley wants to join the conversation of the table and that it is up to her as a

woman to draw him in, but his misogynistic incantation that women “can’t paint, can’t write” (35/62) rings in her ears, foreclosing any desire to help him. Smilingly, she rejects the code of behaviour whose seventh article

says that on occasions of this sort it behoves the woman, whatever her own occupation might be, to go to the help of the young man opposite so that he may expose and relieve the thigh bones, the ribs, of his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself. (66)

Whatever Lily’s own feeling may be, the “code of behaviour” that governs the habitual hospitality of women decrees that she must go the man from whose rib she was biblically cast, and use her words, gestures, and emotions to allow the man opposite to assert himself. Lily succeeds in ignoring the calls of the odious Mr. Tansley’s body, but the hostess of the party is harder to ignore. In her role as the extraordinary hostess, Mrs. Ramsay casts a pregnant glance at Lily that tells her that her hostess’ “nerves are taut as fiddle strings” and that they will snap unless Lily applies “some balm to the anguish” of the hour by saying something nice to Mr. Tansley. So, “of course for the hundred and fiftieth time Lily Briscoe had to renounce the experiment” (66). She says something nice to Mr. Tansley and thereby extends the insincerity that she perceives in all relationships between men and women. Here Woolf demonstrates that not only men control the “code of behaviour” of habitual hosting; women likewise encourage other women to adopt the role of habitual hostess. The strength of social conditioning that encourages women’s habit-bodies to remain open to the parasitic demands of others is shown by the Ramsay girls’ ambivalent attraction and repulsion to the habitual hosting of their mother, and Lily Briscoe’s inability to successfully completely refuse the role for herself. Unlike the party-giving hostess, which is a singular position (albeit it one which different women take up for different parties) the habitual hostess is a mutable role which multiple women can fulfil in each situation. Through her discussion of the Angel in the House and her presentation of Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf reveals how woman is not just an occasional party-giving extraordinary hostess, but also an everyday, habitual hostess, continually involved in the process of hosting other bodies through her own body. As I mentioned in my introduction to this thesis, in the same essay that Woolf discusses the Angel in the House, she also comments on the problem of “telling the truth about my own experiences as a body” (“Professions for Women” 64). Arguably it is in her

presentation of women as habitual hostesses that she tries to “show the social system at its most intense” and to overcome the “immensely powerful” and “difficult to define obstacles” that prevent the truthful representation of woman’s habitual embodiment (“Professions” 64).

Habitual Hosting as Positive: Women as Preservers of Home

Like her extraordinary counterpart, the habitual hostess hosts at home. It is within the everyday world of the home that she uses her body to provide comfort, nurturance, and assurance, for the other bodies with whom she shares her domestic space. Defining women in relation to the home through the “code of behaviour” of habitual hosting gives a sense of fixity and permanence to the modernist idea of home, a conception of home that is being chipped away at by the socio-political facts of the age. Thus, as the “New Woman” tries to liberate herself from the home, the desire to restrain her there becomes all the more powerful. However, as Young points out in her nuanced work, home is not such a black and white space for women. It is not just the place of either oppression or of liberation. Women attach a positive value to the home that complicates their relationships with the space. Tellingly, whilst Woolf’s essay “Professions for Women” argues that women have accepted the consolation prize of the home at the expense of the world, her fiction complicates this account of home. Therefore, despite her argument for women’s emancipation through work in her non-fiction, taken as a whole, it is not possible to read Woolf’s work as divesting home of all positive value for women. Considering the difficulties that feminists face in evaluating home conceptually, Young writes:

If house and home mean the confinement of women for the sake of nourishing male projects [as Simone de Beauvoir suspected], then feminists have good reason to reject home as a value. But it is difficult even for feminists to exorcise a positive valence to the idea of home. We often look forward to going home and invite others to make themselves at home. House and home are deeply ambivalent values. (123)

This tension between home as a place of female comfort, and home as a place of female imprisonment, is reflected in Woolf’s dualistic presentation of the habitual hostess in *To the Lighthouse*. Moreover, Young’s feminist reimagining of Martin

Heidegger's phenomenology of space shows how the negative habitual hosting I discuss above could also have a positive counterpart.

Young offers one way to consider the positivity that Woolf finds in the home when she engages Heidegger's concept of "dwelling" in the hope of retrieving the concept of "home" for feminism. Building on the foundations laid by the feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray, she describes how Irigaray's work makes "explicit the maleness of Heidegger's allegedly universal ontology" (122). Young examines Heidegger's "equation of dwelling with the way of being that is human", and describes how he splits dwelling into two separate characteristics – "moments of building and preservation" (122). Despite Heidegger's stipulation that building and preservation are of equal importance, Young notes he privileges building as "the world-founding of an active subject". Additionally, she suggests that, because men are traditionally the "builders" of mankind whilst women are the "care-givers", this "privileging is male-biased" (122). Young presents an alternative positive way of thinking of female activities within the home when she works specifically against Simone de Beauvoir's conception of housework, and takes up Heidegger's term "preservation". She uses the term "preservation" to mean "the creatively human aspects of women's traditional household work" (124). She claims, preservation "makes and remakes home as a support for personal identity without accumulation, certainty, or fixity" (125); in so doing, she adds new value to the female tradition of dwelling by homemaking, value that Heidegger's focus on building negates. Her concept of preservation as a "support for identity" is commensurate with Mrs. Dalloway's idea of herself as she stands on the landing listening to the sounds of her household at work. In addition, Young argues, a

home ... is personal in a visible, spatial sense ... the home displays the things among which a person lives, that support his or her activities and reflect in matter the events and values of his or her life. (139)

Consequently, home has the ability to act as a conduit for personal revelation because "many of the things in the home, as well as the space itself, carry sedimented personal meaning as retainers of personal narrative" (Young 139). Woolf continually foregrounds homely objects that carry personal meaning: the shoes of *Jacob's Room*, and the skulls of that novel and of *To The Lighthouse*, are just three examples of the way that Young's conception of female preservation is at work within the homes that Woolf writes. Woolf also often presents the women of her texts as the curators of the

space of home: it is Mrs. Ramsay who covers the sheep's skull with her scarf; Mrs. Dalloway who buys the flowers to decorate the house for the party; Delia who pours the claret; and Miss. LaTrobe who sets the scene for the pageant. Therefore, the habitual hostess can, in a very real sense, be designated the narrator of the story of home in Woolf's work.

Nothing makes clearer the importance of the habitual hostess as the preserver of home than the destruction of home that her absence provokes. In the middle section of *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay, the habitual hostess of the novel, suddenly dies. The family forego their visits to their holiday home and it quickly falls into disrepair:

with the house empty and the doors locked and the mattresses rolled round, those stray airs, advance guards of great armies, blustered in, brushed bare boards, nibbled and fanned, met nothing in bedroom or drawing-room that wholly resisted them but only hanging that flapped, wood that creaked, the bare legs of tables, saucepans and china already furred, tarnished, cracked. (95)

In the absence of the hostess, her etymological counterpart the *hostis* – the enemy – enters the home. The vanguard of the “great armies” meets no resistance as they set about their piecemeal destruction of the home. Gone are the tablecloth and the “great brown dish” (72) of succulent beef and olives; in their place are bare wooden legs and furry, fractured china. The homely objects that “support” the activities of the home's inhabitants and that “reflect in matter the events and values” of their lives remain, but the lack of human bodies renders them insignificant:

What people had shed and left – a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes – those alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated; how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons; how once the looking-glass had held a face; had held a world hollowed out in which a figure turned, a hand flashed, the door opened, in came children rushing and tumbling; and went out again. (96)

The absence of the habitual hostess who paired shoes, buttoned blouses, and stood considering her face in the looking-glass, means the “world” which she preserved is gone; abandoned to the destructive forces of her internal opposite, the *hostis*. Derrida comments on the fact that “hospitality” “carries its own contradiction incorporated into it ... which allows it ... to be parasitized by its opposite, ‘hostility’, the undesirable guest” (3). Without the protection of the habitual hostess and the bodies of her family and their guests, undesirable guests cross the threshold and take up residence in the

home: sand and flies; toad and thistles; swallows, butterflies, and poppies; weeds and briars; rats and trees; all enter the home uninvited and disrupt the ordered preservation that the hostess previously maintained for the family. Even Mrs. McNab, who is paid to keep the enemies of sand and salt from the door, is presented as an unwelcome guest that “breaks in” and “lurches about” cleaning (99). Revealingly, she cannot prevent the destruction of the home that Mrs. Ramsay and the servants under her command kept at bay. Without the habitual hostess, the house becomes uncanny - *unheimlich* – unhomely:

This had been the nursery. Why, it was all damp in here; the plaster was falling. Whatever did they want to hang a beast’s skull there? gone mouldy too [sic]. And rats in all the attics. The rain came in. (102).

After the death of the mother, the house is a place of damp and destruction, no longer a suitable place for children. Woolf’s decision to link the destruction of the home to the absence of the habitual hostess reinforces the argument that women are the preservers of home life: the habitual hostess renders the home impregnable and keeps the family intact.

However, nature is not the only enemy that terrorises this home. On the borders of the narrative, war rages. Shells explode, ashen-ships sail by, a purplish stain of blood appears on the sea, and Andrew Ramsay is numbered amongst a group of “twenty or thirty young men ... blown up in France” (99). It is, then, not just the death of the habitual hostess that prevents the Ramsay family from returning home: war has an obvious role to play in keeping the family away. Woolf’s polemic *Three Guineas* reveals how she sees women as primary figures in preventing future war. Of her proposed “society of outsiders”, made up of the daughters of educated men, Woolf writes: “Their first duty ... would be not to fight with arms. ... Next they would refuse in the event of war to make munitions or nurse the wounded” (232). As well as refusing to use their bodies to fight and to work for war, women must refuse to habitually host the bodies of the broken soldiers by providing them with their care. Created by men, fought by men, and championed by men, war, for the pacifist Woolf, is a repellently patriarchal concern. Thinking about how war threatens the home, the nation, and national values, engages the idea of hospitality that has held such critical sway since Derrida’s work on the subject. However, alongside Woolf’s discussion of

the threat of war is an equally important description of how the home becomes unhomely when it is without the efforts of its habitual hostess.

It falls to the bodies of other surrogate habitual hostesses to resurrect the home. Motherless, the Ramsay family has a new habitual hostess in the guise of the daughter (likely Rose) who writes to Mrs. McNab to request that everything be got ready for the family's return to the home. Under this command, Mrs. McNab and her co-hostess Mrs. Bast gather their brooms and their pails and they slowly, and painfully, "stay the corruption and rot" and "rescue" the home and its objects from the oblivion that time is wreaking upon them (130). They use their bodies to sweep and mop; creaking and groaning, stooping and rising, they sing, slap, and slam until at last they banish the *hostis*, conquer the uncanny, and resurrect the homely through the acts of their bodies. In Young's terms, Woolf's description of the partial destruction of the home in the absence of the habitual hostess, and its resurrection through the work of other habitual hostesses, shows that women have a vital role to play in preserving homes. Whilst Woolf by no means suggests that to play the habitual hostess should be a woman's only imperative, her discussion of the home of *To the Lighthouse* reveals that she recognises women have an important part to play in providing care and preservation for other bodies, especially when they are relegated to that role by the same paternalistic system that generates war. The habitual hostess in Woolf then is neither a wholly negative nor a wholly positive role; it is a more nuanced concept than that simplification implies. But what of her extraordinary counterpart? Can she likewise be rescued from condemnation?

The Extraordinary Heroism of the Party-Giving Hostess

So far in this chapter, I have argued that the extraordinary hosting of party-giving rests upon a habitual form of hospitality that women perform on an everyday basis. This habitual hospitality can take negative and positive forms. Here I wish to trace the relationship between the extraordinary and the habitual in the other direction: using habitual hosting as a basis upon which to recast extraordinary hosting as heroic hosting; making the party-giving hostess a modernist heroine. This shift from the negativity of extraordinary hosting, to the positivity of heroic hosting, is

made possible by Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the hero and his presentation of the habitual foundation of embodied consciousness. As I mentioned once already, Woolf doubted the characterisation of her "perfect" extraordinary hostess Clarissa Dalloway: "It may be too stiff, too glittering and tinsely" she worried (*DVWii* 272). To write of such a domestic triviality as party-giving opens Woolf to a similar level of disapproval to that directed at her heroine. Morgan shows how Woolf was observant in discerning that "critics such as Lewis and Strachey viewed her use of domestic subject matter as evidence of her novelistic weakness" (102). Morgan claims that Woolf "anticipates these impending criticisms when she has Clarissa worry that her husband and Peter Walsh 'criticized her very unfairly, laughed at her very unjustly, for her parties' (183)" (102). Half way through the novel Clarissa imagines Peter asking a question that invokes the position of the reader: "what's the sense of your parties?" (120). Against the real and imagined trivialising charges of Peter Walsh, Sally Seton, and Lady Colefax, the foreseen criticism of Lewis and Strachey, the questions of the reader, and her own fears over Mrs. Dalloway's "tinsely" character, Woolf has Clarissa simply answer that she "did think it mattered, her party" (165). Reading Woolf's representation of party-giving against discourses on heroism allows me to claim that one way in which Mrs. Dalloway's party, and others like it, matter, is that party-giving is a form of female heroism that has the ability to generate social unification. Before establishing the party-giving hostess as a heroine, it is first necessary to outline what I mean when I use the term "heroic".

Heroism may seem to be antithetical to the habituality and everydayness that is the crux of phenomenological engagement. Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty was explicitly interested in the nature of the hero. In "Heroism and History in Merleau-Ponty's *Existential Phenomenology*", Bryan Smyth points out that Merleau-Ponty concludes both *Phenomenology of Perception* and his collection of essays *Sense and Non-Sense* with discussions of heroism. Smyth argues that both discussions of heroism receive "negligible scholarly attention" ("Heroism" 168); his own work goes some way to redressing this oversight. *Sense and Non-Sense* is a collection of essays; all bar one of which are first published in the mid-1940s in Merleau-Ponty and Sartre's journal *Les temps modernes*. The essay that concludes the collection, "Man, the Hero", was written especially for *Sense and Non-Sense* (189), and was published with the

collection in 1948.¹² Smyth discusses the “original intentions” behind the essay’s production, claiming they have “to do with Merleau-Ponty’s efforts to rethink Marxist praxis on the basis of an existential attitude *vis-à-vis* post-Hegelian philosophy of history” (“Heroism” 168). Smyth concludes his discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s essay with an exploration of the “contemporary hero” that Merleau-Ponty suggests at the end of the paper. In a later, more recent essay, Smyth takes up the concept of the “contemporary hero” in Merleau-Ponty once again, reading it against the postmodern idea of heroism science. It is Merleau-Ponty’s essay, and Smyth’s later engagement with Merleau-Pontian heroism, that forms the nexus of the phenomenological discussion of heroism offered in this chapter. Merleau-Ponty opens “Man, the Hero” with the statement:

There are several indications, at least in the world of letters, of a return to peace. Heroes are fading away, and protests, which are cautious today but tomorrow will be bold, are being raised against ‘heroic morality’.
(*SNS* 182)

Against the contemporary suspicion of heroic morality, Merleau-Ponty’s motivation is a desire to know “what there is behind this grand word”: hero (182).

Merleau-Ponty is not alone in his contemporary interest in what it might mean to be a hero. Joseph Campbell’s seminal text on heroism, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, is published just a year after Merleau-Ponty’s collection in 1949. Campbell’s book is an astonishing critical and public success: in the reparative and reconciliatory period immediately following the Second World War, the hero, who was such a feature of wartime propaganda, is a ripe subject for public exploration.¹³ In different ways, Campbell and Merleau-Ponty both trace historical representations of the hero to contemporary conceptions of heroism. Inspired by psychoanalytic criticism, Campbell provides a historical overview of global mythology to argue that tales of heroism fit within a common structure, a structure he terms the “monomyth”:

A hero ventures forth from the world of the common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from their mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (30)

¹² The essay was first published under the title “Le Culte du héros” [“Hero Worship”] in the “pro-PCF (Communist Party of France) weekly *action* [sic] in February 1946 (Smyth 169). Smyth contends, “the key reason why Merleau-Ponty sent his essay on heroism to action was because it formed a moment in his on-going political dialogue with the milieu of Marxist thinkers sympathetic to existentialism” (169).

¹³ Published in a new edition in 2008, Campbell’s text continues to appeal to a vast number of readers.

One modernist description of the monomyth that is often referred to in discussions of modernist heroism is James Joyce's presentation of Leopold Bloom's wandering in *Ulysses*. Written against the intertext of one of the most famous epic tales of heroism – Homer's *The Odyssey* – *Ulysses* is an obvious port of call in the search for modernist heroes. However, as many critics have commented, Bloom is neither a typical nor a traditional epic hero. In fact, Joyce wishes

to make Bloom 'heroic' in a special and obviously untraditional sense – living in a world in which traditional heroism is no longer possible, as the ironic parallel to Homer would suggest, Bloom becomes, by the curious logic of reduction and substitution as well as through his largeness of soul, the hero by default, that is, the only possible hero, the hero of the commonplace. (Kuehn 211)

No longer epic but commonplace, not extraordinary but ordinary, Bloom is a new kind of hero suited to the contemporary moment in which he is written. The difference between Bloom and his heroic ancestors leads some critics to term him an "anti-hero":

Modern anti-heroes are lacking in largeness, grace, power, and social success. When conditions of crisis outside were confirmed, modernist writers took their anti-heroes to the domestic realm or to the privacy of the mind. (Neimneh 77)

In place of the exterior, global wanderings of his epic forefather, Bloom's adventure is interior and domestic.

Merleau-Ponty too comments on the everydayness of the modern hero. As in Campbell's genealogical evaluation of myth, Merleau-Ponty argues that the actions of Christian saints and heroes of past revolutions "unite us with others, our present with our past" and bestow meaning on a confused world ("Man" 187). He praises faith but warns that this "resource is not available to the men of today. The contemporary hero is not Lucifer; he is not even Prometheus; he is man" ("Man" 187). The traditional idea of male heroism – the hero as the man who epically battles other men, monsters, and even divinities – is not possible in a world so recently rent by a senseless war that tore real bodies apart and denuded the battlefield of its ambiguous appeal and glamour. In the modernist period, war was too real to be truly heroic, so the common man becomes a hero instead. However, whilst Bloom may be innovatively, progressively heroic, or even anti-heroic, because his heroism takes place in the commonplace

everyday, female heroism has historically been confined to the “domestic realm”.¹⁴ The form of heroism open to men in myth and legends is only really open to female divinities. The earthly woman must enact a different form of heroism. In opposition to the heroic Odysseus who wanders, the heroic Penelope remains. Neither the hunter nor the warrior, nor the goddess, she is the hostess: the protector of hearth and home who keeps the suitors at bay, defends her own (and, therefore, Odysseus’) honour, and fulfils the traditionally heroic preservation of life. For women, the habitual and the heroic are, as I hope to prove here, not as antithetical as they are in traditional depictions of male heroism: home has long been the ground of female heroics. Rather than the contemporary hero being just a “man”, as Merleau-Ponty contends, the contemporary hero can also be a woman in the role of the party-giving hostess.

Like Merleau-Ponty, Campbell, and other critics who go in search of heroes, I turn to fiction to evidence my claims of female heroism through hosting. Reading *Mrs Dalloway* against Campbell’s monomyth reveals how the experience of party-giving that Woolf’s novel describes can fit into the skeleton structure of the heroic journey that Campbell provides. The “perfect hostess”, Clarissa, like other heroes, sets out on a journey of discovery and acquisition: along the way she has to cover a great distance (her physical wandering is limited, but she mentally travels back through both her own and through wider human history); she tames a beast (the gold-rigged lion the prime minister); and wins out over fabulous forces (she faces Septimus’ actual death and her own imagined demise); and she triumphantly returns to a party (the typically festive end to a heroic tale of wandering) with the power to unite other people. This conclusion locates Clarissa’s actions specifically within what Campbell determines the orientation of the “modern hero-task” to be. He claims there has been

a prodigious transfer of the focal point of human wonder. Not the animal world, not the plant world, not the miracles of the spheres, but man himself is now the crucial mystery. Man is that alien presence with whom the ego is to be crucified and resurrected, and in whose image society is to be reformed ... It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse. (390-1)

Thus, Clarissa may not be heroic in the strictly traditional sense, but her story does have the heroic elements of the monomyth. She is a hero for the new age that suits Campbell’s demands that the contemporary hero deal not with the divine, but with

¹⁴ I use the term “female heroism” here because, tellingly, there is no linguistic female equivalent to “heroism”.

the human, and that modern day heroes must play a role in the reunification of society. Olivia Efthimiou claims, “different historical and cultural periods need and give rise to specific types of heroes” (147). It is my argument here that the heroic hostess, in her ability to bring people together, is just the type of heroine that twentieth-century society requires. It is the need for heroines like her that accounts for the prolific rise of the professional hostess both in art and in life. Moreover, Efthimiou’s work combines with that of Smyth to allow for a phenomenological reading of the hostess as heroine. Their shared project is eminently suitable to my desire to show the interrelatedness of heroic and habitual hosting because it grounds “heroism ... in a phenomenological account of embodied existence”, specifically, Merleau-Ponty’s account of “actual” and “habitual” embodied existence (Smyth “Hero” 17).

“Crucially, for Merleau-Ponty *‘the locus of heroic action is the habitual body’*” (Smyth [177]; qtd. in Efthimiou 142). Therefore, to claim that party-giving is heroic and that everyday caregiving is habitual is not to denude either action of the potential for heroism or habituality: the exact reverse is true – both forms have the potential to be habitual and to be heroic precisely because the heroic is grounded in the habitual. Efthimiou claims the recent “resurgence of the intellectual and empirical pursuit of heroism”, of which her own field “heroism science” is a key part, “end[s] the monopoly of myth, fiction, and popular culture on the study of heroism” (139). Nonetheless, she argues that the role of the body has been “sidelined” in current psychosocial research into heroism. In response to this elision, she argues for an “embodiment of heroism thesis”, whereby “heroism is defined as a distinct state of embodied consciousness accessible to all human agents in everyday lived experience” (Efthimiou 139). Here I take Efthimiou and Smyth’s phenomenological accounts of embodied heroism and apply them to fiction, one of the traditional arenas of heroic action, to support my claim that hosting involves determinedly heroic actions. Efthimiou suggests that the “complexity of the phenomenon [of heroism] is enhanced by gender dimensions” (147), but she does not offer an extended account of how gender complicates the already complicated understanding of heroism. Meanwhile, Smyth argues:

the attribution of heroic status to an action hinges on a multitude of cultural, historical, and political variables, and there is no single

‘objective’ account – it is well known that what is lauded as heroism in one context may be vilified in another. (Smyth “Hero” 17)

Efthimiou covers similar ground when she argues “there is *never* a complete absence of heroism, but rather low, middle or peak expressions” (158). The traditional understanding of heroism as an epic male attribute overlooks the possibility for more commonplace heroism in female actions. Here I laud the heroism of hosting precisely as a way to give an account of how gender can be at play in embodied heroism.

Strengthening a distinction that Merleau-Ponty begins to set out, Smyth suggests that one of the reasons for the complexities and ambiguities at work in the concept of heroism is the conflation of heroism with saintliness. In Smyth’s contention, saintliness is conferred when someone has the ability to act in another way, but makes the deliberate moral decision not to; conversely, heroic action is where a person undertakes a potentially no less worthy act, but does so because they are unable to do otherwise. Smyth argues,

phenomenological analysis could reveal many everyday actions as instantiating one or the other in much subtler but nonetheless real ways. Concerning heroism specifically, this is what enables us to see it as at once both extraordinary and yet still ordinary. (“Hero” 17)

The “ordinary” acts of care-giving and party-giving take on heroic potential when read through the lens of phenomenological analysis. Self-reporting is key to whether Smyth determines a person’s actions to be saintly or heroic; whether they feel that they have a choice to act otherwise or not is the defining feature between the two appellations. Turning to Woolf’s literary representations of hosting, it quickly becomes clear that Woolf’s party-giving hostesses fall into the heroic, not the saintly, category. “In an 1988 interview Campbell defined a hero as ‘someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself’” (Efthimiou 147). Mrs. Ramsay, who hosts the needs of others until only a “shell” of herself remains, fulfils this heroic definition. However, she has not sacrificed herself to others in the way that this statement might imply. Smyth outlines the self-sacrifice involved in saintliness: the saintly person is one who chooses to follow a particular path when others are open to them. Here we might be reminded of the self-sacrificing Angel in the House who deliberately takes the chicken leg, and determinedly sits in the draft. The heroic hostess is similar to, but not identical with, this idealised representation of femininity

because she does not feel that another choice of action is open to her. Her actions are motivated by “a kind of impersonal or anonymous necessity”: an “existential incapacity to do otherwise in the circumstances” (Smyth “Hero” 16/13). This heroic motivation is at work in Mrs. Ramsay’s actions as she hosts her dinner party. At the table she complains to herself:

Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. *And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her.* Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for *if she did not do it nobody would do it*, and so, giving herself a little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating as the watch begins ticking – one, two, three, one, two, three. And so on and so on. (60, emphasis added)

Mrs. Ramsay does not undertake the emotional labour of “merging” her guests because of a self-sacrificing desire to do the right thing: she does it because she feels as though she has no other option. The stagnant men and the other guests cannot be counted on so it falls to the female hostess to activate the habitual action – “the old familiar pulse” – of hosting through her body. “[H]eroic action is driven primarily by the concrete sociohistorical factors that shape our embodied coexistence, rather than by the exceptional negativity of personal self-sacrifice” (Smyth “Hero” 18). Therefore in contrast to the self-sacrificing Angel in the House, Mrs. Ramsay does not willingly make the moral choice to sacrifice herself. Her family and guests have the ability to ignore the need to merge the guests together, but Mrs. Ramsay has an existential inability to reject the position of unifier because she fundamentally believes that unifying other people is a woman’s role. It is this quality of being unable to refuse that lends her actions their heroic feeling.

By locating heroic action within the habitual dimension of embodiment, Smyth intimates that the “existential incapacity” he views as primary for heroic action is a product of a person’s social and historical context. As discussed already, the habitual dimension of embodiment is determined by the social expectations of how you will perform according to the social expectations you face, expectations that explicitly include gender and class. Mrs. Ramsay’s habitual embodiment provokes her heroic action: everything she has learned consciously and unconsciously about what it means to be a woman of her familial and social position coalesce to mean that she is existentially incapable of refusing the call to host. In that sense, her actions are truly

heroic because she lacks the capacity to do otherwise. That Smyth should locate the heroic within habitual embodiment is absolutely central to my argument that party-giving is a heightened expression of daily hosting. Both forms of hosting have elements of heroism to them in that women who feel incapable of acting otherwise complete them; however, in the case of party-giving, traditional aspects of heroic story-telling are also present and it is this combination that confers the title of heroic hosting specifically upon the party-giver in this study.

The example of Clarissa Dalloway makes the heroic potential of party-giving even more apparent. Efthimiou provides a definition of heroism against which to read Clarissa's party-giving:

Heroism is the ultimate journey inwards; the prototypical definition of a hero is arguably the figure that is faced with the deepest and darkest conditions who should, by all accounts, be doomed to fail. Yet they somehow rise up despite all odds and return (or are "resurrected" in transcendental terms); the very definition of resilience requires (a) adversity and (b) the capacity to return from it. (152)

Taking this definition apart into its constituent stages, the first thing that is apparent is that the interior, rather than the exterior, journey is paramount. As I claimed when mapping Clarissa's experience against Campbell's monomyth, Clarissa's internal journey over the novel spans time and space. Her interior struggle intensifies as she hosts her party and fears that the party will not be a success:

Oh dear, it was going to be a failure; a complete failure, Clarissa felt it in her bones as dear old Lord Lexham stood there apologising for his wife who had caught cold at the Buckingham Palace garden party. She could see Peter out of the tail of her eye, criticising her, there, in that corner. Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow! Burn her to cinders! Better anything, better brandish one's torch and hurl it to earth than taper and dwindle away like some Ellie Henderson! (164)

Faced with the potential failure of her party and with the resulting criticism, a defiant resilient Clarissa heroically faces adversity; mentally climbing mountains, facing fire and brandishing her torch, she replicates the physical actions of her epic, male forerunners. Refusing to "dwindle away", Clarissa wants the glory that successful hosting can bestow upon her. Her questioning of "why" she continues to run the gauntlet of hosting reveals that her actions are heroic not saintly; like Mrs. Ramsay she sees no other existential possibility – she would rather "burn to cinders" than abandon

her hosting. As she often does, Woolf teeters on satire here, but beneath the hyperbolic exaggeration that pokes fun at the hostess lies the absolute seriousness of party-giving for Clarissa: “She did think it mattered, her party” (164). Clarissa claims that “any explosion, and horror was better” than the failure of the guests to merge together. Suddenly, there is a turn in the heroine’s fortunes and success appears possible once more:

The curtains with its flight of birds of Paradise blew out again. And Clarissa saw – she saw Ralph Lyon beat it back, and go on talking. So it wasn’t a failure after all! It was going to be all right now – her party. It had begun. It had started. But it was still touch and go. She must stand there for the present. People seemed to come in a rush ... they went on into the rooms; into something now, not nothing, since Ralph Lyon had beat back the curtain. (167-8)

The party’s potential success seems within grasp but Clarissa, like all battle-scarred heroes, is wary to claim the victory before the final blow has fallen. On her return journey from the brink of disaster, she remains cautious. And rightly so: pages later, a body plunges, and death comes to Clarissa’s party. Like the epic hero ready to fall on his sword at the battle of defeat, Clarissa takes upon herself the condemnation of Septimus’ death and the subsequent failure of the party:

Somehow it was her disaster – her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and despair here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress. She had schemed; she had pilfered. She was never wholly admirable. She had wanted success, – Lady Bexborough and the rest of it. (183)

The classic heroic failing of hubris is held up as the cause of Clarissa’s disaster: her vanity desires success and causes her to “scheme” and “pilfer”, this opens her to the scorn and judgement of others. However, just as in the classical heroic myths, crisis is averted at the last moment; the hostess swerves danger, and Clarissa returns from the edge of failure:

Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room. (184)

It is only with her acknowledgement of the death of Septimus that Clarissa’s resurrection and return is made possible. Having begun the novel with a rumination

on her youthful experience, Clarissa undergoes her trial by hosting, and ends up where she started, figuratively back at Bourton with Sally and Peter: “For there she was” (193). The “deep, dark conditions” that Clarissa Dalloway encounters pale in comparison to that of her heroic forerunners – she battles no monsters and endures no extended bodily hardship. However, she does undergo an analogous “inward journey” that matches the external journey her heroic forerunners undertake and, further, resurrection rewards her endurance, just as Efthimiou demands.¹⁵

Merleau-Ponty offers an example of heroic action that helps strengthen my claim that Clarissa Dalloway’s hosting is heroic. He describes the French writer, aristocrat, and war pilot, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s work, *Pilote de guerre*, in which Saint-Exupéry details his flights over occupied France in 1940. Merleau-Ponty holds up Saint-Exupéry’s actions as an example of contemporary heroism:

Saint-Exupéry plunges into his mission because it is an intimate part of himself, the consequence of his thoughts, wishes and decisions, because he would be nothing if he were to back out. He recovers his own being to the extent to which he runs into danger. Over Arras, in the fire of the anti-aircraft guns, when every second of continuing life is as miraculous as a birth, he feels invulnerable because he is *in* things at last; he has left his inner nothingness behind, and death, if it comes, will reach him right in the thick of the world. (“Man” 185)¹⁶

Clarissa Dalloway experiences a similar experience to Saint-Exupéry’s life and death revealing flight in her hosting of her party. Although her life is not threatened in the literal sense that Saint-Exupéry’s life is, she too is completed by her actions; she too fears she “would be nothing” without her party. She, likewise, puts herself in a position in which she can be attacked and feels the danger of expiration as she anxiously observes her party, waiting for the unification to occur. Ralph beats the curtain back, Septimus dies, and Clarissa contemplates it all in her little room. Leaving her “nothingness behind”, she comes to a full acceptance of death and life, as

¹⁵ Clarissa’s achievements pale further when compared with the horrific experiences of the Holocaust survivors of Smyth’s account and the witnesses of the September 11th terror attacks that Efthimiou discusses. Nonetheless, as I will show, the post-war context of Clarissa’s party-giving is essential to my understanding of her actions as heroic.

¹⁶ Bryan Smyth uses Merleau-Ponty’s description of Saint-Exupéry’s heroic war experience to create his own distinction between saintly and heroic action. His anchoring of that distinction in Merleau-Ponty’s bidimensional understanding of embodiment is central to the claims that I wish to make for hosting as a form of embodied heroism. For further discussions of Merleau-Ponty’s engagement with Saint-Exupéry, see Efthimiou, Olivia. “The Hero Organism: Advancing the Embodiment of Heroism Thesis in the Twenty-First Century”. *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*. Ed. Scott T. Allison, George R. Goethals, and Roderick M. Kramer. New York; London: Routledge, 2017. 139 – 162; and Smyth, Bryan. “Heroism and history in Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology”. *Continental Philosophy Review* 43.2 (2010): 167-191; and Smyth, “Hero Versus Saint: Considerations from the Phenomenology of Embodiment” *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* (2017): 1-22.

Merleau-Ponty intimates Saint-Exupéry does, and enters into the “thick of the world”: “For there she was”.

It may seem unforgivably trivialising to compare party-giving to the actions of a soldier at war. Nevertheless, it is key to my understanding of Clarissa’s heroics that her party-giving is seen in the context of the post-war social fragmentation that Woolf is careful to set out as a pressing background to Clarissa’s party. Clarissa’s heroic party-giving attains such importance precisely because it reacts to and resolves social fragmentation. Efthimiou claims that “the hero’s journey is, in essence, a regenerative and restorative cycle” (151). Efthimiou locates this restoration in the personal, whilst Merleau-Ponty sees the restorative potential of the hero operating on a grander scale of interrelated people. Clarissa Dalloway’s heroics are individually restorative – she returns to the success of her party having healed some of the wounds of her past experience – and publically restorative – as well as rebuilding a sense of community, her party offers the chance for laughter and for healing in an age where the experience of war has bred in all people “a well of tears” (9). Efthimiou argues via Smyth (who is himself working out of Merleau-Ponty’s text) that the contemporary hero “alleviates the malaise” of the human condition of living as both being-in-itself and being-for-itself (150):

The key component that activates heroism and this crucial opportunity for healing, action and personal growth, is crisis or struggle. It is the premise of the embodiment of heroism thesis that the deeper the suffering and crisis, the deeper the potential for transformation and change. (Efthimiou 150)

A personal and a national crisis motivate Clarissa’s party-giving. Her parties “matter” to her because they allow her to bring people together for her own class-orientated purposes, but they are also part of a wider social desire to recreate communities after war:

Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together, so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom? (120)

Clarissa’s body acts as the conduit between the people in South Kensington, Bayswater, and Mayfair. It is because Clarissa brings them together that the connection is made; her offering is to create networks that enrich other people’s lives

as well as her own. Like Mrs. Ramsay, Clarissa feels existentially compelled to create the unifications of other people: her “continuous feeling” of the existence of other people motivates her desire to unite them. Hosting is, then, a communal and not a personal act, and Clarissa offers her hosting as a gift to her guests, placing herself at the mercy of a slippery hospitable interchange by opening herself up to their otherness.

Lucio Ruotolo claims that Clarissa

journeys out of subjectivity into a richer experience of social relationship. For whether it be an old lady moving about in the window across the street, or the guests at her own party, or her former fiancé, or her reserved husband, Clarissa by virtue of her dis-engagement sees herself increasingly in relationship to a variety of human intentions. (176-177)

Now, it is precisely the less subjective, the less personal, nature of the hostess, which was earlier derided, that enables Clarissa to engage in richer intersubjectivity. In the act of hosting she becomes “something not herself” and has the feeling that

every one was unreal in one way; much more real in another. It was, she thought, partly their clothes, partly being taken out of their ordinary ways, partly the background, it was possible to say things you couldn't say anyhow else, things that needed an effort; possible to go much deeper. (168)

Like the phenomenological epoché that destabilises the natural attitude and reveals things to be other than we commonly think them, it is the effect of Clarissa's heroic party-giving that people are able to go beyond the natural attitude of their “ordinary ways” and to go “much deeper” to the “real things beneath the show”. In her short “party text”, “A Summing Up”, Woolf pays a further tribute to the heroic hostess' ability to unite people:

This, she thought, is the greatest of marvels; the supreme achievement of the human race ... and she thought of the dry, thick, well-built house, stored with valuables, humming with people coming close to each other, exchanging their views, stimulating each other. And Clarissa Dalloway had made it open in the wastes of the night ... (13)

Here the male achievements of construction and commerce, the large house loaded with treasures, is secondary to the human network that Clarissa Dalloway, the heroic hostess, has brought into being. Her intersubjective creation may be less stable and permanent than the hosting environment in which it occurs, and more

subject to the whims of the moment than the established disciplines of architecture and economics, but it is that which Woolf characteristically chooses to designate “the supreme achievement of the human race”, over and against the patriarchal value system of money and monuments. Unlike the solid well-built house, that which the hostess creates is fleeting, built in moments not in mortar. But, for all its evanescent ephemerality, all its potential banality, Woolf privileges the work of the hostess as something which unites and combines people, creating and cementing intimacies and experiences that have genuine human value and that offer the ability to sustain a truly subjective understanding of humankind. Experience, intimacy, and empathy, are the preferred currency of this “greatest of marvels”, and Clarissa Dalloway is the bell-ringer of the exchange.

Efthimiou claims that the heroic process “can be a deeply personal experience that takes place in the darkest, most quiet corners of life, and has little or no impact on other people” (147). She continues, “Does this make the act any less heroic?” (147) My answer would be that it does not. Woolf sends back the same response in her suggestion that Clarissa “did think it mattered, her parties”. The description that Woolf gives of the guest’s reaction to the offering of the hostess in “Am I a Snob?” confirms this suggestion. Writing of her attempts to convey her gratitude to Lady Sybil for her party-giving, Woolf lists all the leonine people that she has met at Lady Colefax’s parties. A pleased Sybil replies: “That’s what I’ve wanted – that the people I like should meet the people I like. That’s what I tried to do –” (76). Although Woolf admits that she has “never much enjoyed meeting other writers”, she still claims to feel “very grateful” to Sybil and acknowledges that the professional heroic hostess has “worked very hard; it had been a great achievement in its way” (76). In the same essay she claims to have replied to Sybil’s statement, “Oh how I long to be a writer!” with the words, “Oh Sybil, if only I could be [a] great hostess like you” (70). Despite the overall mocking tone of the piece, Bryony Randall suggests that we cannot “discount a seriousness coexisting with this mockery” in Woolf’s proclaimed longing to be a hostess (106-7). Randall also alerts us to the fact that the party consciousness that so fascinates Woolf is specifically “Sybil’s [Colefax’s] consciousness” and that, as Woolf writes in her diary, “You must not break it. It is something real” (Randall 107). The claim that heroic hosting is “real” exposes why Woolf would fear that she has trivialised the act of party-giving

through her rendering of the heroic hostess as the worryingly “tinselly” Clarissa”. Sybil, Clarissa, Mrs. Ramsay and all her other heroic hostesses certainly have their flaws, and Woolf does not shy away from revealing them, but in their intersubjective creations that shake the natural attitude and allow people to go deeper and to forge new connections they have their value too.

Revealing why hosting a network of lived bodies “matters” in the contemporary moment is a primary aim throughout Woolf’s writing on the incarnate party consciousness. Efthimiou points out that this “grounding of the hero in the critical relationship between suffering and healing, or crisis and order, is clearly not unique to our times” (151). Instead, as she argues via Merleau-Ponty, “the contemporary hero is in a distinct position due to the heightened diversity of our historical period” (151). The contemporary hero, according to Merleau-Ponty

is not sceptical, dilettantish, or decadent; he has simply experienced chance, disorder, and failure .. He lives at a time when duties and tasks are unclear ... Never before have men had such good evidence that the course of events is full of twists and turns, that much is asked of daring and that they are alone in the world and before one another. But sometimes – in love, in action – a harmony is created among them and events respond to their will. Sometimes there is that flash of fire, that streak of lightning, that moment of victory, or, as Hemingway’s Maria says, that *gloria* which in its brilliance blots out everything else. (“Man” 186)

Clarissa’s party offers one brief flash of fire, one fleeting experience of *gloria* that counters the chance, the disorder and the failure of modern life to offer a form of “harmony” through the unification of people. It is an offering that in its domestic, private sphere is no less important, or less heroic, than the grander heroics that play out on a national scale. Clarissa fights not against other people, but alongside them, banding people into comrades in arms, creating a cohesion that offers sanctity and hope in the inherently disjointed, disordered modern experience. Yet the mutable temporality of Woolf’s novel, the shift between the past and the present and the sense of an impending, unknown future means that the reader is aware that the creation Clarissa molds in that instant is not stable. In order to keep her evanescent mist of hosting alive, Clarissa must continue to bring people together, must continue to create and to offer against all of the forces - social, historical, temporal, and existential - that would take the power to create away from her. The title of the “perfect hostess”

implies a fixity that the novel derides; Clarissa Dalloway is, at best, and at the height of the party, heroic in hosting.

In this first chapter, I have striven to complicate the singular idea of the “perfect” modernist hostess, breaking modernist hosting into extraordinary, habitual and heroic hosting. I began with the environment of the party, before moving to a consideration of the hostess as party-giver. In this primary discussion hosting appeared as an extraordinary, in the sense of unusual, but infinitely trivial and negative act. I then related that extraordinary form of hosting to a more ordinary form of hosting, arguing that women are socially conditioned to use their bodies to offer habitual hosting to the needs of others. Having described the negative representation of woman as habitual hostess, I set about diversifying the argument, using Young’s phenomenology of home and space to show how the habitual hostess acts as a positive preserver of home. I took my argument further by suggesting that the extraordinary hosting of party-giving is actually rooted in habituality and that it can, therefore, take on heroic forms. Via Efthimiou and Smyth’s judicious application of Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of heroism to his presentation of the bidimensionality of embodiment, I argued that the party-giving hostess is not saintly but heroic. Her heroism appears in domestic settings but her journey, nonetheless, matches the monomyth of heroic action that Campbell outlines. Reading the party-giving hostess as the heroic hostess allows for a positive understanding of her actions as a means towards social reunification and harmony: a truly contemporary heroism. In the following chapters, I extend the dualistic representation of the hostess – part habitual, part heroic sometimes negative, often positive – that I have set out here by looking at how women are encouraged to play the hostess in different ways through the developmental stages of their lives. Looking first at childhood, in the next chapter I argue that girls first learn the roles of hostess through the structure of the childhood home.

Chapter Two

Hosting is Child's Play

An Incomparable Childhood

Childhood is addressed in modern literature and art, as well as phenomenological study ... because it is also recognized as valuable in itself, as a stratum of human existence and experience that, long neglected or merely idealized by philosophy and classical and romantic literature, demands to be addressed as it is or was lived. (Anna Gosetti-Ferencei 42)

Christopher McCann claims that Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is "designed to teach us to see, to relearn what perception means *against* the falsification that our mental constructions impose" (183). He further states that in order to "unlearn" these constructions, or structures, we must "become once again the child we once were" (183). In this chapter, I look to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's and Virginia Woolf's discussions of childhood to see where the social construction of hosting is first learned. Hosting is seen in this study as a structure of human engagement that derives out of our shared primary experience of being hosted within the mother's body as a syncretic being, and is then transformed by the experience of being hosted alongside others within the childhood home as a nascent self. My key focus here is on how the early socialisation of children imposes the "mental constructions" of gender and class and how these combine to encourage young girls to begin to adopt the behaviour of the habitual hostess that we saw at play in the last chapter.

Woolf and Merleau-Ponty both describe childhood extensively. Inspired by Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget, Merleau-Ponty subscribed to a developmental understanding of child psychology. Between the years 1949 and 1952, he delivered a series of lectures at the Sorbonne, where he was the chair of psychology and pedagogy. Formed around eight central themes, his dense and wide-ranging lectures explored many facets of child development by engaging with psychological, epistemological, and anthropological theorists. Talia Welsh's English translation of all eight lectures, *Child Psychology and Pedagogy: The Sorbonne Lectures 1949-1952* reveals to English audiences the true breadth of Merleau-Ponty's endeavour in the

lectures.¹⁷ The lectures are key to my reading of childhood development as they describe how Merleau-Ponty sees children relating to their own lived bodies and to the bodies of others in early and then late childhood. This discussion of children's lived bodies helps to ground the claims I make in this study for how adult lived bodies come to act in the way that they do.

Woolf's engagement with childhood is similarly broad. Her sister, the painter Vanessa Bell, claims "any real account of childhood would necessarily be long, for how much happens in an hour or a day of a child's life, and what changes come in a year!" ("Virginia's Childhood" 3). For Woolf the account is indeed long, traversing her fiction and non-fiction, her public and private writing, her own experience and her artistic creations. Despite this fact, and allowing for the almost incredible amount of scholarship available on Woolf, her fictional treatment of children and childhood are widely understudied. In order to address this oversight, here I focus on Woolf's descriptions of her own childhood in "A Sketch of the Past" as well as her fictional descriptions of childhood in the novel *The Waves* and, more briefly, *To the Lighthouse*.

If "the classic idea of phenomenology" is, as Gosetti-Ferencei contends, "as a philosophy of beginnings" (41) then looking to Woolf and Merleau-Ponty's discussions of childhood should prove fruitful. Reading their accounts of childhood together reveals some striking similarities. Both subscribe to a pre-dualistic, pre-subjective account of early childhood and both see this period as coming to an end with the awareness that the personal body is separate from other bodies. In this early stage it is not possible to host another because of the lack of understanding of the other's separateness from them self. Woolf's and Merleau-Ponty's presentations of the primary perception of the world as undifferentiated and uncategorised are remarkably alike. In the title of her 2013 monograph, Welsh makes the bold claim that children are "natural phenomenologists".¹⁸ This claim is founded on the idea that children's undifferentiated, uncategorised, experience is akin to the primary pre-objective ground that phenomenology privileges. Reading Woolf's fictional and autobiographical work against Merleau-Ponty's lectures reveals that Woolf prefigures

¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty did not write the lectures out as a formal work; his students recorded the lectures in note form, Merleau-Ponty then reviewed and approved the notes, and they were then serialized in "the *Bulletin de psychologie* (formerly called *Bulletin du Groupe d'études de psychologie de l'université de Paris*) every few weeks from 1949 to 1952" (Welsh CPP ix). Some lectures have appeared in English but Welsh's 2010 translation is the first to comprehensively translate all the lectures into English.

¹⁸ Welsh, Talia. *The Child as Natural Phenomenologist: Primal and Primary Experience in Merleau-Ponty's Psychology*. Evanston, I.L.: Northwestern University Press, 2013.

much of what Merleau-Ponty will later write on the subject. In the first half of this chapter, I discuss Merleau-Ponty and Woolf's early conceptions of the "pre-hosting" stage of childhood and describe how both present the birth of subjectivity and the attainment of an understanding of "lived" bodies as separate. In the second half, I return to my focus on situations and hosting. I again engage the home environment to show how the childhood home acts as a form of social instruction for children. I argue that the childhood home helps to educate children about class and gender roles and therefore, that it aids in the production of girls as habitual and heroic hostesses.

In general, modernism is not short of autobiographical representations of childhood. Writing in her journal in 1920, Katherine Mansfield describes the current "rage for confession, autobiography, especially for memories of earliest childhood" (205). James Joyce's portrayal of his nascent self in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a famous example of a modernist exploration of early experiences that is motivated by the autobiographical or semi-autobiographical standpoint that Mansfield highlights. The fervour to look back to past experiences is partly motivated by a desire to explain contemporary circumstances; we can work out where we are more easily if we know where we have already been. The idea that the adult present has its roots in the childhood past is one of Sigmund Freud's great contributions to twentieth-century thought. Exploring child psychology at the mid-century, Maurice Merleau-Ponty found much to praise in Freud's conception of development. He celebrated the "psychoanalyst's hermeneutic musing ... which looks in the past for the meaning of the future and in the future for the meaning of the past" claiming that this understanding is suited to the "circular movement of our lives" (CD 25). Despite publishing Freud's work through the Hogarth Press, Woolf claimed not to have read Freud until the late 1930s. Whether this is true or not, it is clear that Woolf shares Freud's understanding that childhood is the foundation of all adult existence. Woolf reveals her belief that the present is founded on the past when she writes of a childhood experience in Talland House, her family's summer holiday home in St. Ives, in "A Sketch of the Past":

If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that fills and fills and fills – then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St. Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind. It is of hearing the blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing this splash and seeing this light, and

feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive. (78)

The “bowl” of Woolf’s later experiences rests upon her treasured childhood memory. Recalling this epiphanic moment, she claims that it is the experience upon which her artistic life was founded. Many of the hallmarks of her fiction appear within this childhood memory: the light and water imagery, and in particular the processional waves; her symbiotic “stream of consciousness” approach to sight and sound; the intense attention to the presence of ordinary objects; the sublime viewpoint; the ecstasy.

Notably, it is the bodily experience that is primary in Woolf’s childhood memory; she feels herself between sleep and wakefulness, caught in the net of her combined senses as she sees, hears, and feels the world around her. Merleau-Ponty attributes a similarly phenomenological attention to the bodiliness of early experience in Freud’s understanding of childhood:

Freud was the first to take the child seriously; not by showing an explanation for bodily functions, but that these bodily functions take place in a psychic dynamism. ... Freud wants to return the child to the current of existence where the body is the vehicle. (CPP 280, emphasis in original)

In the version of childhood that Merleau-Ponty puts forth in the *Sorbonne Lectures*, he describes the bodily experience of childhood not just as the grounding for adult experience, as Freud does, but as a valuable and desirable period of existence in its own right. Against theorists such as Jean Piaget, who view childhood experience solely as an inferior forerunner to adulthood, Merleau-Ponty argues:

Children are not, as was previously thought, “miniature adults”. Thus, contrary to the negative account, the child’s consciousness is not identical to the adult’s in everything except for its incompleteness and imperfection. The child possesses another kind of equilibrium than the adult kind; therefore, we must treat the child’s consciousness as a positive phenomenon. (CPP 131)

Thus children are not only “future hosts/hostesses” but, prior to the initiation of the individual sense of self that triggers the hosting mentality, they also display an alternative mode of being-in-the-world. Woolf’s describes the positivity of the child’s experience of the world in “A Sketch of The Past”:

in retrospect nothing that we had as children made as much difference, was quite so important to us, as our summer in Cornwall ... the summer at

St Ives [was] the best beginning to life conceivable. When they took Talland House father and mother gave us – me at any rate – what has been perennial, invaluable. (133)

Her belief in the inestimable worth of Talland House, and of her summers spent there mirrors a statement that Merleau-Ponty made about his own youth to Jean-Paul Sartre in 1947. “Merleau told me that he has never recovered from an incomparable childhood. He has known that private world of happiness from which only age drives us” (Welsh *The Child as Natural Phenomenologist* 147). In Merleau-Ponty’s recollection, childhood is a resoundingly positive time of life.

Vanessa Bell argues for a similarly positive understanding of the distinct state of childhood when she suggests:

The more I see of children ... the more I realise that their world is quite unlike ours. It is so different from ours that, it seems to me, to describe it needs a particular kind of imagination and understanding. (“Virginia’s Childhood” 3)

In “A Sketch of the Past” and in *The Waves*, Woolf presents a version of the “particular kind of imagination and understanding” necessary to describe the original world of the child accurately. Part of this mimetic ability derives from the unusual strength of Woolf’s own impressions during childhood and the particular power of her memory to vividly recall those experiences. She claims: “At times I can go back to St. Ives more completely than I can this morning”. To this she adds:

I can reach a state where I seem to be watching things happen as if I were there ... those moments – in the nursery, on the road to the beach – can still be more real than the present moment. (STP 80)

Woolf notes how, if she were to paint “those first impressions” at St. Ives, she would

make curved shapes, showing the light through, but not giving a clear outline. Everything should be large and dim; and what was seen would at the same time be heard; sounds would come through this petal or leaf – sounds indistinguishable from sights. Sound and sight seem to make equal parts of these first impressions. (STP 80)

The indistinct, symbiotic experience of the world that Woolf presents in this image pre-empts Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological understanding of the child’s primary pre-subjective experience. Privileging perception as the point of direct access to the world, Merleau-Ponty is keen to articulate the clear differences he sees between the adult categorical understanding of the senses, and the interfused and co-dependent

nature of sensual experience that children encounter. He claims that for children perception is

a question of a *totality* of given sensations experienced through the intermediary of the *whole* body. The child makes use of his body as a totality and does not distinguish between what is given by the eyes, the ears, and so forth. The child has no multiplicity of senses. (CPP 145)

This perfectly coordinates with Woolf's recollection that her "colour-and-sound memories" of St. Ives present a perceptual world that is "as if everything were ripe, humming; sunny; smelling so many smells at once; and all making a whole that even now makes me stop" (STP 80). The sound of the humming fuses with the sight of the bright sunshine that in turn mingles with the smells of the seaside to present a world that is felt through the "totality" of the body rather than through distinct sensory organs. Woolf makes clear that her senses do not fuse in the same way in adult perception: "the strength of these pictures – but sight was always then so much mixed with sound that picture is not the right word – the strength anyhow of these impressions makes me again digress" (STP 80). It is the perceptual difference between the adult "pictures" and the childhood "impressions" of the world that make her recollections so arresting and intoxicating for Woolf.

Merleau-Ponty focuses on another artist's attempt to present primordial perceptions when he claims that Cézanne does not try to use colour to "*suggest* the tactile sensations" precisely because the "distinctions between touch and sight are unknown in primordial perception" (CD 15). It is, Merleau-Ponty claims, "only as a result of a science of the human body that we finally learn to distinguish between our senses" (CD 15). Writing in "A Sketch of the Past", Woolf contrasts the perception of the world that she has after she learns to distinguish between her senses, with the primordial perception of childhood that comes before such distinctions are made. She brings the primordial perception of childhood to life for her reader when she writes of the shared childhood of her six protagonists in her novel *The Waves* (1931).

Syncretic Seeing in *The Waves*

The human action of the novel opens with a series of contrapuntal lines that each child delivers in turn and that come together to create a kaleidoscopic picture of their

shared perceptual world: a spider's web glistens; there are "islands of light" on the grass and bubbles on the "floor of the saucepan"; birds chirp and a cock crows all whilst the chained beast stamps; the stones are cold but the back of a hand burns; the palm is "clammy and damp with dew" (5-6). Sight, sound, and touch are at the forefront of this passage, whilst the preparation and cooking of the mackerel hints at smell and taste. Merleau-Ponty provides a term for the experience Woolf portrays here when he adopts Claparède's term "syncretic" to describe the synthesized perception of children. This term emphasizes how "the child's perception is at one and the same time *global* and *fragmentary* (these two forms being not necessarily contradictory), whereas the adult's is articulate" (*CPP* 149). In the opening passage the fragments of the children's sentences collide with one another, building the global picture of a house and garden. The children's bodies are the various central points from which the perception of the house and garden emanate, which adds weight to Merleau-Ponty's claim that "one finds a poor but never entirely absent, structuration in the child" (*CPP* 150). The children can distinguish separate objects in language and are capable, in the opening six lines at least, of aligning their own perceptions with themselves as individual bodies: "I see", "I hear", they say (5). But the primary subjective distinction Woolf creates here does not hold. Despite her attribution of each line in the passage to a single child, the individuality of the children quickly fades into the background as the communal experience takes over, and the reader is given the impression that the children are everywhere all at once, including within each other creating the world in unison.

This multiplicity of perspective is possible because, as Woolf and Merleau-Ponty's accounts both suggest, the child's perspective is fundamentally non-dualistic. Merleau-Ponty uses this claim of a primary non-dualistic perspective to navigate the question of intersubjectivity: one of the central problems in philosophy. In the consideration of the relationship between the self and others, philosophy traditionally begins with a distinct sense of self that then has to be extrapolated somehow in order to take account of humankind's ability to feel empathy for other subjectivities. Merleau-Ponty, however, turns the problem of subjectivity around, stating that it is more logical that a definitive personal sense of self derives *out of* a primary experience of an undifferentiated intersubjective life. Hence his statement that "the self and other

are entities that the child only later disassociates. The child begins with a total identification with the other" (*CPP* 24).

In her work, Woolf prefigures Merleau-Ponty's argument that children exhibit a primary intersubjectivity and she again draws upon her own experience to illustrate her theory. In "A Sketch of the Past" she describes the bond that she has with her siblings Vanessa and Thoby as being, from earliest childhood, "so close ... that if I describe myself I must describe them" (131). Unable to divorce her own impressions and experiences from that of her siblings, Woolf portrays their childhood as a singular shared experience. She makes the primacy of this intersubjective experience clear when she describes having "instincts, affections, passions, attachments" that "bound me, I suppose, from the first moment of consciousness to other people" (*STP* 92-93). For Woolf, nothing comes before this shared world; it exists from "the first moment of consciousness". The fragmentary experiences of the separate children in the opening lines of *The Waves* intermingle to create a fused, global picture. Like the birds that sing together to create the melody of the opening italicised interlude, the children's experiences weave together into a single experience.

Psychogenesis: Society and the System "Self-Others-Things"

Nevertheless, with Louis' severing statement "Now they have all gone ... I am alone" (7), the contrapuntal nature of the text loosens. Whilst a definite mingling of experiences remains, the spaces between the children grow wider as whole paragraphs are given over to describing more individuated perceptions. In his concept of psychogenesis, Merleau-Ponty describes the shift away from the merged experience of early childhood to the individual experiences of later childhood. Etymologically "psychogenesis" literally means the birth of the psyche: it is the point in childhood at which personality and a distinctive subjectivity appears. The first stage of psychogenesis, Merleau-Ponty claims, is "the existence of a kind of pre-communication, an anonymous collectivity with differentiation, a kind of group existence" (*CPP* 248). The unified group existence of the opening lines of Woolf's novel fits this description neatly.

The second stage, he suggests, “is the objectification of one’s own body segregation, distinction between individuals” (CPP 248). For Merleau-Ponty, this second stage of psychogenesis takes place somewhere between the ages of two and three years and is triggered by a Lacanian mirror stage:

Until the moment when the specular image arises, the child’s body is a strongly felt but confused reality. To recognize his image in a mirror is for him to learn that *there can be a viewpoint taken on him*. ... By means of the image ... he becomes capable of being a spectator of himself. Through the acquisition of the specular image, the child notices that he is *visible*, for himself and for others. (“The Child’s Relations with Others” 136)

It is in the second stage of psychogenesis that the awareness of the independent lived body that is so central to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy becomes possible. In *The Waves* Woolf highlights the children’s separation into separate bodies after Louis’ statement that all the other characters have “gone”. The children’s character traits and personalities - Louis’ jealousy, Jinny’s vanity, Bernard’s phrase-making - begin to be revealed, making the different characters much more distinct than they previously were as a consequence. Having begun by creating a melodic world together, the children then begin to split apart as each “played his own tune, fiddle, flute, trumpet drum or whatever the instrument might be” (197). Bernard provides a further metaphor for this segregation into individuality in his summation at the close of the novel. He recalls:

we were all different. The wax – the virginal wax that coats the spine melted in different patches for each of us – our white wax was streaked and stained ... differently. Louis was disgusted by the nature of human flesh; Rhoda by our cruelty; Susan could not share; Neville wanted order; Jinny love; and so on. We suffered terribly as we became separate bodies. (186)

Woolf presents the painful negotiation from the ‘white wax’ of the anonymous undifferentiated, world to the many-coloured, multi-layered, individual, “separate bodies”. It is so forceful an experience that, even in old age, for Bernard it remains an unforgettable torture.

Merleau-Ponty provides a phenomenological way of understanding this experience when he notes how the “objectification of one’s own body” establishes “a dividing wall between the other and me and the constitution of the other and of me as ‘human beings’ in a reciprocal relationship” (CPP 248). This process of self-

objectification results in the “surpassing of childhood egocentrism”, characterized “not by a ‘going outside oneself’ (the child ignores the individual ego), but by a modification of self-other relations” (*CPP* 36). Thus, it is through the recognition of their own visibility that children begin to be able to determine their bodily boundaries and to use this knowledge to re-establish their relationships with others. Merleau-Ponty claims that this process begins with the child recognizing first her own visibility and then reflecting that visibility outwards in her conceptions of others. In *The Waves* Woolf reveals how coming to an awareness of the body is a subjective experience that can be triggered in different ways.

The seemingly trivial act of a kiss on the back of the neck generates the second stage of psychogenesis for four of the novel’s central characters. For Louis and Jinny it is the tactility of their shared experience that invokes within them an understanding of their bodily separateness. Louis becomes aware of the demarcation of his own body when he experiences Jinny’s kiss as an unwelcome transgression: “I am struck on the nape of the neck. She has kissed me. All is shattered” (8). Later in the text he will identify this specific moment as the point of his subjective awakening: “I woke in a garden, with a blow on the nape of my neck, a hot kiss, Jinny’s” (71). Jinny’s kiss reveals Louis’ body to him in a way that chimes with Elizabeth Grosz’ Merleau-Pontian understanding of the body. The body, she claims, “is both a thing and a nonthing, an object, but an object which somehow contains or coexists with an interiority, an object able to take itself and others as subjects, a unique kind of object not reducible to other objects” (xi). A thing that can be kissed, but that can also feel that kiss, Louis’ body is both an object and a subject. The realisation of his own subjectivity fosters in Louis a complimentary understanding of Jinny’s own separate ability to move her kissing body.

By placing her flesh against Louis’ body, Jinny is able to distinguish the I that touches, just as Louis experiences the I that is touched, and both come to know that their bodily borders are no longer mutable. Like Louis, Jinny learns that she too is distinct and that she has the ability to overpower and overcome another through the actions of her body: “I dance. I ripple. I am thrown over you like a net of light. I lie quivering flung over you” (8). In “Metaphysics and the Novel”, Merleau-Ponty describes the struggle for subjectivity between the self and the objectifying demands of the Other that play out in Louis’ and Jinny’s interaction. “If another person exists, if

he too is a consciousness, then I must consent to be for him only a finite object determinate, *visible* at a certain place in the world" (29). Jinny presents the objectification of Louis as the Other through the sublimating action of her subjective self: the "I" that lies quivering over him. The physical projection of her body that Jinny describes here – her ability to "throw herself" over others – becomes her primary mode of engagement with other male bodies throughout her life. Later she will describe her interaction with a different male body. "My body instantly of its own accord puts forth a frill under his gaze. My body lives a life of its own. ... I open my body, I shut my body at my will" (47). Jinny's mode of embodiment sustains Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that we "try to subdue the disquieting existence of others" by being the "nimble being who moves about the world and animates it through and through" (29). It is Jinny's will that opens and shuts her body, animating the world and the other selves within it as she nimbly dances through the world.

Meanwhile, in witnessing the kiss, Susan becomes capable of the kind of visible determination of her own body that Merleau-Ponty privileges as constituting a subjective sense of self: "Once we are aware of the existence of others, we commit ourselves to being, among other things, what they think of us, since we recognize in them the exorbitant power to *see us*" (MN 37). Seeing the others, Susan feels herself seen. Merleau-Ponty argues that we only know other human beings through "their glances, their gestures, their speech ... their bodies" ("Man Seen from the Outside" 82-3). To Susan, Jinny's dancing body speaks of a levity that Susan cannot find within herself and this is a source of pain. She compares her body to Jinny's dancing "diamond-dust" flecked body, and despairs to find her own body "squat" and "short" (9). Niemi and Parks suggest "One's experience of one's body can ... become seriously truncated if, instead of experiencing one's body, one begins to see it as the other sees it, as an object" (259). The "condition of being-at-home" they continue, "is as much a question of how one inhabits one's own skin as it is a question of how one inhabits one's physical space" (258). Viewing her body in comparison to Jinny's body, Susan feels out of place, not quite at home, objectified within her own body.

Bernard discovers that he too is separate when he witnesses Susan's pain and Neville's reaction:

It was Susan who cried, that day when I was in the tool-house with Neville; and I felt my indifference melt. Neville did not melt. "Therefore," I said, "I am myself, not Neville," a wonderful discovery. (185)

In a statement in "Metaphysics and the Novel", Merleau-Ponty echoes Bernard's wonder at his own meaning-making potential. Merleau-Ponty claims:

It is I who bring into being this world which seemed to exist without me, to surround and surpass me. I am therefore a consciousness, immediately present to the world, and nothing can claim to exist without somehow being caught in the web of my experience. I am not this particular person or fact, this finite being: I am a pure witness, placeless and ageless, equal in power to the world's infinity. (29)

Where for Louis, Jinny, and Susan, tactile and visual experiences provoke psychogenesis, affectivity generates Bernard's subjective sense of self. Emotion triggers his pleasing awareness that he is an "I": a consciousness that can catch the world in the web of its experience.

Later in the day, the children return indoors from the outside world, and the "dividing wall" between their bodies becomes even more distinct. "Old Mrs. Constable lifted her sponge and warmth poured over us," recalls Bernard. "We became clothed in this changing, this feeling garment of flesh" (93). Bernard's assertion that it is at that specific moment that he is clothed in flesh is key, for flesh is the clearest evocation of the distinctiveness of bodies; it is the defining point at which I end and another begins. The completion of psychogenesis thrusts the children out of the primary natal world of anonymous collectivity that they exhibit at the very start of the novel and forces them to articulate independent dualistic relationships with themselves, with the world of things, and with others. No longer coexisting within one another's experiences, the children now become guests on each other's bodily borders, welcome or unwelcome, friendly or hostile, subject to a conditional hospitality that can accept or shun them.

With their newly divided bodies, the children become subject to the social distinctions of gender and class.¹⁹ They attend different schools and the girls now outwardly mark their bodies as female: "We go upstairs to change into white frocks to play tennis" (22). In comparison, the boys inhabit the "male" intellectual world of

¹⁹ This study follows societal conventions in suggesting a dualistic understanding of gender. However, like the interchange between host and guest, gender is not as fixed as the oppositional terms masculine and feminine imply. The aim of this study is not to privilege the dualistic understanding of gender but to suggest some of the detrimental effects of this construction.

Virgil, Lucretius, and Catullus. Where one boy in the school has an uncle that is “the best shot in England”, and another has a cousin who “is Master of Foxhounds”, Louis learns that he cannot boast for “his father is a banker in in Brisbane” and “he speaks with an Australian accent” (22). It is in the socialisation of children into gender- and class-specific behaviours that the seeds of habitual hosting are sewn. In the following section, I discuss how Woolf and Merleau-Ponty see society as shaping children’s experiences, and begin to show how it is that girls learn to host.

“Self-Others-Things” and the Childhood Home

In chapter one, I described habitual hosting as the bodily curation of interpersonal networks of exchange; the habitual hostess must use her lived body to provide for the needs and desires of other lived bodies within the environment of her home. Here I argue that it is in the childhood home that this structuring of interpersonal relationships first occurs. Where I previously argued for an understanding of the hostess hosting in the home, now I rely upon the opposite idea that children are hosted *by* the home. Thus, the environment impacts the experiences of the lived bodies of the children that become separate in the completion of psychogenesis. This is because the body “for Merleau-Ponty [is] the sum of its tasks, of the forms of agency proper to it within its setting” (Niemi and Parks 260-1). Woolf places great emphasis on the domestic nature of the primary “setting” of the home. She regularly presents children either inside or in relation to hospitable childhood homes that offer them multiple forms of nurturance and preservation. In *Jacob’s Room* the novel opens and ends with discussions of the child’s place in their parental home whilst in *To the Lighthouse*, the Ramsay children’s childhood holiday home on the Isle of Skye forms the centre around which all of the action takes place. Notably, in the example of *The Waves*, it is once the children come inside the house that they are clothed in their differentiating “flesh” and it is there that they begin to learn that boys and girls will be prepared for different social destinies, destinies that for girls include the role of habitual hostess. As was the case with Woolf’s parties, the childhood home recreates the social world in miniature. This means that the experience of the child’s

lived body acting in the situation of the childhood home mirrors and anticipates the adult experience of acting as a lived body in the wider situation of the social world.

Like Woolf, Merleau-Ponty reveals an interest in socialisation when he describes the phenomenological task as being “to rediscover phenomena, the layer of living experience through which other people and things are first given to us, the system ‘Self-others-things’ as it comes into being” (PP 57). Habitual hosting is one way in which the system “Self-others-things” is managed. Additionally, the relationships between selves, others, and things are governed by social and cultural rules that are first learned in childhood. Although the adherence to such conventions later becomes habitual, these rules are social constructs and children must undergo reasonably strict training in order to be able to make them part of their *habitus* and to comply with them in later life. In their relative confinement to the childhood home, children first come to an awareness of the system Self-others-things within and through the overarching structures of that childhood home. Victoria Rosner comments on the primacy of the childhood home when she states, “few spaces are more formative than a childhood home. It is a crucible of identity, a place that teaches both overtly and implicitly who we are, what things mean, and how life is to be lived” (59). In Rosner’s description, the childhood home is much more than a place to gain sustenance and shelter; it is the model through which the worlds, and all engagements of “Self-others-things” within it, are fundamentally given.

This experience of being hosted in an environment has a clear existential forerunner in pregnancy. Recent work in feminist phenomenology has examined this idea by pushing Martin Heidegger’s conception of the primacy of “dwelling” further by suggesting that the original experience of dwelling or “housedness” occurs within uterine existence.²⁰ The rich idea that pregnant embodiment is the primary habitual structure is explored in further detail in chapter four of this thesis. My discussion of pregnancy comes after, rather than before, my discussion of childhood as I wish to place the focus primarily on the maternal rather than the natal experience. Eva Simms provides one way of thinking about the experience of the primary post-uterine domestic space through her suggestion that among “things the house is probably the most comprehensive extension of the original, cradling maternal space” (85)

²⁰ Roughly, “dwelling” is a philosophical concept that Heidegger uses to mean to exist peacefully or contently in an elemental sense within an environment. For more on this concept, see his essay “Building Dwelling Thinking”. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Collins, 2001. 141-160.

Therefore, in its provision of shelter, nourishment, and physical protection, the childhood home not only provides hospitality to a growing child but, in so doing, it also replicates the experience of being literally hosted within the protective nurturing environment of the mother's body. Once children complete the stages of psychogenesis outlined in the last section, they come to an awareness of the social structures of "Self-others-things" specifically through the structure of that childhood home.

In my last chapter, I argued via the work of Iris Marion Young "the home displays the things among which a person lives, that support his or her activities and reflect in matter the events and values of his or her life" (139). Woolf brings this process of thingly revelation to the fore in a description she gives of the Ramsay family's holiday home in *To the Lighthouse*:

Disappearing as stealthily as stags from the dinner-table directly the meal was over, the eight sons and daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay sought their bedrooms, their fastness in a house where there was no other privacy to debate anything, everything; Tansley's tie; the passing of the Reform Bill, sea-birds and butterflies; people; while the sun poured from those attics, which a plank alone separated from each other ... and lit up bats, flannels, straw hats, ink-pots, paint-pots, beetles, and the skulls of small birds. (6)

In this quote, the present and future public and private lives of the Ramsay children are encapsulated within and reflected by the artefacts of their existence found within their shared childhood home: Mr. Tansley's tie and the children's flannels and straw hats reveal their social class; the birds, butterflies, and beetles broadcast their leisure activities; the paint pots confess their creative outlets; and the ink-pots and legislative bills proclaim the children's possible future employments. This passage reflects Rosner's idea that the childhood home is a place of osmotic instruction. The awareness of the relationship of Self-others-things that Merleau-Ponty sees as beginning in childhood presses heavily against the Ramsay children as they try to articulate independent relationships with the otherness of beings and objects within the claustrophobic confines of their Victorian summer home. The children struggle against the public nature of their lives in the house that is overflowing with a large upper-middle class family and their guests: "there was no other privacy to debate anything". They seek the private sanctuaries of their bedrooms to engage in individual communes with entities - their ink-pots and insects - and collective debates about

other Beings - Charles Tansley specifically and “people” more generally. The house itself, as well as the people and things within it, are the “layer of living experience” through which the Ramsay children come to an awareness of the subjective, social and objective relationships that Merleau-Ponty’s hyphenated expression describes.

Accordingly, it is possible to read into Woolf’s exploration of the childhood home an implicit discussion of the system “Self-others-things” as it comes into being and as it relates to children’s later experiences. Gaston Bachelard emphasizes the constitutive nature of the childhood home for later experiences when he writes that the “lived body of the child is educated by the structures of the first house. All later houses are then but variations on a fundamental theme” (See Simms 85). In housing and hosting us, our childhood homes first reveal us to the world and the world to us. This childhood experience of dwelling is not only primary in the temporal sense; it is also foundational because it provides the prototypes for all subsequent experiences. Like a Russian doll, folded within the bricks and mortar walls of the childhood are all the houses and experiences that are yet to come; the childhood home literally and monumentally hosts the future.

In her autobiographical texts “22 Hyde Park Gate”, “Reminiscences”, and “A Sketch of the Past”, Woolf describes how the childhood home reveals the structures of the social world, and specifically how the demarcations of its space reveal gender and class. She shares Rosner and Bachelard’s idea that it is within the walls of the childhood home that children first learn to comply with social rules and, thus, that the childhood home forms the model upon which future engagements with selves, others and things, are built. One point that it is important to note at this stage is that the childhood homes that Woolf describes in her work are white, Western, upper middle-class late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century homes. That fact has obvious and undeniable consequences for the universality of the model of childhood that Woolf provides. This specificity also evidences how the childhood home not only reflects social attitudes but also how, in its very structure, it helps to impart and develop those attitudes within the children who reside in them.

Like the dual hostesses of the last chapter, Woolf presents a heroic and a habitual childhood home. Woolf is raised in a prominent family within the intelligentsia and her family’s social position and wealth means that she and her siblings have not one, but two childhood homes. The heroic childhood home is the

Stephen family's holiday home Talland House in the Cornish town of St. Ives. The family holidays at Talland House every year for two or three months from 1882, the year that Woolf is born, to 1895, the year that her mother Julia Stephen dies. This heroic home forms the model for the Ramsay family's Skye home and Woolf associates the non-dualistic, undefined yet vivid perception of early childhood with that home. It is at Talland House that Woolf experiences the epiphanic moment of lying in bed listening to the waves that she claims forms the foundation of her creative life. For Woolf, Talland House and her experiences there are deeply associated with her mother. In "A Sketch of the Past" she famously suggests that rewriting the experiences of Talland House as *To the Lighthouse* lay to rest the ghost of her mother who, until her writing of the novel, "obsessed" her (92).

In the same essay, Woolf also claims her mother is "one of the invisible presences who after all play so important a part in every life" (92). Woolf defines the influence of the invisible presences as "the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that" (STP 92). Here she outlines how society shapes and conditions behaviour through affirmation and condemnation; human beings internalise the praise and censure of people and of groups and modify their behaviour in accordance with those internalised principles. She claims that the autobiographies, or "Lives", that she enjoys reading so much, fail to treat the invisible presences of society or do so "very superficially". Against this superficial treatment, Woolf claims that it is

by such invisible presences that the "subject of this memoir" is tugged this way and that and that every day of his life; it is they that keep him in position. Consider what immense forces society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade; and also from class to class; well, if one cannot analyse these invisible presences, we know very little of the subject of the memoir; and again how futile life-writing becomes. I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream. (STP 92)

In this rich quote, Woolf reveals her keen awareness, restated in *Mrs. Dalloway*, that people are "made up" (9) of everyone who surrounds them and that this constitution of the self is socially specific. It is also a development process that changes from decade to decade. Woolf claims that leaving out the description of the society that shapes the person makes all autobiography futile. That writing of her mother triggers

this discussion of the influence of society on personhood adds weight to Woolf's claims, presented in *The Waves*, that the impact of society is first felt in childhood where the mother is usually the key influence. Woolf escapes the futility of incomplete life writing when she describes how the invisible presences of society have shaped her sense of self in her autobiographical writing about her habitual childhood home.

22 Hyde Park Gate: Birthplace of the Habitual Hostess

The place where Woolf spends the majority of her time as a child and the environment in which she learns the most about society, is 22 Hyde Park Gate, a towering townhouse in the London borough of Kensington. Woolf's discussion of the world of 22 Hyde Park Gate shows that her habitual home is clearly directed towards the idea of children as "miniature adults". There, the Stephen children

lived in a state of anxious growth; school, reports, professions to be chosen, marriage for the elders, books coming out, bills, health – the future was always too near and too much of a question for any sedate self-expression. All these activities, too, charged the air with personal emotions and urged even children, and certainly 'the eldest', to develop one side prematurely. ("Reminiscences" 3)

In this quote Woolf reveals the transformative potential of collective social expectation. Closer to home, Merleau-Ponty describes how parents are responsible for the conditioning of children. He claims, parents

communicate to their children their personal imprint, but also the culture in which they live. Truthfully, the two kinds of causality must not be separated. All parental influence is built on a certain cultural schema and, inversely, social initiation is accomplished by the intermediary of parental influence. (CPP 302)

Part of the social initiation that Merleau-Ponty describes here is the adoption of sex specific behaviours. Nancy Chodorow claims "gender identity begins in infancy" (See Golombok and Fivush 61). Woolf's non-fiction presents a way of understanding gender as a "cultural environment" that is conveyed through the structure of the home. Born into a childhood home where women feature as the curators of domesticity and where the male is perceived as the socially and intellectually superior breadwinner, the Stephen children gain an understanding of the wider patriarchal

structure of upper-middle class society from observing the ownership of specific rooms of their childhood home. The public drawing room belongs to the women, the private study to the men. Consequently, “22 Hyde Park Gate” reveals to the reader the social ordering of childhood that Woolf claims occurs in the Victorian home.

In “A Sketch of the Past” Woolf brings the routines and divisions of her Kensington home to life by mapping the architectural and habitual structures of the house against the organs of the human body. The first room to receive this treatment is the drawing room:

The tea table rather than the dinner table was the centre of Victorian family life – in our family at least. Savages I suppose have some tree, or fire round which they congregate; the round table marked that focal, that sacred spot in our house. It was the centre, the heart of the family. (STP 125)

Within this centralised feminized domestic realm, Woolf presents her mother acting as a literal hostess to her children and to visitors by “pouring out tea” (125). Woolf bases the character of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* on her mother Julia Stephen.²¹ Woolf portrays the female spaces within her childhood home as the physical heart of the house and the family’s emotional and spiritual centre. Her mother is the habitual hostess who both manages these spaces and opens herself to the demands of others within those spaces, often at the expense of her own comfort or bodily health.

Contrasting this inclusive female realm is the solitary dominion of the male study:

My father’s great study – that study had been built on, when the family grew – was a fine big room, very high, three windowed, and entirely booklined. His old rocking chair covered in American cloth was the centre of the room which was the brain of the house. (STP 125)

Where the communal drawing room is a public space, the study belongs definitively and solely to one member of the household: the father.²² Extrapolating from Woolf’s description in “A Sketch of the Past” of Leslie Stephen as a “wild beast” (22), it is tempting to surmise that the solitariness of his environment was as much for the protection of the other family members as it was in deference to his intellectual endeavours. In “22 Hyde Park Gate”, Woolf is torn between admiration for her father’s

²¹ For more on Mrs. Ramsay as a habitual hostess, see chapter one of this thesis (38-44).

²² For a thorough discussion of Leslie Stephen’s study at 22 Hyde Park Gate, see chapter four “Studies” of Victoria Rosner, *Modernism and the Architecture of Private Life*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. 91-126.

intelligence and horror at his unrelenting demands for sympathy: “He had constant interviews with sympathetic women” (13).

In her autobiographical piece, Woolf seems unclear about just how detrimental the pater’s patriarchal privilege is to the family’s comfort. However, in *A Room of One’s Own*, she makes her anger at the female disbarment from the Victorian world of intellect clear: “Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind” (76). The seed of this anger is undoubtedly germinated in her London childhood where Woolf learns that Victorian society believes that a man’s place is in the study whilst a woman’s is by the tea-table. As well as the drawing-room and the study, in “22 Hyde Park Gate”, Woolf also describes her parent’s bedroom. She notes that it is both the sexual centre and the literal centre of the family’s existence; it is there that lives are created, begun, and ended. Woolf’s mapping in “A Sketch of the Past” therefore makes clear that 22 Hyde Park Gate provided for its youthful inhabitants through the demarcations of its rooms and experiences, all of life in microcosm.²³ In that sense, parental hosting teaches children the nature of their social roles and ensures their preservation within the wider society outside of the childhood home. In taking up these roles and enacting them through their bodily actions, children themselves learn how to “play host” to these conventions.

So it is that Woolf locates 22 Hyde Park Gate as the place that she becomes aware that not only does her mother have to act as an habitual hostess, but that she and her sister Vanessa will be required to act as one too. In “A Sketch of the Past” Woolf describes the “tea-table training” that takes place at 22 Hyde Park Gate that teaches her and her sister Vanessa the “rules of Victorian society” – one of which is that they should follow their mother’s example and become habitual hostesses themselves (150). In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf combines the social training of 22 Hyde

²³ In his essay “Building Dwelling Thinking”, Martin Heidegger describes a similar process of existential tutelage through the architectural and habitual structure of a home in his description of a two hundred year old farmhouse in the Black Forest. Unlike Woolf who focuses on the way that the urban home is designed specifically to raise children to fit the society that surrounds it, Heidegger explores the influence of the rural environment when he relates how the relationship between the building’s function of farming and the nature of the landscape surrounding it “ordered the house” (158). But similarly to Woolf, Heidegger focuses specifically on life, love, and death by selecting the “community table”, “the hallowed places of childbed”, and “the ‘tree of the dead’ ... the *Totenbaum*”, for discussion (158). His suggestion that the house in its layout “designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time” (158) reveals that he too saw domestic structures as being instructive for the whole life of the inhabitants of a dwelling place.

Park Gate with the creative world of Talland House to write a novel that presents both experiences blended together in the Ramsays' holiday home on Skye. The descriptions that Woolf gives of the youngest Ramsay girls Cam and Rose allows for a reading of the influence of gender and of the future role of the habitual hostess in girlhood.

In the first section of the novel, which is centred upon the Ramsay's holiday home, Cam Ramsay is seven years old. Her sister Rose Ramsay is a little older. Both have already lived through the experience of psychogenesis and both girls' characters are now open to the distortions of society and gender. The influence of the mother on the character of her daughters is made clear in Mr. Ramsay's charge that Mrs. Ramsay is teaching her "daughters to exaggerate" (49). Mrs. Ramsay denies the charge by claiming that her "Aunt Camilla was far worse than she was" (49). "Nobody", replies Mr Ramsay "ever held up your Aunt Camilla as a model of virtue" (49). The classic habitual hostess the Angel in the House rears her head in Mr. Ramsay's suggestion that girls' role models should be "models of virtue". Moreover, if Mrs. Ramsay can deflect the claim that she is teaching her girls to exaggerate, she cannot allay the charge that she is teaching them to imitate.

One of her musings reveals to the reader that the younger girl Cam is made happy "for days" by a "tenpenny tea-set" (43). Presumably, a good portion of the girl's happiness is derived from the belief that she is acting like a grown-up, and grown-up women – as her mother has taught her – pour out tea. As well as learning that women give tea parties, Cam is also learning that women monitor the family members, control the servants, and manage the meals of the house. Mrs. Ramsay sends her youngest daughter to the cook to enquire whether her son Andrew and her guests Paul and Minta have returned and to ask whether tea has been cleared. Whilst Cam eventually produces the answers Mrs. Ramsay requires, she is not yet a fully trained habitual hostess and is more interested in daydreaming and story-making than reporting facts and managing guests:

she would not stop for Mr. Bankes and Lily Briscoe ... she would not stop for her father ... She was off like a bird, bullet, or arrow, impelled by what desire, shot by whom, at what directed who could say? ... It might be a vision – of a shell, or a wheelbarrow, of a fairy kingdom on the far side of the hedge, or it might be the glory of speed; no one knew. (39)

Cam still largely has the freedom of childhood that excuses her from adhering too closely to the social structure that her parents are trying to instil within her. But she

cannot completely ignore it and her mother's power is clear when she manages, on the second time of asking, to wrench Cam away from the adventure that no one else can stop (39). Despite her mother's power, Cam's induction to her tea-table training is only just begun and she is not willing to completely disregard her own desires in the face of the demands of others, as she will need to if she is to become a successful habitual hostess. She refuses to give a flower to Mr. Bankes as the nursemaid tells her inadvertently wounding the family guest and making him feel old and sad; something a fully-grown habitual hostess would avoid at all costs.

Rose Ramsay is a different case. In Rose we see the beginnings of the heroic hostess through her attention to the aesthetic side of life. It is Rose who creates the beautiful display of fruit that provokes Mrs. Ramsay's rapture and that was discussed in the introduction to this thesis. It is not clear exactly how old Rose is, her age lies somewhere between Cam's seven years and the age of her older sister Prue who is in the bloom of late adolescence. Rose is old enough to attend the dinner party, but too young to be caught up in the sexual economy that partly governs the relationships between the older characters. Talia Welsh describes how childhood experience, "sets the ground, or the '*a priori*' ... for more complex representational kinds of intersubjective life" (*The Child as Natural Phenomenologist* 50). We see this "setting of the ground" of intersubjective life through Rose's careful selection of her mother's jewels and scarf for the dinner party. Mrs. Ramsay lets Rose lead the nightly ceremony of selecting her heroic ornaments because she knows that she likes it best and that she attaches "great importance" to what her mother wears (59). Mrs. Ramsay attributes the significance of her jewels for Rose to "some deep, some buried, some quite speechless feeling that one had for one's mother at Rose's age" (59). Part of Rose's admiration for her mother is rooted in her mother's success as an appropriately attired heroic hostess and Rose herself takes on the role of heroic hostess when the family plays charades: "Rose made the dresses; made everything; liked best arranging tables, flowers, anything" (42). Like Woolf's famous heroic hostess Clarissa Dalloway Rose arranges the flowers and sews dresses in anticipation of stepping into Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Dalloway's party-giving shoes. Her pleasure in dressing her mother for her party, and her mother's pity for her when someone takes a piece of fruit and destroys the centrepiece, reinforces the suggestion that Rose is her mother the heroic hostess' heiress.

Therefore, both Cam and Rose imitate their mother's role as hostess in their play. In "The Philosophy of Toys", Charles Baudelaire comments on the tendency of young girls to act "grown up" when he derides "those little girls who put on grown-up airs ... The poor little things are copying their mothers; they are already preparing for the immortal future puerility that is theirs" (2). Woolf's writing exposes the gender bias of Baudelaire's assumption that the drive to imitate is solely present in female children. In "A Sketch of the Past", she describes her brother Thoby as a schoolboy who "was feeling earlier than most boys, the weight laid on him by his father's pride in him; the burden, the responsibility of being treated as a man" (140). Meanwhile, in *To the Lighthouse*, James Ramsay, the youngest of all the Ramsay children at six years old is preparing for the future roles that are typical for a boy of his social class. His arts and crafts material is the illustrated Army and Navy stores catalogue, out of which he carefully cuts pictures (3). This catalogue combines with the stories of "soldiers with kettledrums and trumpets" (42) that his mother tells him to reveal that James is being surreptitiously prepared for a possible career in the military. Other options that are open to James include his mother's suggestion that he might be "a great artist" because of his "splendid forehead" or his father's hope that he will follow his own academic lead and write a "dissertation" (23). The Victorian suppression of women's potential outside of the home is tellingly revealed through the fact that James' forehead makes his mother consider him as a future artist, but Rose's proven artistic sensibility does not generate a similar belief in her future potential. Yet Woolf's novel reveals how, in Victorian society, the social pressure of gender expectation was detrimental to all children and not just to girls.

Moreover, in "Reminiscences", Woolf's understanding that the drive to produce gender specific imitative behaviour is externally rather than internally motivated is clear. In this autobiographical text, written for Julian Bell, Woolf describes how her sister, his mother, Vanessa "until she was fifteen indeed ... was outwardly sober and austere, the most trustworthy, and always the eldest; sometimes she would lament her 'responsibilities'" (2). She continues:

our lives are pieces in a pattern and to judge one truly you must consider how this side is squeezed and that indented and a third expanded and none are really isolated, and so I conceive that there were many reasons then to make your mother show herself a little other than she was. (3)

Thoby and Vanessa, and presumably Virginia too, are “squeezed” and shaped by the Victorian social “patterns” of class and gender that are imparted to them by their parents through the structure of their childhood home. This social distortion perhaps explains why Woolf locates the instigation of her social self as having taken place at the tea-table in the female drawing room of 22 Hyde Park Gate.

In the opening to her early novel *Night and Day* (1919), Woolf presents just how habitual Victorian tea-table training is through the character of Katharine Hilbery:

Katharine Hilbery was pouring out tea. ... But although she was silent, she was evidently mistress of a situation which was familiar enough to her, and inclined to let it take its way for the six hundredth time, perhaps, without bringing into play any of her unoccupied faculties. (3)

Katharine has poured tea on so many occasions – six hundred at least according to her creator – that the action is merely physical and requires no intellectual or emotional input at all. Moreover, Katharine Hilbery is not only being trained in how to pour tea; the complete habitual hosting of a household is her social destiny. This means she

was, from childhood even, put in charge of household affairs. She had the reputation, which nothing in her manner contradicted, of being the most practical of people. Ordering meals, directing servants, paying bills, and so contriving that every clock ticked more or less accurately in time, and a number of vases were always full of fresh flowers was supposed to be a natural endowment of hers, and, indeed, Mrs. Hilbery often observed that it was poetry the wrong side out. (40)

Mrs. Hilbery is the apotheosis of Victorian habitual hosting – a woman who prizes practicality, respectability, and efficiency to the extent that a well-maintained household takes on the designation of a work of art. Sara Crangle comments that this passage reveals how, “for Katharine’s mother, likening management to poetry is the highest compliment, but Katharine detests the demands of domesticity” (171). Woolf presents a similar distaste for her own Victorian training in habitual hosting even whilst she remains committed to its usefulness. In “A Sketch of the Past” she reveals how, at her mother’s tea-table, she and her sister Vanessa both “learnt the rules of the game of Victorian society so thoroughly that we have never forgotten them. We still play the game. It is useful” (150). In a similar fashion Merleau-Ponty describes his understanding of social initiation as a form of role-playing with strict rules when he writes:

Individual history is thus not the only determining factor in the social attitude. ... Intra-individual history (the individual's apprenticeship in social rules) and the historical-social drama play a great role in the formation of the individual. (*CPP* 72)

Woolf clearly suggests that a child's initiation into their cultural environment occurs specifically through the self-conscious and socially determined parental mediation of the home environment.

Reading *The Waves* alongside "22 Hyde Park Gate", Woolf's suggestion that "gendered" and "class" behaviour is something that adults mediate within the walls of the childhood home becomes even clearer. The distinctions that mark the human interactions of the London home are noticeably absent in the opening lines of *The Waves*. Unlike their London counterparts, the children of *The Waves* are not separated from the actions of the servant classes; they interact with Biddy the servant in ways that the strict stratifications of 22 Hyde Park Gate does not encourage. Additionally there is no distinction made between the behaviours of the girls and the boy's bodies. If Woolf had not chosen to attribute a name to each action in the opening lines it would be fairly difficult to discern whether a boy or a girl was relaying the event. By presenting the children's "natural" world as being devoid of the artificial gender distinctions of later adult life, Woolf suggests that children's experience emanates out of the primary pre-logical ground that phenomenology stipulates as the ground of all experience. Consequently, in *The Waves*, the original shared syncretic world is shown to be truly hospitable because it is truly equitable. Primarily, there can be no hosting acts because there are no rules or distinctions between, selves, others, and things.

It is socialisation that ends that syncretic experience. "What divorces us from our underlying syncretic nature could be nothing else but the social-cultural-linguistic world we become increasingly enmeshed in as we mature" (Welsh *CNP* 147). "Childhood", Merleau-Ponty claims, "is not seen as the installation of certain complexes in the individual, ones which will play a destined role, but as an *initiation into a certain cultural environment*" (see Welsh *CPP* xiii). The "cultural environment" that Merleau-Ponty describes in this statement is obviously historically variable. As the famous quote from Woolf's essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" shows, domestic life, the space in which "human relationships" are enacted, underwent fundamental changes in the modernist period. Despite her own admission that the social world

changed “around December 1910”, writing in 1941 Woolf admits that she still “plays the game” of Victorian society (“Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” 38). This shows the inescapable nature of the primary social training that her first permanent childhood home conveyed. However, Rosen suggests, “the peace and stability of the Victorian household deteriorated, deformed by the pressure of changing social, sexual, and cultural mores” (3). These changes meant that the childhood homes that the modernists experienced in the late nineteenth century were different to the homes that they collectively provided for the next generation. The Victorian structures of 22 Hyde Park Gate were not suited to the century that followed the Stephen children’s social initiation. As Woolf has Mrs. Lynn Jones remark in *Between the Acts*:

Change had to come ... or there’d have been yards and yards of Papa’s beard, of Mama’s knitting. Nowadays her son-in-law was clean shaven. Her daughter had a refrigerator ... change had to come unless things were perfect. (118)

It is clear from Woolf’s descriptions of the stifled Stephen girls that she felt their childhood home of 22 Hyde Park Gate to be far from perfect, and its strict routines and gendered rooms were left behind when Vanessa and Virginia left Hyde Park Gate in 1904 and began to host their own parties at 46 Gordon Square.

(Re)Writing Childhood

Despite my lengthy discussion, it does not strictly follow that the manner in which Woolf writes of childhood is the manner in which she actually experienced it. She acknowledges the distorting potential of time when she recalls how, looking back from a temporal distance, the semi-transparency of memory appears “as though one were lying in a grape” (STP 79). Time acts a kind of film, muting and mutating the memories that travel through it. Moreover, “the past is much affected by the present moment. What I write today I should not write in a year’s time” (STP 87). Woolf claims that it is characteristic of childhood memories that we later add feelings to them that makes them “more complex” (STP 81). This statement is complemented by Merleau-Ponty’s suggestion that “No fixed point of our past continues to exercise its role without being reprised and modified by the rest of our lives” (CPP 278).

Woolf pushes this idea further through her concept of “moments of Being”.²⁴ “Moments of Being” or “shocks” are events that force themselves upon our notice thereby representing “a change in the *a priori* of existence”. They are intensely vivid epiphanic moments such as Woolf describes when she relays how the experience of lying in her nursery and listening to the waves forms the ground upon which her life is built. One remembers, “only what is exceptional” she remarks. “And there seems to be no reason why one thing is exceptional and another not” (STP 83). *The Waves* further reiterates how “moments of Being” need not be memories of extraordinary occurrences in and of themselves; fleeting kisses and communal baths can take on these “exceptional” characteristics if they happen on a particular day, at a particular time, coinciding with a particular mood. Woolf argues that, despite the strength and importance of “moments of Being”,

as an account of my life they are misleading, because the things one does not remember are as important; perhaps they are more important. If I could remember one whole day I should be able to describe, superficially at least, what life was like as a child. (STP 83)

She calls the unremarked, unnoticed daily events that occur in the unthinking passage of one moment to the next “non-being”. As a child, she claims, “my days, just as they do now, contained a large portion of this cotton-wool, this non-being” (STP 84).

Woolf’s focus on the interplay between “moments of Being” and “non-being” reveals how the representation of the past in the present is inevitably skewed by the memory of exceptional experiences. This misrepresentation creates nostalgia for past states of being that leads to an inevitable idealization of the child’s experience. It is then perhaps not at all surprising that Woolf recalls her holiday home more fondly than the home in which she spent the majority of her time; the latter was the place in which she would experience the deaths of both of her parents. Moreover, Bernard’s assertion that the children of *The Waves* are part of a “doom-encircled population” (64), reveals a further consideration which must come into any account of modernist memories: the impact of war. Writing back to the pre-war years of their youthful experience, Woolf and Merleau-Ponty both almost inevitably remember that period as being one of “incomparable” happiness (Welsh *The Child as Natural Phenomenologist*

²⁴ For an in-depth analysis of the “sudden shocks” of “revelation” that burst into the non-being of everyday life and that Woolf termed “Moments of Being” see Hermione Lee’s introduction to *Virginia Woolf: Moments of Being*. Eds. Jeanne Schulkind and Hermione Lee London: Pimlico, 2002.

147). In cutting short youthful experience, war elevates that time to the realms of utopia. Combined with the missing “non-being” of daily experience, the nostalgia war generates means that both Woolf and Merleau-Ponty are in danger of presenting one-sided accounts that focus too closely on the positive aspects of childhood experience or are distorted by the muddling of childhood experiences with later knowledge.

However, it is only Woolf that explores this danger at any great length. Whilst Merleau-Ponty presents his portrayal of childhood as relatively factual and impersonal, Woolf interrogates her own position, exposing the inherent difficulties that exist within the acts of remembering and (re)presenting the child’s experience. She has Bernard claim in *The Waves*: “Life is not susceptible perhaps to the treatment we give it when we try to tell it” (205). In particular, Woolf objects to the strict linearity of narrative: “Let us pretend that we can make out a plain and logical story so that one matter is despatched [sic] – love for instance – we go on, in an orderly manner, to the next” (193). Merleau-Ponty’s account of childhood falls prey to the false linearity of narrative. His claim that the syncretic stage of childhood is ended by the mirror-stage sometime between the age of three and five is one way in which he rewrites experience as a “plain and logical story” that proceeds in neat developmental stages in an orderly manner. For Woolf, the semblance of order is an artificial surface glossing over the multiplicity of everyday experience. “It is a mistake, this extreme precision, this orderly and military progress; a convenience, a lie” (*The Waves* 197). Behind the social construction of order and progress lies the “alive” “deep” stream of consciousness.

In her exposition of this “alive stream” at the back of consciousness, and of the way that childhood experiences remain active within it, Woolf makes a key contribution to the phenomenological understanding of the importance of childhood experience. In *The Waves*, she shows how the primary, syncretic and non-dualistic natural state that Merleau-Ponty deems complete by the age of five, actually remains within the everyday experience of the adult. Hence Bernard’s assertion that “I am not one and simple, but complex and many” (56) and his contention that:

when I meet an unknown person, and try to break off, here at this table, what I call ‘my life’, it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am – Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs. (212)

In her suggestion that the intersubjective life remains accessible within the “alive” communal stream at the back of each separate existence, Woolf provides a compelling model for on-going intersubjective human engagement. For Woolf, the syncretic world remains underneath daily experience, creating the foundation that all subjective and intersubjective existence stands upon. In her literary work, she thereby locates the primary ground that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology consistently gestures towards. This provides a solid platform from which to understand the human ability to go back to the past, to revisit it, to rewrite it, and to be rewritten by it. Welsh claims “poets, painters, and musicians will be our salvation from the constraining, unnatural effects of our modern society” (CNP 147). Woolf’s writing of childhood is one attempt to enact just such a salvation.

To conclude: in this chapter I have described how Woolf prefigures Merleau-Ponty’s suggestion that early childhood experience is devoid of the distinct categories of self, others, and things that the social world relies upon. I explored Merleau-Ponty and Woolf’s shared interest in bodies and in the ways that the distinction between bodies becomes possible. I suggested that the initiation into the social world of class and gender is controlled by parental mediation and is relayed by the structures of the childhood home. I discussed how Woolf provides examples of young girls being encouraged to play first the habitual and then the heroic hostess, but how she also describes boys as being subject to equally distortive social pressure. In my concluding section, I claimed that, as well as prefiguring Merleau-Ponty’s account of childhood, Woolf also went further than Merleau-Ponty by interrogating her position as a (re)writer of that experience. Finally, I argued that Woolf’s description of the way that the syncretic, non-dualistic world of early childhood remains within the “alive and deep” stream of adult consciousness provides a more convincing argument for intersubjectivity than Merleau-Ponty’s suggestion that this manner of experiencing the world is consigned to the past after the age of five. In my next chapter, I follow the nascent hostesses out of childhood and into adolescence to explore how the initiation into the sexual economy reinforces the roles of habitual and heroic hostess that are first operative in children’s play.

Chapter Three

Maturing in Modernism: Adolescent Guests at the Party

Adolescents, famously, have it tough: their hormones are chaotic; their bodies extend in new equally exciting and embarrassing ways; and intense scrutiny meets their fumbling entrances into the sexual economy. Small wonder this period of development holds such historical interest for so many writers. In this chapter, I focus on adolescent girls as guests at the modernist party. The slippery “in-between” position of the guest mirrors the unstable “in-between” position of the adolescent girl: she exists midway between the childhood of the last chapter and the adult hostess of chapters one and four. Adolescence deviates from childhood in that it marks the advent of sexual desirability creating a dual representation of the body as “for the self” and “for others”. Iris Marion Young’s feminist reworking of Merleau-Ponty’s presentation of spatiality reveals that the dualistic awareness of the body as “for the self” and “for others” is a specifically female concern. This split embodiment comes to the fore in the descriptions of adolescent girls at the party that Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, and Katherine Mansfield provide; however, it is also at play in the everyday movements of adolescent girls. Here I examine both the habitual embodiment of adolescent girls and their heroic party-going embodiment.

The party-going embodiment of adolescent girls comes to the fore in modernist descriptions of dancing. With performance dance in mind, Susan Jones calls the “reciprocal relationship between literature and dance ... one of the most striking but understudied features of modernism” (1). Dance is also underrepresented in phenomenological studies of movement. This oversight is especially surprising in Merleau-Ponty’s case given his attention to embodiment and aesthetics and dance’s status as a truly embodied art form. Contributors to the relatively new field of phenomenology of dance include Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, David Michael Levin, Sondra Fraleigh Horton, Michel Bernard, and Gediminas Kiroblis. All of the critics listed are interested in dance as a performance art. Whilst this work is of undeniable importance, this chapter breaks with the existing phenomenology of dance by exploring dance in its social, rather than its staged, context. Whilst performance dance

is a paradigmatic, non-habitual style of movement, formal social dancing is a learned performance. Rishona Zimring defines social dancing as “everyday, non-theatrical dancing in couples and groups” (*Social Dance* 5-6). Her extraordinary work in this area traces the many changes that social dancing undergoes in the twentieth century and links these developments to the cultural and political situation of the surrounding years.²⁵ I consider dance in the social sense not as an aesthetic form, although it is clearly not without aesthetic appeal and motivations, but as a way of exhibiting social conformity through bodily movements. I read Young’s work on feminine spatiality against Bowen’s and Mansfield’s descriptions of adolescent girls’ social dancing to show how dancing is a specific mode of comportment that places young women in figuratively and literally submissive positions: dependent upon the invitations and the bodies of men. The absolute aim of dances is matchmaking and matrimony and the hostess – the organiser of the party network – has potent power over potential matches. The central idea of this chapter is that the party-going and partnered dancing of adolescent female guests is, like the play of the children in the previous chapter, a form of social conditioning that ultimately prepares young women to play the hostess.

On Being “In-between”: The Adolescent Guest

Scholarly and artistic explorations of adolescence are features of early twentieth-century thought, a fact that goes some way to explaining the prevalence of modernist representations of adolescents. A key text is the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall’s behemoth two-volume work *Adolescence* (1904). The term “adolescence” does not originate with Hall.²⁶ What Hall does help to initiate is the

²⁵ Social dancing, although never completely out of vogue, received an upswing in popularity in the years immediately before, during, and after the First World War. This popularity led to an explosion of styles and techniques, and a complementary extension of venues as new and different places to dance opened up in both urban and rural areas. Zimring identifies two key strains of social dancing in the interwar period. The first is Folk revivalism, which Lady Naylor in Bowen’s *The Last September* describes as “that horrible kind of country dancing they have in England ... women hopping one way, waving things, men all hopping the other way, stamping” (57). The second is the progressive style of dancing associated with the advent of jazz from the 1910s onwards. Henry Green’s novel *Doting* neatly presents the interwar and post-war appetite for jazz and nightclubs. The popularity of the oldest form of ballroom dancing, waltzing, was threatened but not destroyed by these new modern styles of dancing. As Susan Jones notes, “the vogue for the waltz in social dancing ... reached far into the century” (141). In Green’s novel *Concluding*, the climactic scene of the Founder’s Day Dance presents young girls waltzing with one another and with their elders.

²⁶ “Adolescence” is a general term that has been in common usage in English, by way of Middle French, since the mid-fifteenth century. It is derived from Latin and combines the idea of maturing or “ripening” with that of being nourished. Whilst the twenty-first century understanding of the term is that “adolescence” describes the years between thirteen and nineteen years of age, Hall argues for a more elastic understanding. He claims adolescence can begin as early as fourteen and can last as late as twenty-four (*I* xix). Hall’s twentieth-century definition of the timeline of adolescence directs my selection of “adolescent”

widespread exploration of adolescence as a subject for scholarly, and especially psychological, research in the early twentieth century. Hall offers a call to arms on behalf of the young, claiming:

the adolescent stage of life has long seemed to me one of the most fascinating of all themes more worthy, perhaps, than anything else in the world of reverence, most inviting study, and most crying out in need of a service we do not understand how to render aright. (*I xix*)²⁷

Hall's influential work displays a post-*fin-de-siècle* horror of deviancy and helps to establish the early twentieth-century adolescent as an individual undergoing a period of *storm and stress*: a youngster in need of strict social observation and careful direction. As Douglas Mao neatly suggests, the adolescents Hall brought to public consciousness were "tinglingly receptive to vice as well as virtue" (*Fateful Beauty* 34). Hall's focus on social conformity is central to my reading of the effects of external influences on adolescent embodiment.

Elizabeth Bowen ties twentieth-century experience and art to adolescence in her essay, "English Fiction at Mid-Century".²⁸ "In European countries", she claims, "life and art are still seeking their footing in actual time – both have the stigmata of an over-long drawn out adolescence" (321). Here Bowen casts the fragmentary, hesitant uncertainty of modernist artworks as a source of shame: the products of people who cannot, or will not, come to maturity. She attributes the delayed development of twentieth-century life and art to war. As well as creating a feeling of social and artistic torpidity, war also highlights what is significant: "War makes us conscious, anxiously conscious, of the value of everything that is dear and old" (Bowen "The Christmas Toast is Home!" 128).²⁹ One of the dear, valued things that Bowen returns to again and again is the idea of home.³⁰ Home is a stable, indestructible concept that outlasts the brick buildings bombed in the Blitz. The reason for this is that homes "are much more than rooms and tables and chairs. Homes wait in our hearts until we can make them again" ("Christmas" 128). That home is an affective as well as, or instead of, a physical

characters in this chapter; however, I remain suspicious of the infantilising effects of such an extended understanding of the term.

²⁷ Hall's readers share his fervent interest in juvenile experience: *Adolescence* sold 25,000 copies worldwide on its first printing and was internationally influential on the field of youth studies. For more on the influence of Hall, see Louis N. Wilson "Bibliography of the published writings of G. Stanley Hall" in *Biographical Memoir of Granville Stanley Hall, 1846 – 1924*. Ed. Edward L. Thorndike. *National Academy of Sciences Biographical Memoirs* 7. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1928. 155 – 180.

²⁸ Originally published in the *New Republic* on 21 September 1953.

²⁹ "The Christmas Toast is Home!" is a war-time essay first published in *Homes and Gardens* in December 1942.

³⁰ The nature of home is a recurring theme in Bowen's fiction and in her non-fiction. For examples of the latter, see her essays: "The Christmas Toast is Home!"; "Opening up the House"; "Home for Christmas"; and "Bowen's Court".

space is central to my argument that hosting operates on a level beyond the material as a source of bodily and mental comfort support.

Bowen's interest in home forms part of a wider artistic exploration of the subject:

Modernism has a long association with movements, individual or collective, towards and away from 'home'. Whether imagined as an actual space or as an ideal to be pursued, 'home' remains a constant preoccupation for modernist writers generally. (Niemi and Parks 256)

My first and second chapters reveal two ways modernists engage the idea of home, firstly, as the space of party-giving, and secondly, as the space in which subjectivity is formed in childhood. Niemi and Parks suggest that the act of "locating oneself" – which they define as "one's subjective constitution of embodied consciousness" – takes on "particular urgency with the advent of the often alienating social, material, and historical phenomena we now associate with modernity" (256). They conclude: "the subject's sense of being at home – and the opposite sensation, *homelessness*" take on wide and varied valences in modernist literature and philosophy (256).³¹ Here I take the relative homelessness of adolescents as my focus. Straining away from the childhood home of the previous chapter, but not yet in possession of the independent adult home of the first chapter, the adolescent occupies an alienating "in-between" position between childhood and adulthood, and at-homeness and homelessness. This doubled liminality places adolescents in the position of uncertain guests. Bowen presents a particularly compelling representation of the modernist adolescent as guest in Portia Quayne – the sixteen-year old heroine of her late modernist novel *The Death of the Heart* (1938).

Portia is presented as a perpetual guest throughout the novel. She spends her childhood in a string of hotels with her treasured mother Irene:³²

she and Irene, shady, had been skidding about in out-of-season nowhere railway stations and rocks, filing off wet third-class decks of lake steamers, choking over the bones of *loups de mer*, giggling into eiderdowns that smelled of the person-before-last. Untaught, they had walked arm-in-arm along city pavements, and at nights had pulled their beds closer together or slept in the same bed – overcoming, as far as might be, the separation of birth (57).

³¹ Niemi and Parks focus their phenomenological readings of modernist homelessness on the representations of exiles in the work of Claude McKay and James Joyce.

³² The liminal space of the hotel – a home from home that is not truly a home – fascinates Bowen who made a hotel the setting and title of her first novel *The Hotel* (1927).

Portia and her mother share an intense bond and this deep attachment to one another enables them to overcome the difficulties of their nomadic existences to have joyful invigorating experiences. The death of Portia's mother shatters the affective home that they created together in hotels and her father's death soon after makes Portia an orphan. Her brother Thomas agrees to fulfil their father's dying wish and takes her into his London house as a guest. From there, she becomes a guest in a seaside house before returning once more to her stay of uncertain length in London. Never fully at home, Portia is an archetypal adolescent guest. "Sara Ahmed writes that 'we learn what home means, or how we occupy space at home and as home, when we leave home'" (See Niemi and Parks 261). Portia's feeling of being out of place, not quite at home, in the London house reveals the emotional gravity of her destroyed home. Portia's unease is partly motivated by the questions around the length of her stay. Her brother, Thomas, suggests that she may stay a year, but his wife, Anna, is less willing. Therefore, Portia, like all guests, is subject to the uncertainty of conditional hospitality. To reframe the argument in Derridean terms: Portia fills a complementary space to that of the "stranger" or the "foreigner" in the Quayne's domestic home; she is neither located in the "there" of her lost home, nor is she really "here" in the present house that she occupies.

Portia's bodily movements expose her uneasy relationship with the London house and its inhabitants. Young describes the movement of the body through its surroundings as the "most primordial intentional act" (35): nothing reveals a person more clearly than the way in which they move their body. Bowen conveys Portia's nervous and intensely self-aware embodiment in an early description of Portia moving through the sophisticated hosting environment of Anna's drawing room:

Getting up from the stool carefully, Portia returned her cup and plate to the tray. Then, holding herself so erect that she quivered, taking long soft steps on the balls of her feet, and at the same time with an orphaned unostentation, she started making towards the door. She moved crabwise, as though the others were royalty, never quite turning her back on them – and they, waiting for her to be quite gone, watched. (27)

This passage reveals Portia's guesting position with uncomfortable clarity: her awkward and ungainly gait mirrors her dependent situation, causing her to retreat backwards in exaggerated deference to her benefactors' higher social status, and in

acknowledgement of her own position as an “orphaned” guest.³³ Hall highlights the adolescent’s taste for extremity that these actions demonstrate when he claims that, in adolescence, “every trait and faculty is liable to exaggerations and excess” (I xv). Portia’s excessive concern about how to behave makes her adopt an unnaturally rigid intense position that makes her body physically shake. Desperate not to let her body betray her all-too-obvious unease, she moves silently and carefully under the watchful eyes of the drawing room’s hostess Anna and her guest St. Quentin.

Later in the scene, Bowen reinforces the link between the body and the environment. The reader is told that Portia exhibits a strong undercurrent of potential, a “secret power” that keeps springing out, but that at the same time she looks “cautious, aware of the world in which she had to live” (27). Here Bowen comments on the relationship between the body and the world in which it lives – a relationship that Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the “lived body” also engages. According to Young, the lived body is “a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is body-in-situation” (16). In the example from Bowen, the sociocultural context is a drawing room in a fashionable London house during the socially important hour of tea: a situation that is new for Portia.

Merleau-Ponty points out the relationship between development and novelty in one of the few direct comments on puberty that he makes in *The Sorbonne Lectures*. “Development’s essential nature”, he contends, “is a restructuration by which a new bodily situation is assumed when realizing a new type of life” (CPP 222).³⁴ More comfortable in out-of-season hotels than in-fashion town houses, Portia attempts to mould her body to her “new type of life” whilst simultaneously fearing her expulsion from it. Merleau-Ponty emphasises the fundamental reciprocity between self and situation when he writes, “the social is at the interior of the individual and the individual is at the interior of the social” (CPP 225). Bryan Smyth clarifies how this process of development actually occurs when he describes how the disparity between past and present experience requires a modification of bodily movements. As shown in chapter one, Merleau-Ponty’s “bidimensional model of embodiment” compels

³³ The orphan is a key figure in Bowen’s work; her fiction is filled with orphaned or motherless girls. Besides Portia, in the novels there is: Lois in *The Last September*; Pauline in *To The North*; and Eva Trout in the novel of the same name. In the short stories the motherless include: the eponymous heroine of “Maria”; Tibbie in “The Girl with the Stoop”; and Geraldine in “The Little Girl’s Room”.

³⁴ In chapter two of this thesis I provide a more extensive discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s *Sorbonne Lectures*, specifically his presentation of child development (64-89).

Smyth ("Hero" 11).³⁵ Smyth reveals how the difference between "personal ipseity" or the "present body" and the "anonymous habitual" body is temporally contingent:

one's past shapes and conditions one's experience in the present such that selfhood can be seen as emerging dynamically from the ongoing tension that obtains between these dimensions of embodiment. This tension reflects the permanent possibility of an existential disharmony between one's immediate situation and one's past history inasmuch as one (literally) carries the latter around bodily ... in any given circumstances, the dynamic of human existence is in general a matter of negotiating this tension and striving to maintain or increase one's level of corporeal integration or synchronization in order to minimize the resulting disharmony. ("Hero" 11)

Therefore, the social situations that Portia has internalised in the past, that have helped to develop her personal identity and that she "carries around" with her, do not match the present situation that she finds herself within, and it is this disparity that ultimately motivates her uncertainty and bodily "disharmony".³⁶ Portia develops her new identity as the novel progresses and she becomes marginally more comfortable in the London house. However, at the close of the novel the disharmony between her present and past experience resurfaces once more. Visiting Major Brutt in the Karachi hotel, Portia displays an inhuman trepidation:

She only looked at him like a wild creature, just old enough to know it must dread humans – as though he had cornered her in this place. Yes, she was terrified here, like a bird astray in a room, a bird already stunned by dashing itself against mirrors and panes. (319)

"Stunned" by her new experience, Portia reveals how deeply embedded in the developmental stage of adolescence she remains.

However, Portia's particular new social situation is not the only factor contributing towards her ungainly embodiment; other girls her age display similarly awkward movements. Writing a few years after she publishes *The Death of the Heart*, Bowen describes the typical embodiment of the female English adolescent in her essay "Modern Girlhood":³⁷

The young English girl fidgets and gangles her way through society, in which she is conscious of having no place. She comes in round doors

³⁵ For a fuller discussion of Merleau-Ponty's bidimensional presentation of "actual" and "habitual" embodiment see chapter one of this thesis (38-44).

³⁶ Although the temptation exists to read Portia's existence as tragic in some way, a radio interview Bowen gave in 1950 refutes this clear-cut interpretation. She denies that the novel is a "tragedy of adolescence", claiming instead that Portia is actually "less tragic" than the other characters and "at least, has a hope, and ... hasn't atrophied" (See Warren 143).

³⁷ "Modern Girlhood" was originally published in *The Leader* in 1945.

sideways, bashfully, like a crab. She can be very annoying or very touching: I think she is chiefly annoying because she *is* touching. She is as humble as a puppy and as self-conscious as a peacock. She hasn't got a formula ... usually, she is referred to as a 'schoolgirl' – with the suggestion that, if at the moment she is not actually at school, it would be better for everyone if she were. (340)

Awkward, unsettled, and timid, the “young English girl” that Bowen describes is, like Portia, uncomfortably out of place in the society around her and in her own fidgeting gangling body. Consequently, Portia shares her “crab-like” movements and her affecting, but also irritating, manner with her wider contemporaries. Lacking a “formula”, the typical English schoolgirl is no longer a child but not yet an adult, and so she is caught in a guest position between the home and the school that mirrors the more obvious guest position between the hotel and the house that Portia occupies. As with all other lived bodies, it is clear that age and situation have much to do with the movements of adolescent bodies. Nevertheless, there is another central factor at play in embodiment, and it is a concern that is conspicuously missing from Merleau-Ponty's account of the lived body: it is, of course, the question of gender.

In the previous chapter, I touched upon how society reinforces gender identities through cultivated behaviours: girls wear tennis dresses, boys read Virgil.³⁸ These nascent heteronormative gender distinctions are much more rigidly enforced in adolescence. As Hall claims, in adolescence, “sex asserts its mastery in field after field” (*I* xv). In her discussion of female embodiment, Young argues against the term “gender” claiming that the “idea of the lived body ... does the work the category ‘gender’ has done, but better and more” (18). Yet Elizabeth Grosz cautions against a full acceptance of Merleau-Ponty's theory on the grounds that, whilst he “provides a number of crucial insights about the forms and structure of human embodiment”, his philosophy “nevertheless excludes or cannot explain those specific corporeal experiences undergone by women” (108). To this mistrust, Talia Welsh counters “there isn't a problem with Merleau-Pontian phenomenology but rather a problem with Merleau-Ponty's *execution*” (*CNP* 137, emphasis in original). Young shares Welsh's faith in the feminist potential of Merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body. Her solution to the problems that Grosz and Welsh highlight is

³⁸ These deliberately provocative gender distinctions are taken from Woolf's *The Waves*.

a focus upon the ways in which the feminine body frequently or typically conducts itself in ... comportment or movement ... [because this] may be particularly revelatory of the structures of feminine existence. (18.)

To tie this argument around habitual embodiment to Bowen, Portia's personal discomfort is not the only cause of her submissive embodiment: it is actually a style of comportment that suits her new social position as a girl of potential, if not actual means.

Young's discussion of the ways that female bodies inhabit space further illuminates Bowen's presentation of Portia's embodiment. Young opposes Merleau-Ponty's universal idea that the lived body is always "of" rather than "in" space. In contravention of this singularity, Young claims: "Feminine existence lives space as *enclosed* or confining, as having a *dual* structure, and the woman experiences herself as *positioned* in space" (39, emphasis in original). Therefore, female and male bodies can both be "of" space, but the objectifying gaze of others can also position the female body "in" space. Portia's movement through the drawing room is that of a body "in" space: she is uncomfortable moving through space under the objectifying eyes of Anna and St. Quentin, so she draws her body close – tightening her mouth, curling her fingers, and pressing her wrists to her thighs – in an attempt to limit the amount of space her body extends into. Her awareness of the social expectations of her observers triggers this enclosed embodiment. Welsh claims Merleau-Ponty comments on the distortive potential of society when he

discusses how families can aid or hinder a girl in her development by strengthening or loosening the expectation to live up to social norms. Thus, a young woman's freedom is itself influenced by various cultural norms. (131)

In Portia's case, her class position has shifted ambiguously and her unconfident way of moving reflects her uncertainty about the social expectations and norms of her new ill-defined position. Anna makes some attempt to help when she capitulates to Portia's familial tie to her husband by buying her a small wardrobe of appropriate clothing and enrolling her in a school; nevertheless, she shows little desire to personally educate Portia or to truly aid her in the adoption of the alien social position that has been thrust upon her.

Speaking to the housekeeper, Matchett, Anna reveals her annoyance at Portia's unwillingness to give up the "bears' party" in her bedroom (22). Anna considers this

an unforgivably infantile attachment in a girl whose smile is “already not quite childish” (26). Bowen reinforces both Portia’s homelessness and her childishness in a description of Portia’s gaze:

Portia had learnt one dare never look for long. She had those eyes that seem to be welcome nowhere, that learn shyness from the alarm they precipitate. Such eyes are always turning away or being humbly lowered – they dare come to rest nowhere but on a point in space; their homeless intentness makes them appear fanatical. They may move, they may affront, but they cannot communicate. You most often meet, or rather avoid, meeting such eyes in a child’s face – what becomes of the child later you do not know. (49)

Here it is not just Portia’s physical body that is homeless: even the perception that extends out of that body is deemed unwelcome. In this quote, Bowen attributes Portia’s shyness to her awareness that communication is futile – even if she spoke openly she could not be understood. Her “fanatical” eyes and her bear’s party could generate the feeling that Portia is deliberately infantilising herself. However, as Welsh claims, “it is impossible to see” a girl’s

resistance to embracing her ‘womanhood’ as a kind of individual immaturity. ... Instead, it is connected with a world in which womanhood carries with it a curtailing of possibilities rather than an expanding of them. To be a woman is to be required to fit a relatively narrow set of acceptable behaviours. Naturally, young girls will often resist this change when childhood provided them with greater possibilities. (131)

Portia’s attachment to her bear party is then a minor resistance to the narrowing of possibilities that womanhood represents. She feels the “curtailing of possibilities” of impending adulthood particularly keenly because the government of her childhood was especially loose: a discrepancy that makes her present experience feel all the more rigid and restrictive. Portia may be unable, or unwilling, to discard her childhood completely, but she genuinely wants to fit in with the accepted norms of her gender and social position. Her face “burns” with shame when her schoolteacher Miss Paullie catches her with her bag in class – a transgression that the older woman scathingly denotes “a hotel habit” (55). Therefore, Portia exhibits competing desires to develop towards womanhood and to retain the freedom of her former, younger self. In light of Welsh’s statement, Portia’s discomfort with the changes in her situation and her subsequent restlessness are not just evidence of an immature inability to accept change, as some of the adults in the text suggest, but are a response to the curtailing of

her freedoms and to the role of her elders in those restrictions. In sum, Bowen's description of Portia's habitual adolescent embodiment fulfils several functions: it reveals how Portia's orphaned and dependent "guest" status is inscribed into her embodiment; it exposes that adolescents are awkwardly part-child and part-adult; and it brings to light some of the ways in which gender and society impact upon adolescent embodiment.

Heroic Embodiment: The Adolescent Guest at the Party

Everyday, habitual movements through the home environment have a heroic counterpart in bodily movements through the party space. The first movements are self-directed; others motivate the second.³⁹ Merleau-Ponty discusses the two perspectives on the body in a footnote in the *Phenomenology of Perception*: "We must ask", he commands,

why there are two views of me and of my body ... my body for me and my body for others, and how these two systems can exist together. It is indeed not enough to say that the objective body belongs to the realm of "for others", and my phenomenal body to that of "for me", and we cannot refuse to pose the problem of their relations, since the "for me" and the "for others" co-exist in one and the same world, as is proved by my perception of an other who immediately brings me back to the condition of an object for him. (106)

Despite his demand that the problem of the dual aspect of the body, and the relationship between the representations "must" be questioned and "cannot" be ignored, Merleau-Ponty does not return to explore this specific idea in his text in detail, and he especially does not consider how this dual relationship is at work in the specific case of female embodiment.

Woolf, however, does examine the dual representation of the female body. The idea that the body is both for the self and as for others is a key concern throughout her party texts where it plays out in her descriptions of the adolescent guests at Mrs Dalloway's parties. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa's adolescent daughter Elizabeth is an unwilling guest at her mother's party. At the party, she compares her habitual

³⁹ Portia is a special case because Bowen often presents Portia's habitual embodiment as "for others" as well as for herself. The highlights the intense artificiality of Portia's social position, which makes Portia feel under constant observation: an understanding that Anna's reading of her diary proves correct.

embodiment – that which is “of” space or “for the self” – with the heroic embodiment that women are expected to display “in” space or “for others”:

Already, even as she stood there, in her very well-cut clothes, it was beginning. ... People were beginning to compare her to poplar trees, early dawn, hyacinths, fawns, running water, and garden lilies; and it made her life a burden to her, for she so much preferred being left alone to do what she liked in the country, but they would compare her to lilies, and she had to go to parties, and London was so dreary compared with being alone in the country with her father and the dogs. (133)

Elizabeth's thoughts reveal the pressure of “the *idea* of nature that has been established for” women (Wittig 309, emphasis in original). The constraining environment of the social party requires that Elizabeth embody the supposedly “feminine” characteristics of innocence, beauty, and serenity. In contrast to her reaction to the artificial party environment is Elizabeth's preference for the country, a place where she is free from the impetus to contort and conform. It is telling that Woolf describes Elizabeth as “alone” in the country even whilst she notes that Elizabeth's father and dogs are also there: clearly not all “others” have the ability to generate the “for others”, “in space” bodily reaction. Woolf's example makes clear that it is possible for women to be in company without abandoning their freer habitual relationship with their bodies and with space. Young presents a philosophical account of the experience that Elizabeth undergoes at the party:

woman lives her body as *object* as well as subject. The source of this is that patriarchal society defines woman as object, as a mere body, and that in sexist society women are in fact frequently regarded by others as objects and mere bodies. An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject's intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention. (44, emphasis in original)

In Elizabeth's case, it is the combination of her party clothes and the objective eyes of the other guests that robs her of her subjectivity and makes her into a “mere body”, subject to the transfiguring intentions of others. In the country, Elizabeth's habitual “for the self” body is “a living manifestation of action and intention” which gives her the freedom to engage her own possibility to do “what she liked”, but at the party this personal sense of the body recedes under the force of multiple objectifying perspectives.

Of these objectifying perspectives, the sexual gaze of heterosexual men has a particular role to play in the objectification of women's bodies. Bowen explores how parties present a fertile environment for this male-driven objectification in her description of Portia attending a small dance in *The Death of the Heart*. At the party at the seaside house, Dickie, one of Portia's dancing partners and a "born leader of men" (183), lectures Portia on "feminine" actions and toilette. Bowen makes clear the double standards at play in male influence over female bodies when she has Dickie light a cigarette whilst cautioning Portia not to start smoking. He continues: "And another thing you had better not begin is putting stuff on your nails. That sort of thing makes the majority of men sick. One cannot see why girls do it" (184). Having polished off nail polish, Dickie next takes a swipe at lipstick:

Another thing I don't like is messed-up mouths. ... Girls make a mistake in trying to be attractive in ways that simply lose them a man's respect. No man would want to give his children a mother with that sort of stuff all over her face. No wonder the population is going down. (184)

In Dickie's conception, it is not only a woman's status as a potential lover that is at stake if she defies men's expectations of her body: it is also her ability to marry and to produce children. Setting aside, for the time being, Dickie's worrying implicit suggestion that the ultimate purpose of all female actions is matrimony and motherhood, it is key that Bowen reveals the success of Dickie's campaign through the bare nails of his fervent admirer Clara (184). In the sexual economy, the potential reward for successfully shaping the body to fit another's intentions is union with the desired other, a fact that Clara clearly understands.

Bowen presents a more moderate example of a man feeling proprietary over female beauty in her novel *The Last September* (1929). The character Gerald Lesworth, a subaltern soldier and a devotee of the novel's adolescent heroine Lois Farquhar, ponders to himself, "he did like girls to have natural complexions – he was perfectly certain Lois's was" (36). Gerald does not relay this information to Lois directly; nonetheless, Lois understands that Gerald has an idealised view of her: "Some idea he had formed of herself remained inaccessible to her; she could not affect it" (48). Lois rejects Gerald's mythologizing of her: "I feel certain you have illusions about me; I don't believe you know what I'm like a bit" (45). Preferring to retain her subjective bodily awareness, Lois refuses to accept the singular representation that Gerald holds

out for her as a body for others. Welsh claims a young woman cannot “fully abstract herself from the cultural norms that, for better or worse, exist in her society. Yet, the particular style in which she takes up her embodiment is itself not fated” (131). Similarly, through Lois, Bowen reveals that young women can enact agency over their own bodies by refusing to adhere to the idealising influence of men.

But it is not just men that objectify women’s bodies: Young discusses the ways in which women themselves can be complicit in their own objectification:

The woman herself often actively takes up her body as a mere thing. She gazes at it in the mirror, worries about how it looks to others, prunes it, shapes it, molds and decorates it. (44)

This objectification can be internally, as well as externally, motivated. It is precisely this form of self-objectification that the hostess Mrs. Ramsay engages in – and teaches her daughter Rose to engage in – when they sit in front of the mother’s dressing-table mirror selecting jewels for her to wear to her dinner party. Another of Woolf’s characters, Lily Everit of the short story “The Introduction”, reveals the internalised objectification of the female body more clearly. An adolescent guest at yet another of Mrs. Dalloway’s parties, Lily echoes Elizabeth’s and Young’s awareness that female bodies are open to external objectification and idealisation when she realises that “to worship, to adorn, to embellish was her task, and to be worshipped, her wings were for that” (181). However, whilst Elizabeth seeks to evade the party atmosphere and appears at her mother’s party only out of a sense of filial duty, Lily’s engagement in the theatrics of the party motivates her own objectification.

As with Elizabeth, Lily’s heroic embodiment contrasts with her habitual embodiment. She describes her body in solitude as an open point of joyful possibility that moves in unconfined ways at different speeds and across different terrains: “Hers it was, rather, to run and hurry and ponder on long solitary walks, climbing gates stepping through mud, and through the blur, the dream, the ecstasy of loneliness” (180). Despite her suggestion that the sense of self associated with that mode of motility is her “ordinary being”, and that “by which she knew and liked herself” (180), her party-going self is open to the flatteries of femininity. Following Simone de Beauvoir, Young defines “femininity” as

not a mysterious quality or essence that all women have by virtue of their being biologically female. It is, rather, a set of structures and conditions that delimit the typical *situation* of being a woman in a particular society,

as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves. (31)

Lily's heroic embodiment reveals the "set of structures" associated with the experience of being a female adolescent guest at an upper-class party. Adapting her manner of moving to suit her situation, Lily becomes a

flower which had opened in ten minutes ... As she walked with Mrs. Dalloway across the room she accepted the part which was now laid on her and, naturally, overdid it a little as a soldier, proud of the traditions of an old and famous uniform might overdo it, feeling conscious as she walked, of her finery; of her tight shoes; of her coiled and twisted hair; and how if she dropped a handkerchief (this had happened) a man would stoop precipitately and give it her; thus accentuating the delicacy, the artificiality of her bearing unnaturally, for they were not hers after all. (180)

Woolf draws the reader's attention to the artificiality of Lily's objectified motility: she "accepts" the role of the party-going guest; she becomes self-conscious; she conspicuously overdoes it. Her party costume of tight shoes and coiled hair modify the way that she carries herself so that she becomes another person entirely; not herself "after all". Her falsely delicate, dependent, dainty movements at the party are totally at odds with the running, climbing, mud-coated body that represents her "ordinary being". She becomes what her name proclaims her to be: a "flower"; a natural "feminine" object like the similarly lily-like Elizabeth.

Merleau-Ponty claims self-determined self-modification is a feature of adolescent development: "Life's exercise – the creation of the self by the self – is how the child becomes adult" (*CPP* 225). Young, however, is more sensitive to the detrimental effects that the experience of living their bodies as malleable things has on women: "To the extent that a woman lives her body as a thing, she remains rooted in immanence, is inhibited, and retains a distance from her body as transcending movement and from engagement in the world's possibilities" (39). Too late, Lily comes to the similar realisation that her heroic embodiment has betrayed the open possibilities of her habitual embodiment. She finds that she has come out of the "chrysalis" of the "comfortable darkness of childhood" to be proclaimed a

frail and beautiful creature, before whom men bowed, this limited and circumscribed creature who could not do what she liked, this butterfly with a thousand facets to its eyes and delicate fine plumage, and difficulties and sadnesses innumerable; a woman. (179)

By adopting the artificial bearing of the adolescent female guest at the party, Lily accepts a position that is akin to the suffocated butterflies of *Jacob's Room*: her body is encased within an invisible but utterly confining set of principles, rooted in immanence, and ready to be hung upon the wall as a fine specimen of the species "woman". Read alongside the feminist phenomenology of Welsh and Young, Woolf's and Bowen's descriptions of adolescent party guests add to Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodiment the awareness that women can be both "of" space and "in" it through the external and internal objectification of their bodies that requires them to modify their habitual movements to fulfil socially condoned notions of "femininity".

Party-going and the cultivation of specific movements are even more obviously linked in the case of formal dances. Katherine Mansfield reveals that the dance, like the party, is a prime location for the objectification of female adolescent bodies in her short story "Her First Ball" (1921). Describing the start of the eponymous ball Mansfield places the men on the perimeters of the dance floor casually waiting to initiate the dancing. The passive female guests wait in a splendid array of finery nervously wondering what the cause of the delay could be when, all of a sudden, the men come "gliding over the parquet" prompting a "joyful flutter among the girls" (196). The early inaction of the girls, and their rippling response to the movement of the men, affirms the power that the men have over the dance. In this formal 1920s ball, it is the men who give out the invitations to dance. The men's invitations are based largely on physical appearance, a fact that explains the flustered pre-dance preparations of the girls in the first half of the story.

But the men are not the only people prompting the girls to view themselves objectively; a network of women also curates the female adolescent bodies at the dance. This network of women is clear from the outset of the story. Leila, a "country girl" and the story's protagonist, is attending her first formal ball in the company of her more experienced cousins, the Sheridan girls, who she takes as exemplars of ballroom appearance and etiquette. Arriving at the ball, the girls enter the little room marked "Ladies" where "two old women" dash around tossing out armfuls of wraps (194). This female environment is separate from the rest of the drill hall and is filled with mirrors, the presence of which encourages the girls to objectify themselves and each other. When the dance begins, Leila's cousin Meg initiates her into the situation of the dancing environment by introducing her to the other girls in attendance. "'This

is my little country cousin Leila. Be nice to her. Find her partners; she's under my wing,' said Meg, going up to one girl after another" (195). Meg's familiarity with the conventions of dancing allows her to adopt a new "in-between" position that casts her as part-guest and part-hostess, able to send out her own invitations, but still ultimately subject to the higher authority of the men and the older women at the dance.

Just as Meg teaches Leila about the social mechanics of the dance, so too are women the instructors of the dancing world in a pedagogical sense. Mansfield tells her reader that Leila "had learned to dance at boarding school. Every Saturday afternoon the boarders were hurried off to a little corrugated iron mission hall where Miss Eccles (of London) held her 'select' classes" (197). The select nature of the classes reflects the hierarchy of social dancing more generally, where class, as well as looks dictates invitations. Similarly, Bowen's short story "The Dancing-Mistress" (1929) also presents women as the teachers of dance. In the story, the eponymous dancing mistress manages the movements of young girls by instructing them in dancing. She shows a ready preference for the most successful students, and harshly rejects the less capable – casting the clumsy as wilful and deliberately difficult threats to her carefully crafted cohesion. Therefore, whether it is through the passing of wraps, the pleas for partners, or the teaching of steps, a network of women acts as the foundation for socially acceptable dancing.

Dancing Like a Girl

Now I shall move from the preparations for dancing to the phenomenon of dancing itself. Social dancing is of interest here because it is one way female adolescent bodies are taught to be "of" space under the objectifying gaze of others in the way that Young identifies. In phenomenological terms, social dance is a form of bodily gesturing that indicates a way of being-in-the-social-world. Social dancing follows strict, preordained, gender-defined patterns of movement, and promotes a restriction of bodily movements in line with social expectations. Therefore, "social dance is an ideal activity through which to discover the meanings and implications of everyday performance and performativity" (Zimring *Social Dance* 8). In her best-

known essay, Young famously argues that social expectations around what female bodies can and should do teach young girls to use their bodies to “throw like a girl”. In a complementary way, girls are also taught to use their bodies to dance “like a girl” Zimring brings gender into her discussion of dancing when she points out how, for the people of the interwar period,

the variable meanings of social dance hinged on its urgency as both symptom and cure for a war-ravaged, cosmopolitan modernity, and were inseparable from negotiations of modernized gender relations. (*Social Dance* 10)⁴⁰

Similarly, “gender relations” are prominent in Bowen’s presentation of Portia socially dancing with Dickie in *The Death of the Heart*.

Portia learns that society expects her to submit to the control of men when she foxtrots with Dickie in the seaside house where she holidays:

She began to experience the sensation of being firmly trotted backwards and forwards, and at each corner slowly spun like a top. Looking up, she saw Dickie wear the expression many people wear when they drive a car. Dickie controlled her by the pressure of a thumb under her shoulder blade; he supported her wrist between his other thumb and forefinger – when another couple approached he would double her arm up, like someone shutting a penknife in a hurry. Crucified on his chest against his breathing, she felt her feet brush the floor like a marionette’s. (183)

Dickie’s forceful foxtrotting of Portia evidences Young’s claim that female bodies are subject to male “intentions and manipulations”. Dickie “controls” Portia’s movements by using his body to direct hers. “Crucified”, martyr-like against his chest, Portia’s body is in a submissive, doll-like, passive position. Dickie reveals the utilitarian understanding that he has of Portia’s body when he “drives” her and doubles up of her arm like a “penknife”. Young suggests “gendered hierarchies of power ... reproduce a sense of entitlement of men to women’s service and an association of heterosexual masculinity with force and command” (24). Dickie’s forceful and commanding use of Portia’s body echoes Young’s understanding of masculine entitlement, as does the ultimate purpose of his dancing which is to rid him of his persistent admirer Clara.

Merleau-Ponty provides a description of the body’s acquisition of things that mirrors Dickie’s commanding use of Portia’s body:

⁴⁰ That the First World War should generate social dancing specifically as a “cure” to the social fragmentation is also due to the enormous contemporary popularity of the Ballet Russes and to modern celebrity dancers such as Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan.

Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught up in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. *Things are an annex or prolongation of the itself*; they are encrusted in its flesh, they are parts of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body. (EM 125, emphasis added)

Merleau-Ponty claims that all bodies act in this acquisitive way upon the things of the world: Bowen's description of the foxtrot reveals that male bodies can also act in this way on female bodies. Dickie's aggressively colonising body is the centre of the dance: through his movements he "annexes" Portia's body, "encrusting" it within his flesh making it an object that serves his intentions. In *The Last September*, Gerald enacts a similar, albeit gentler, control over the dancing body of Lois after she misses a step whilst dancing with him on the avenue: "His hand slid up between her shoulders; then as she steadied back to the rhythm, down again" (33). In both of Bowen's pairs of dancers, the expressive movements and gestures of the dance reveal the conformity of the dancers to patriarchal gender relations: the adolescent female bodies submit to the will of the young male bodies; the men encircle the bodies of the women in their arms in a gesture that is at once protective and possessive; and they use their bodies with differing levels of force, to direct or provoke the movements of the women. Social dancing, therefore, reiterates, solidifies, and displays, the dependent and delicate embodiment in need of protection that patriarchal narratives impose upon female bodies. Young suggests that the distorting effects of heroic embodiment on habitual embodiment are cumulative: "the more a girl assumes her status as feminine, the more she takes herself to be fragile and immobile ... the more she actively enacts her own body inhibition" (44). Bowen gives an example of this active inhibition of the female body near the end of her description of the foxtrot. Dickie's praise of her dancing flusters Portia who missteps, "leaving behind a toe" that is immediately crushed by the unrelenting Dickie (183). Taken together, Bowen's novels expose social dancing as one way adolescent guests at the party learn the dependent embodiment that society expects of women.

Dancing may allow the adolescent girls to display a "feminine", "womanly" style of embodiment, but this possibility remains open only as long as they keep dancing. Stopping dancing returns the newly mature Portia to her prior youthful state. Cecil, another guest at the party, asks the stationary Portia her age; to the reply of "Sixteen"

he remarks: "Gosh – I thought you were about ten. Anyone ever told you you're a sweet little kid?" (186). Not content to simply return Portia to her "in-between" adolescent status, Cecil regresses her to a more distant point in her childhood. A fleeting maturity is also accorded female dancers in Henry Green's novel *Concluding* (1948). In the novel, 300 institutionalized girls prepare for the annual Founder's Day Dance by performing a practice waltz. Dancing unites them as a cohesive, elegant group; however, with the lifting of the record player's needle, the girls all break away "disappointed, years younger once again" (151). Mansfield's "Her First Ball" presents an even clearer example of the changeable ability of dance to cast adolescent girls first as women and then as children. Having passed through the door marked "Ladies" Leila feels far from the home in which she is a young dependant. Later, Leila's partner the "fat man", refers to her as a "kind little lady" whilst they are dancing (200). This complicated appellation emphasises her youth – "little" – and her maturity – "lady". Her cousin Laura's wink also raises the question of her maturity, causing Leila to "wonder for a moment whether she was quite grown up after all" (198). Here the adolescent girl's status as an "in-between" guest, no longer childish but not yet adult is clear. As the dance progresses, Leila builds up an aura of adulthood by dancing with various men, but this temporary maturity is destroyed by the fat man's prophecy. He claims that "before long" Leila will have transformed into an older, sexually undesirable woman who will be consigned to the stage with the "poor old dears up there" wearing black velvet and living vicariously through the fortunes of her daughter (200). Horrified by the suggestion that her ability to keep dancing is precariously linked to her position within the sexual economy, Leila suffers an existential crisis and longs for the security of her childhood home, whilst "deep inside her a little girl threw her pinafore over her head and sobbed" (201). In the prophecy the understanding that accepting womanhood entails a "curtailing of possibilities" is at play once more. In these examples, dancing like a girl reveals to the adolescent guests the ways in which they will be expected to move like women, a comportment that places them in the perpetually submissive position of artificial fragility.

Dancing, Hosting, Matrimony

But what is the purpose of all this dancing? Rishona Zimring provides an answer in her description of dance as “that formulaic narrative technique for introducing boy to girl” (“Dangerous” 721). In art, and in life, dancing socially brings couples together. Marriage is the ultimate purpose of this matchmaking and matrimony offers one way for girls to solidify their status as adults. Hall objectionably suggests that an “ideal society” ought to prepare young girls for a future of “motherhood and wifedom” (*L* 610-1). Dances offer environments in which matches leading to marriage can be made. In Henry Green’s novel *Doting*, the parents Diana and Arthur are said to have met at a “Hunt Ball” (190), whilst the licentious adolescent Annabel laments the lack of mid-century dances specifically as a “problem for a girl” (253). In Green’s *Concluding*, the leaders of the state institution, the impervious Edge and Miss Baker, are represented as “spinsters” who dance with each other but mostly sit in black velvet and watch their adoptive girls dance. Their initial observation of the dance perfectly coincides with the fat man’s prophecy for older women in “Her First Ball”. Nonetheless, waltzing with Mr Rock reels the unlikely Edge right back into the social order expected of women, and she impulsively, and surprisingly, suggests marriage to the man that she has spent the majority of the novel scheming to expel. Finally, Lady Naylor of *The Last September* claims Lois’s friend Livvy’s engagement to the soldier David has come “of dancing and all this excitement” (167).

Furthermore, the example of Lady Naylor also reveals the influence of the hostess in couple making. Merleau-Ponty suggests that parents and culture act as “developmental guardrails” for adolescents (*CPP* 225). The hostess too can act as a “developmental guardrail”; in the party environment, she curates a suitable environment through the management of her guest list: she decides who to invite and perhaps more importantly, who not to invite. However, the hostess’s power over matrimony is more extensive than the simple act of bringing bodies together in one room. As Woolf’s Mrs. Ramsay reveals the hostess can have a hand in the proposal too. Like Hall and Dickie, Mrs. Ramsay heartily, and erroneously, believes that “people must marry; people must have children” (44). This unshakeable understanding

motivates her to push together her ill-suited guests Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle.⁴¹ Mrs. Ramsay's unfailing belief that "an unmarried woman has missed the best of life" compels her to command Minta that she "must marry" (36). Likewise, it is Mrs. Ramsay's encouragement that finally prompts Paul to propose to Minta:

It had been far and away the worst moment of his life when he asked Minta to marry him. He would go straight to Mrs. Ramsay, because he felt somehow that she was the person who had made him do it. (57)

Minta accepts and Mrs. Ramsay delights in the knowledge that she has created a new couple in the "Rayleys". She desires a similar fate for her own daughter Prue: an adolescent girl who is "just beginning, just moving, just descending" towards womanhood (79). Mrs. Ramsay observes Prue watching Minta curiously and mentally promises her the same, if not greater, happiness in marriage. I will return to Prue Ramsay shortly, but first, I want to reveal that the hostess can sever couples, as well as unite them.

In Bowen's novel *The Last September* Lady Naylor, aristocratic aunt to the adolescent Lois and hostess of Danielstown, breaks apart the "improper" match between Lois and the soldier Gerald. The match is the result of two dances; the first an informal dance on the avenue, the second a more formal dance at the Rolfe's party. It is the second dance that results in the impromptu proposal that leaves the couple in an uncertain betrothal. Lady Naylor uses all of her considerable powers of manipulation to put a stop to this unplanned engagement. Early in the narrative, she castigates the Hartigan girls for not making the effort towards matrimony, and she sends Gerald over to them as a potential match. However, when it is her own niece's marriage that is in question, Lady Naylor claims, "'there's a future for girls nowadays outside marriage'" (174). Rejecting Gerald because he lacks both money and social status, Lady Naylor succeeds in her mission to break the couple apart: "'You do quite understand that you are not engaged...?'" (182). The example of Lady Naylor makes clear the power that the hostess holds over matchmaking and matrimony.

To the Lighthouse reveals a further negative aspect to the hostess's power over marriage. In one of the bracketed asides in "Time Passes", we learn that Prue Ramsay like Minta, has been wed. Her community is delighted: "What people said could have been more fitting?" (98). Mrs. Ramsay is not present at the marriage of her daughter

⁴¹ Minta is a womanly girl who, at twenty-four, just fits within Hall's extended definition of twentieth-century adolescence.

as she has died some time previously. It is also not clear whether she played any direct role in the making of the match. However, the implication remains that Prue's marriage is, at least in part, a response to her mother's forceful invocation that "people must marry; people must have children". Prue's decision to marry is in contrast to the refusal of matrimony that she imagines making earlier in the novel when she and her sisters dream of a life different from their mother's:

not always taking care of some man or other; for there was in all their minds a mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the Bank of England and the Indian Empire, of ringed fingers and lace. (5)

The young girls mentally reject the habitual hospitality of "always taking care of some man or other" that is wrapped up with patriarchal ideas of gender, business, and nationhood. Nevertheless, soon enough Prue will follow her mother's mantra in the wearing of lace and a ring. Prue's much-promised happiness is short-lived. Shortly after her marriage, in another bracketed aside, Prue dies. The cause of her death is "some illness connected with childbirth" (98). Therefore, matrimony and maternity literally result in the death of Prue Ramsay. Neither does Minta Rayley, née Doyle have a blissful wedded life: within a year, the marriage to Paul Rayley turns "out bad" (129). Lily Briscoe, a rare female character who successfully deflects Mrs. Ramsay's attempts to get her to contemplate marriage, imagines feeling triumphant telling a spectral Mrs. Ramsay that the marriage of the Rayleys has not been a success. But even Lily only escapes by "the skin of her teeth" (131). Moreover, it is not until Mrs Ramsay is dead that Lily feels capable of really standing up to the "astonishing power" that the habitual hostess has over her (131). Like Woolf and the murdered Angel in the House, if Mrs. Ramsay had not died she would, artistically speaking, have killed Lily. Freer of her influence, Lily realises that she "need never marry anybody" and this revelation allows for the successful culmination of her much-delayed artwork (131). In her art, Lily finds a sustaining form of creativity outside of hosting. Through the characters Prue, Minta, and Lily, Woolf condemns thoughtless capitulations to the habitual hostess's demands for imitation at the same time that she remains committed to the preservative potential of the hostess, as explored in chapter one.

In summation, here I have argued adolescents occupy a guest position: no longer "little girls" but not yet "women", adolescent girls are somewhere "in-between", and this ambiguity motivates their uncertain and hesitant habitual embodiment. Young

Woolf, Bowen, and Mansfield all reveal that adolescent girls objectify their bodies in line with equally distortive external and internal ideals of “femininity”, often as part of wider networks of objectifying women. At parties, adolescent girls are encouraged to adopt a refined, delicate “for others” heroic embodiment in place of their freely moving “for the self” habitual embodiment. Sustained repetitions of this heroic embodiment ultimately change their habitual manner of moving, and this process occurs in line with the general curtailing of possibilities that womanhood presents. Dancing is one such form of repetitious bodily movement. In my discussion of dancing I step away from the existing work on the phenomenology of dance to consider dance in its social, rather than its performative, context. This allows me to reveal how “modern gender relations” are enforced through social dancing which conditions men to exhibit a forceful, colonising comportment, whilst adolescent girls are made to present correspondingly submissive and passive movements (Zimring *Social Dance* 10). I suggested that dancing offers adolescent girls a fleeting maturity that can only be sustained as long as they are confined to the passive movements of partnered dancing; when they cease dancing they return to their ambiguous status as “girls”. I explored how the aim of social dancing is marriage and how matrimony is a process that is controlled, in part, by hostesses who curate socially appropriate matches. Ultimately, the intervention in adolescent embodiment that social dancing exemplifies aims at creating submissive, passive women who will adhere to Mrs. Ramsay’s mantra to marry and have children: future habitual and heroic hostesses. Yet, like all people the hostess is fallible and Woolf shows that the model of habitual hosting that they offer is not always the surest road to happiness. From the maturity and matrimony of this chapter, in my next chapter I move to maternity and the embodied hosting of pregnancy.

Chapter Four

Hosting in Maternal Flesh

Our birth in fact constitutes the first act of hospitality— offered to, not by, us—and not a psychological, but an ontological, existential problem: We come from a mother’s womb, we begin our beings as cells splitting and growing, until we finally part, indeed “disassemble” ourselves from another human being ... In this special case, hospitality actually is the precondition to life. (Anne Dufourmantelle “Of Compassion and Violence” 17)

Pregnant embodiment provides the primary hospitable environment. The pregnant woman is a maternal hostess whose lived body offers hospitality to the foetus. I begin this chapter on maternal hospitality by discussing the general discourse around pregnancy in the early twentieth century before looking specifically at D. H. Lawrence’s literary descriptions of pregnancy. I read Lawrence’s account of pregnancy against the concept of the flesh that Merleau-Ponty develops in his final work *The Visible and the Invisible*.⁴² Taking inspiration from recent feminist research into the “flesh”, I consider how the “flesh” in Merleau-Ponty is equivalent to “maternal flesh”. I then move from the discussion of pregnancy to one of birth. I argue for an understanding of birth as “dehiscence”: a term that Merleau-Ponty takes up in his work and that denotes the “splitting of flesh”. Lawrence’s literary description of childbirth allows me to explore how maternal hospitality extends through, and beyond, dehiscence. I further my discussion of modernist childbirth by close reading the birthing scene in the “Oxen of the Sun” chapter of *Ulysses*. I argue that James Joyce describes a twentieth-century description of childbirth that counters the more typically nineteenth-century version of birth that Lawrence presents in *The Rainbow*. This difference reveals how, in the twentieth century, the scene of childbirth moved from the home – with the assistance of other women – to the hospital – under the watch of men. I conclude my discussion of birthing with a reading of Mina Loy’s

⁴² Written at the end of Merleau-Ponty’s life, and curtailed by his untimely death in 1961, *The Visible and the Invisible* exists only in incomplete and unedited form. The text’s editor Claude Lefort makes clear that the material that remains was intended to form part of a larger work: “Outlines for the work are few and do not agree exactly with one another. It is certain that the author was recasting his project during the course of its execution. We can, however, presume that the work would have been of considerable length and that the text we possess constitutes only its first part, which was intended to serve as an introduction” (xxxiv-xxxv).

modernist poem “Parturition”. “Parturition” is a literary rarity in its modernist description of birth from the parturient woman’s perspective. Close reading the poem allows me to explore the female perspective on birthing that is noticeably absent in the presentations of maternal flesh that Merleau-Ponty, Lawrence, and Joyce provide. Finally, I return to Lawrence and to Merleau-Ponty’s late philosophy to expose a shared reliance on the language of pregnancy to reveal metaphysical ideas. I claim that this appropriation recasts women as “metaphorical”, as well as “maternal hostesses”. Throughout, my focus remains on the lived bodily experience of the hostess, and on bringing to expression those female bodily experiences that are traditionally silenced or described from male perspectives.

Twentieth-Century Pregnancies

The society of the early twentieth century viewed pregnancy in a very different way to the society of the century that preceded it: “In Victorian culture, the entire process of pregnancy, from conception to delivery, was carefully managed and hidden so fully shrouded as to be nearly invisible” (Prescott 196). This Victorian reticence extended into the arts:

Just as a woman’s ‘delicate condition’ was euphemized out of sight and hearing, pregnancy and childbirth endured a similar ‘confinement’ in literature; referenced or alluded to, but never fully revealed, examined, or celebrated, and certainly not from a woman’s point of view. (Prescott 196)

The modernists, however, were writing at a time when pregnancy had become a source of public debate. In 1906, Havelock Ellis, the leading sexologist and founder of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (the B. S. S. S. P.), made clear the need for frank and public discussions of pregnancy:

Our ignorance of the changes effected by the occurrence of this supremely important event – even on the physical side – still remains profound. Pregnancy, even for us, the critical and unprejudiced children of a civilized age, still remains, as for the children of more primitive ages, a mystery. (*Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Volume III* 228)

For Ellis, pregnancy has existential, as well as sociological and biological, importance. “The future of the race is bound up with our efforts to fathom the mystery of

pregnancy" (229). Ellis's interest in pregnancy is part of a wider contemporary discourse on sexual rights. By the 1910s, the questioning of sexual rights is a cultural debate that extends beyond social campaigning, giving rise to political, religious, medical, and aesthetic discussions about a woman's right to "control over [her] maternal function". That startling phrase is taken from a paper entitled "The Sexual Variety and Variability Among Women and Their Bearing upon Social Re-Construction", delivered to the B. S. S. S. P. on October 14, 1915. In the paper, F. W. Stella Browne, a prominent female member of the B. S. S. S. P., argues against the government's propaganda to raise the falling birth rate – the so-called "War Baby Scoop" – showing how contemporary women's acceptance or denial of maternity is affected by their lack of legal rights to sexual education, to contraception, and to abortion. Sara Crangle reveals how menses were a particular focus in the twentieth-century discourse around women's mental and reproductive health: "a variety of authoritative bodies – domestic, medical, corporate – were paying attention to menstruation in the modernist era as never before" (157). In the same year that Browne spoke, The Women's Co-operative Guild published a collection of letters written by a selection of its 32,000 members, entitled *Maternity: Letters from Working-Women*. The Rt. Hon. Herbert Samuel provided the preface to the collection, and claimed that the letters give, "for the first time in their own words the working woman's view of her life in relation to maternity" (3). The collection is limited to letters from married mothers; nevertheless, in their unshrinking account of the hardships of continual maternity, the letters provide a robust riposte to the contemporary political idea that women have a duty to produce as many children as they can for as long as they are able.

Out of this background of widespread interest in sexual rights, and in maternity in particular, several modernist texts that include pregnant characters appear. The three key writers under discussion in this thesis so far all write texts that contain pregnant characters: Mansfield's short stories "Prelude", "At the Bay", "This Flower", and "At Lehmann's"; Woolf's novels *Orlando* and *The Waves*; and Bowen's novel *The Heat of the Day*. These limited examples evidence a contemporary artistic interest in pregnancy. However, of all the modernists that describe pregnancy in their work, it is Lawrence that is the most comprehensive; gestating women appear in his work with a regularity that is little matched in the whole of modernist literature. Each of the

following works contains a pregnant character: the early short story “Odour of Chrysanthemums”;⁴³ the semi-autobiographical novel *Sons and Lovers*; the unfinished comic novel *Mr. Noon*;⁴⁴ and the novel *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. Of course, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is also infamous for its contemporarily unusual discussion of sex.⁴⁵

Although it is beyond the particular purview of this thesis, the body in its sexual being is interesting in terms of hosting because, in heterosexual intercourse, the female body literally acts as a host to the guesting male body. The male body is exposed in this act: the host has the potential to become the *hostis* or enemy by infecting the guest. Likewise, the guesting male can infect the host and parasitically destroy the hosting space it enters. Despite the involvement of hosting in the body in its sexual being and Lawrence’s interest in the sexual body, because the focus of this thesis is the sociological structures that impact behaviour and that are habit-forming it is the social conception of sex and pregnancy that is privileged here in place of discussions of the body in its sexual being. The reoccurrence of the theme of pregnancy across Lawrence’s fictional works makes his enduring interest in the phenomenon of pregnancy clear. But nowhere else in his work does pregnancy receive such complete treatment as it does in his novel *The Rainbow* (1915). *The Rainbow* focuses on the sexual and familial relationships of four generations of the Brangwen family who have fifteen children between them. In the course of the narrative Lawrence describes three separate Brangwen pregnancies: two pregnancies result in children, but one ends in a life-changing miscarriage. In what follows, I present a phenomenological reading of the pregnant lived body in *The Rainbow*. But first, what does Merleau-Ponty contribute to the question of maternal hosting?

Merleau-Ponty’s Maternal “Flesh”

Lawrence and Merleau-Ponty share an interest in the concept of “flesh”. “Flesh” is a word that appears repeatedly in *The Rainbow*, and this engagement is part of a wider interest that Lawrence has in flesh and, in particular, in “maternal flesh”. In his

⁴³ Written in 1909 and published in *The English Review* in 1910.

⁴⁴ Begun in 1920 but abandoned by Lawrence in 1921, this incomplete work was published posthumously in 1934.

⁴⁵ *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was the subject of a famous, but unsuccessful, obscenity trial when it was first published in full in 1960.

"Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*", he reverses the biblical idea of the relationship between "the flesh" and "the word" to emphasis the role of women in the making of flesh:⁴⁶

John, the beloved disciple, says, "The word was made Flesh". But why should he turn things around? The women simply go on bearing talkative sons, as an answer. "The Flesh was made Word". (95-96)

Merleau-Ponty's reveals his interest in the nature of "flesh" in the chapter "The Intertwining – The Chiasm" of *The Visible and the Invisible*. Just as in Lawrence's foreword, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the "flesh" references female reproduction. However, whilst Lawrence's focus on "maternal flesh" is overt, Merleau-Ponty's inclusion of gestation appears altogether less deliberate:

Merleau-Ponty does not refer to the intrauterine as such, [but] he does refer to "the current making of an embryo a newborn infant" (199, 152), to "pregnancy" (195/149) and to "invagination" (199/152). (Tina Chanter 230)

Merleau-Ponty uses the language of pregnancy liberally, but he fails to explicitly discuss the phenomenon of "pregnant flesh"; nonetheless, it is a phenomenon that substantially informs the content of his theory.⁴⁷

In order to explore how Merleau-Ponty's concept of "flesh" is akin to "maternal flesh", and to set up the questions around maternal hosting that Lawrence poses in his description of pregnant flesh, it is first necessary to give an outline of the visible/invisible dialectic that forms the basis for Merleau-Ponty's theory of the "flesh". In his final work, Merleau-Ponty repositions his career-long interest in perception, choosing to focus instead on "visibility". Perception suggests a single direction of sight; visibility, however, implies a reciprocal relationship between the seer and the thing seen: to see one must also be able to be seen. It is by engaging in the reciprocal acts of seeing and being seen that one enters into the being of visibility. Complimentary to the idea of visibility is the notion of "tangibility". In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty presents his famous image of the "double sensation" of the two hands touching one another:

⁴⁶ The foreword is included in a letter to Edward Garnett in January 1913 but it was never published with the novel. It is published for the first time in 1932 in the posthumous collection of Lawrence's letters edited by Aldous Huxley. For more on Lawrence's engagement with the biblical idea of flesh, see John R. Harrison, "The flesh and the word: The evolution of a metaphysic in the early work of D. H. Lawrence." *Studies in the Novel* 32.1 (2000): 29-48.

⁴⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, the man who brought phenomenology to France via his translation of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), also relies heavily on pregnant language.

the two hands are never simultaneously in the relationship of touched and touching to each other. When I press my two hands together, it is not a matter of two sensations felt together as one perceives two objects placed side by side, but of an ambiguous set up in which both hands can alternate the roles of “touching” and being “touched” (107).

In his later text, Merleau-Ponty returns to the image of hands to reinforce how there is an identical reciprocity at work in the tangible as there is in the visible. Thus, to touch one must also be able to be touched:

the touched-touching. This structure exists in one sole organ. The flesh of my fingers = each of them is phenomenal finger and objective finger, outside and inside of the finger in reciprocity, in chiasm, activity and passivity coupled. The one encroaches upon the other, they are in a relation of real opposition. (“Working Note” VI 261)⁴⁸

Merleau-Ponty defines the congruent relationship at work in the visible and the tangible as “reversibility” or “chiasm”: “The idea of *chiasm*, that is: every relation with being is *simultaneously* a taking and a being taken, the hold is held, it is *inscribed* and inscribed in the same being that it takes hold of” (WN VI 266). As well as containing their own opposites, the visible and the tangible also exhibit “reversibility” in their relationship with one another. It is this “reversible”, reciprocal relationship between the visible and the tangible that helps to create a full sensual engagement with the world. Refuting Jean-Paul Sartre’s nihilistic solution of “nothingness” to the question of Being, Merleau-Ponty suggests instead the opposite solution of an endless plenitude: “every perception is doubled with a counter-perception” (WN VI 264).⁴⁹ He terms this counter-perception the “invisible”. The “invisible” is

not a *de facto* invisible, like an object hidden behind another, and not an absolute invisible, which would have nothing to do with the visible. Rather it is the invisible *of* this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility, the Being of this being. (151)

Having introduced the idea of the “invisible”, Merleau-Ponty relies on an image of gestation to further reveal his theory: “The visible is pregnant with the invisible” (WN VI 216). Merleau-Ponty uses this pregnant imagery to indicate the “intertwining” of the visible and the invisible. It is this intertwining that characterizes and maintains the

⁴⁸ This statement appears in a “Working Note” to *The Visible and the Invisible*. Working notes are written by Merleau-Ponty and are dated November 1960. All future working notes are marked “WN” in parentheses.

⁴⁹ Merleau-Ponty takes particular issue with the Sartrean concept of nothingness as put forward in *Being and Nothingness*. For more on this, see the chapter “Interrogation and the Dialectic” in *The Visible and the Invisible* (50-104).

reversibility of visibility. The relationship of reversibility at work within the visible constitutes not just the seer and the thing seen, but also everyone and everything within the visual field:

if there is a relation of the visible with itself that traverses me and constitutes me as a seer, this circle which I do not form, which forms me, this coiling over of the visible upon the visible, can traverse, animate other bodies as well as my own. (140)

In this quote, Merleau-Ponty once again depends on pregnant language to reveal his ideas in a way that becomes increasingly characteristic of *The Visible and the Invisible* as the work progresses. The seer becomes like the foetus in the womb: “animated” by another body and “encircled” by the “constituting” body of visibility. The “coiling” of the visible upon itself suggests the characteristic looping of the umbilical cord.

Merleau-Ponty uses the term “flesh” to describe this “interiorly worked-over mass” (146 – 147). The body has two “sides” which form the flesh: “the body as sensible and the body as sentient (what in the past we called objective body and phenomenal body)” (136). Both “sides” of the body are caught up in the reciprocal “intertwining” between the seeing and the seen, the touching and the touched. However, for Merleau-Ponty, flesh is not limited to the human body but is also “a connective tissue or intertwining constituting both world and body on a prepersonal level” (Olkowski 5). Additionally, “the flesh of the world is not *self-sensing* (*se sentir*) as is my flesh. It is sensible and not sentient” (VI 260). Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the primordial, but non-material, “elemental” nature of this alternative conception of flesh:

The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term “element,” in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an “element” of Being”. (VI 139 – 140)

Flesh is, therefore, not a thing in the usual sense, but is that which enables the thingness of things: “Flesh is being’s reversibility, its capacity to fold in on itself, a dual orientation inward and outward, which Merleau-Ponty has described – not unproblematically as ‘invagination’” (Grosz 100). Merleau-Ponty’s description of flesh “folding in on itself” as “invagination” finds a complement in his suggestion that the “divergence between the within and the without ... constitutes” the “natal secret” of

the flesh (VI 135 - 136). In natural birth, the vagina acts as the final point of contact between the “within” flesh of the mother and the “without” flesh of the world. Consequently, the female body contains a literal point at which two fleshs can merge.

Considering Merleau-Ponty’s evident propensity for pregnant language Elizabeth Grosz comments on the “significance” of the fact that “most feminists have little to say” about Merleau-Ponty’s last works, and about his notion of the flesh specifically (103). Grosz notes that until the 1990s, most of the feminist commentary on Merleau-Ponty’s work engages the concepts of bodily schema and subject-object relationships that he puts forward in *Phenomenology of Perception*. The focus was changed by the philosopher Luce Irigaray’s famous reading of the “The Intertwining - The Chiasm” in her work *Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1993). Nonetheless, Grosz laments that key feminist respondents to Merleau-Ponty, such as Young and Judith Butler, continue to work with his earlier material even after Irigaray’s intervention. More recently, some notable exceptions to the rule include Gail Weiss’s work on Merleau-Ponty’s concept of “écart” or the “space of corporeal difference”, and Tina Chanter’s work on the “maternal-feminine” of the flesh, a piece which itself forms a response to Irigaray’s reading. The work of Eva Simms also originates in Irigaray’s response but approaches the question of pregnant flesh from an ecological as well as an ontological perspective. The phenomenological focus of this chapter develops specifically out of the feminist research into Merleau-Ponty’s late work that is begun by Irigaray, and continues in the work of the thinkers listed above.

Irigaray’s work reveals how it is not just in his language that Merleau-Ponty relies upon pregnant images; his theory itself brings to mind intrauterine experience:

Luce Irigaray points out that many of the images in *The Visible and the Invisible* describe the visible in terms of ‘intrauterine nesting’ and other maternal metaphors. Merleau-Ponty’s flesh ontology is permeated with images of gestation. But he never lingers to explore these maternal metaphors. (Simms “Eating” 268)

As well as refusing Merleau-Ponty’s appropriation of the imagery of pregnancy, Irigaray also argues against his emphasizing of the visual at the expense of the tangible: “Merleau-Ponty accords an exorbitant privilege to vision. Or else, once again, he expresses the exorbitant privileging of vision in our culture” (*Ethics* 174). Similarly, in *Women in Love*, the sister novel to *The Rainbow*, Lawrence discusses the

Western privileging of the visible over the tangible. Considering a trip to South America, the rakish Halliday suggests that there

one would *feel* things instead of merely looking at them. I should feel the air move against me, and feel the things I touched, instead of having only to look at them. I'm sure life is all wrong because it has become much too visual – we can neither hear nor feel nor understand, we can only see. I'm sure that is entirely wrong. (96)

Lawrence sets the visible in direct opposition to the tangible, as Irigaray does, and prefigures her argument for a reevaluation of the importance of tangible experiences. In contravention to Merleau-Ponty's work, Irigaray suggests that the visible needs the tangible but that this need is "not reciprocal" (*Ethics* 174). To prove the primacy of tangibility, Irigaray holds up the very experience that Merleau-Ponty's language and imagery evokes but that he fails to explore: the "*prenatal sojourn*" (*Ethics* 165). This experience, she claims, "is always invisible, in any case to my eyes" (165). Her focus on pregnant tangibility leads her to assert, "intrauterine tactile experience is the primal sensibility" (Olkowski 5).

Interbody reciprocity is key to this "primal sensibility". Following Irigaray, Simms describes "the original chiasmic life of the human body [as] coming into being inside the body of another – through the placenta" ("Eating" 268). The placenta is the ultimate embodiment of reversibility: created by the mother for the sustenance of the child, it exists between both bodies. In one of the rare instances when he discusses pregnancy directly, Merleau-Ponty engages the interbody reciprocity of pregnancy when he describes pregnancy as an "anonymous experience" that the pregnant woman has little conscious control over (*CPP* 78). He suggests the pregnant woman

feels her own body to be alienated from her; it is no longer the simple extension of her own activity. Her body ceases to be entirely hers; it is systematically inhabited by another being. Her body will shortly bring another consciousness to the world. Her own pregnancy is not an act like all the others she accomplishes with her body. Pregnancy is more an anonymous process which happens through her and of which she is only the seat. On the one hand, the infant's body escapes her, but on the other, the infant who will be born is truly an extension of her own body. (*CPP* 78)

In his description of pregnancy as a form of "inhabitation", Merleau-Ponty reveals how the gestating body is wrapped up in the logic of hospitality; however, he privileges the natal guest experience over the experience of the pregnant maternal hostess. For some mothers, Merleau-Ponty's description of the alienation and anonymity of

pregnancy will be deeply familiar; yet, for others, his portrayal of the life-creating mother as “only the seat” of pregnant experience belies the deliberate, continuous engagement they feel they have with their pregnant bodies and with the fetuses they nourish, nurture, protect, and sustain. For others still, pregnancy will be an experience that generates changeable feelings of both alienation and connection. In *Psychoanalysis of the Unconscious*, Lawrence, like Merleau-Ponty, focuses on the anonymity of pregnancy: “Child and mother have”, he argues, “in the first place, no objective consciousness of each other, and certainly no *idea* of each other. Each is a blind desideratum to the other” (77). By contrast, Tina Chanter reverses this logic and restores female agency to pregnant bodies in her description of maternal hospitality: “The maternal body is that which brings to birth, makes viable, creates each individual, and as such it contributes the initial home, dwelling, vessel that renders life possible” (230). Chanter refutes the claims for maternal passivity in pregnancy by presenting pregnancy and birth as only possible through the deliberate actions of women’s bodies. Her focus on the knowing actions of the creative mother overturns any idea of pregnancy as being entirely “anonymous”. Chanter’s statement that the woman’s body provides the primary home or dwelling also reinforces the idea of foetal inhabitation that Merleau-Ponty suggests, compounding my argument that pregnant women are fleshy hostesses.

Thinking of the pregnant woman as hostess emphasises the reciprocity that is at the heart of hospitality:

the reversal in which the master of this house, the master in his own home, the host, can only accomplish his task as host, that is, hospitality, in becoming invited by the other into his home, in being welcomed by him whom he welcomes, in receiving the hospitality he gives. (Derrida 9)

Like the two-way placenta, and the intertwining of the visible with the invisible, hospitality is a reciprocal relationship where the welcoming one must also in turn be welcomed. Here I prefer Merleau-Ponty’s term “reciprocal” to his term “reversible”, as a way to suggest the mutual intentionality of maternal hospitality: it is not an anonymous “reversible” process, but a directed “reciprocal” relation willingly given from one body to another. The slipperiness of the host/guest relationship is evident in this primary hospitality because pregnancy

challenges the integration of my body experience by rendering fluid the boundary between what is within, myself, and what is outside, separate. I

experience my insides as the space of another, yet my own body. (Young 49)

In gestation it is hard to know where the “I” ends and the foetal “Other” begins and therefore, it is difficult to determine who is hosting whom within the fleshy relativity of the womb. Rather than being “anonymous”, as Merleau-Ponty stipulates, or “unconscious”, as Lawrence suggests, some pregnancies are actively conscious, and some aspects of pregnancy require the woman’s conscious effort. Irigaray describes the “chiasmic relationship between mother and foetus as the ground for all future instances of reversibility that we experience in our lives” (Weiss 206-207). Whilst Young claims the foetus is “another that is nevertheless my body” (49). Moreover where Merleau-Ponty insists on the psychogenetic effect of the mirror stage,⁵⁰ Irigaray privileges prenatal experience as the primary source of intersubjective reckoning: it is because the flesh of the child is originally subsumed in the maternal flesh that all other relationships of I/Other become possible:

Intersubjectivity may well commence with the felt experience of the child, which begins in the body of the woman who gives birth, who carries the child to term, and who then nurtures and cares for the child. (Olkowski 10)

It is in this sense of intersubjectivity that Dufourmantelle claims “hospitality actually is the precondition to life” (“Of Compassion and Violence” 17).

Pregnant Flesh in D. H. Lawrence

The first attempt that Lawrence makes to fathom the “maternal hospitality” in *The Rainbow* comes in his description of Lydia’s pregnancy with her son, Tom Brangwen. Lawrence presents that pregnancy exclusively from the point of view of the deposed father Tom Senior:

She was with child, and there was again the silence and distance between them. She did not want him nor his secrets nor his game, he was deposed, he was cast out. He seethed with fury at the small, ugly-mouthed woman who had nothing to do with him. Sometimes his anger broke on her but she did not cry. She turned on him like a tiger, and there was battle. (63)

⁵⁰ For more on psychogenesis and the mirror-stage in Merleau-Ponty, see chapter two (71-76).

The father is “deposed” and “cast out”, and he reacts to his perceived expulsion from the woman’s emotional life with explosive fury. He feels that once Lydia is “with child”, she is no longer with him, and this feeling grows as the pregnancy develops: “as the months of her pregnancy went on, she left him more and more alone, she was more and more unaware of him, his existence was annulled” (64). In Tom’s conception, Lydia’s pregnancy is a self-sufficient state of embodiment, but nowhere in the text does Lydia herself confirm her contentment; the “silence” that exists between the pregnant wife and her partner also shuts down communication between Lydia and the reader. In this early part of the novel, pregnancy appears largely as an irritation to the outsider male and the reader is, therefore, pushed to accept the male perspective of the experience.

Later in the text, Lawrence portrays pregnant embodiment from the perspective of the enceinte woman for the first time. He describes the moment that Anna Brangwen realises that she is pregnant with her daughter Ursula:

Directly, it occurred to her that she was with child. There was a great trembling of wonder and anticipation through her soul. She wanted a child. Not that she loved babies so much, though she was touched by all young things. But she wanted to bear children. And a certain hunger in her heart wanted to unite her husband with herself, in a child. (175)

Lawrence portrays Anna’s “wonder” and “anticipation” of motherhood as part of a larger desire to cement her fractious relationship with her husband. He also nullifies the specifically human quality of the source of Anna’s wonder: she does not love “babies” so much as she is “touched by all young things.” In this description of a woman coming to awareness of the new life within her, Lawrence diminishes the relationship between the mother and her baby in the face of the “primary” relationship between man and woman. Like her mother, Anna experiences a disconnection in her relationship with her partner because of her pregnancy. Her husband, Will, turns on her because he is unable to share in her bodily experience:

He was cruel to her. But all the time he was ashamed. And being ashamed, he was more cruel. For he was ashamed that he could not come to fulfilment without her. And he could not. And she would not heed him. He was shackled and in darkness of torment. (182)

Here Lawrence once again clarifies his understanding that the source of male discontent in female pregnancies is a feeling of shameful abandonment: Will requires

a relationship with Anna to “come to fulfilment”, but he feels that the foetus has usurped his position in this I/Other relationship. Anna is unable to understand Will’s perspective, so she responds to his anger with confusion:

she wanted so much the joy and the vagueness and the innocence of her pregnancy. She did not want his bitter-corrosive love, she did not want it poured into her, to burn her. Why must she have it? Why, oh why was he not content, contained? (181)

In this quote, Lawrence briefly presents the emotional elation of pregnancy for the first time. Anna is “contained” and “content” in her pregnancy, but remains ignorant of the source of the solitary male’s annoyance. Lawrence’s description of the “vagueness” of pregnancy indicates both the I/Other ambiguity that characterises the experience and Merleau-Ponty’s idea of pregnancy as an “anonymous” process.

The sense of pregnancy as a rapturous experience that Lawrence hints at in Anna’s “joy”, reaches its ecstatic climax in the scene where Anna celebrates her pregnant body by dancing naked:

She sat in pride and curious pleasure. When there was no-one to exult with, and the unsatisfied soul must dance and play, then one danced before the Unknown. Suddenly she realized that this was what she wanted to do. Big with child as she was, she danced there in the bedroom by herself, lifting her hands and her body to the Unseen, to the unseen Creator who had chosen her, to whom she belonged. She would not have had anyone know. She danced in secret, and her soul rose in bliss. She danced in secret before the Creator, she took off her clothes and danced in the pride of her bigness. (183)

Unable to share her joy with her jealous husband, and incapable of “exulting” alone Anna looks for an alternative source of secret companionship. As Peter Balbert writes she “capitalizes on her self-contained link with the infinite, bypasses her defaulting husband, and communes with the unknown by herself” (71). But when she is finished she immediately begins to fear the response of her husband: “She was shrinking and afraid. To what was she now exposed? She half wanted to tell her husband. Yet she shrank from him” (183). This fear does not stop her from repeating the experience even whilst Will is in the house:

Because he was in the house, she had to dance before her Creator in exemption from the man. On a Saturday afternoon, when she had a fire in the bedroom, against [sic] she took off her things and danced, lifting her knees and her hands in a slow, rhythmic exulting. He was in the house, so her pride was fiercer. She would dance his nullification, she would dance

to her unseen Lord. She was exalted over him, before the Lord. (184)

Dancing naked, the pregnant Anna glories in her new transcendental relationship. Importantly, it is not her relationship with her unborn child that creates this fulfilment; rather it is her communion with the unseen Lord. She “nullifies” her human partner by dancing before her divine observer. Will’s reaction to Anna’s spiritual transcendence gives an uncanny impression of the pregnant woman:

He turned aside, he could not look, it hurt his eyes. Her fine limbs lifted and lifted, her hair was sticking out all fierce, and her belly, big, strange, terrifying, uplifted to the Lord. Her face was rapt and beautiful, she danced exulting before her Lord, and knew no man. It hurt him as he watched as if he were at the stake. He felt he was being burned alive. The strangeness, the power of her dancing consumed him, he was burned, he could not grasp, he could not understand. He waited obliterated. Then his eyes became blind to her, he saw her no more. ... The vision of her tormented him all the days of his life, as she had been then, a strange, exalted thing having no relation to himself. (184 - 185)

In her separation from him, Anna becomes a wild, terrifying vision. Unable to share in or comprehend her experience, Will becomes a heretic who figuratively burns at the stake for witnessing her divine transcendence. Earlier, Lawrence gave the impression of female fulfilment in the joy of gestation, now pregnant embodiment becomes a nightmarish vision so frightening as to remain with the viewer for the rest of his life. If it is possible to read Lawrence as suggesting that Anna’s dancing is rooted in a positive pride in her pregnancy, the rapid and hideous transfiguration that the experience undergoes in the eyes of her husband quickly removes that possibility.

Balbert suggests Anna’s dancing is a result of Will’s obvious resentment of her “fulfilment”. He describes the dance as a “primitive pantomime” of Will’s “emasculatation and execution” and claims it displays “sexual intensity and unrestrained cruelty” (71). Young, however, gives a description of pregnant embodiment that presents an alternative, non-sexualised way of comprehending Anna’s naked dance: “The pregnant woman’s relation to her body can be an innocent narcissism. As I undress in the morning and evening, I gaze in the mirror for long minutes, without stealth or vanity” (53-54). Young’s idea of the positive “innocent narcissism” of pregnancy may be better served by the term “fascination”; this alternative word captures the “pride” and “curious pleasure” in her life-giving body

that prompts Anna to rejoice in her “bigness” by dancing naked⁵¹. Writing of the “innocent narcissism” of pregnancy, Young claims:

the dominant culture’s desexualization of the pregnant body helps make possible such self-love when it happens. The culture’s separation of pregnancy and sexuality can liberate her from the sexually objectifying gaze that alienates and instrumentalizes her when in her non-pregnant state. (54)⁵²

Where the male sexual gaze previously alienated woman from her sexually objectified body, now woman’s pregnant body alienates the man who looks upon it. Therefore Anna’s naked dance can also be read as a celebration of her freedom from the sexual gaze. Will’s response to the sight of Anna dancing exposes that, in this instance, just such a desexualisation has taken place. Previously, Will took great sexual pleasure in Anna’s body, but in pregnancy her body becomes “strange”, “terrifying”, and of “no relation to him”.

Divested of its religious connotations, Anna’s dancing also evidences Irigaray’s claim that the tangible has primacy over the visible in pregnant experience: Anna celebrates herself as a visual spectacle – she dances “in the pride of her bigness” – but the visual aspect of her dance is subordinate to the tactile experience; it is the tangible movement of the dance – the “rhythmic exultation” that comes from lifting her knees and hands – that ultimately leads to Anna’s elation. Will is party only to the visible element of Anna’s experience, so he cannot share in the tangible aspect of her pregnancy, and it is the one-sided nature of his perception that makes the visible

⁵¹ Young describes normal pregnant movement as “dancing”; however, where Anna’s pregnant dancing leads to transcendence, for Young pregnant “dancing” leads to a positive sense of immanence: “The pregnant subject experiences herself as located in the eyes and trunk simultaneously, I suggest. She often experiences her ordinary walking, turning, sitting as a kind of dance, movement that not only gets her where she is going, but also in which she glides through space in an immediate openness. She is surprised sometimes that this weighted solidity that she feels herself becoming can still move with ease. Pregnancy roots me to the earth, make me conscious of the physicality of my body not as an object, but as the material weight that I am in movement” (Young 52).

⁵² Young makes a further claim for the desexualisation of the pregnant body when she suggests that, although “there was a time when the pregnant woman stood as a symbol of stately and sexual beauty ... our own culture harshly separates pregnancy from sexuality” (53). Whilst Young accepts that pregnant women themselves are not necessarily cut off from their sexuality, and acknowledges that they may in fact feel a heightened sense of sexuality, I am not persuaded by her suggestion that our culture strictly separates pregnancy from sexuality. My feeling is that, as with most elements of sexual desire, sexual attraction to pregnant bodies occurs on an individual scale that can extend from total sexual disinterest right through to fetishisation. Young later softens her claim to suggest that pregnancy “may” give women “some release” from the sexual gaze, but she does not address how, for some women, pregnancy creates the feeling of being even more fully defined by their sexuality than ever before (53). Young does acknowledge the limiting of her scope to desired, Western pregnancies; however, whilst her work is to be applauded because it highlights how pregnancy can be made to feel negative through the actions of others – for example, through the alienating discourse of male-dominated obstetrics – Young fails to consider how pregnancy can be experienced as a negative experience by the woman undergoing it simply because of the actual physical effects of the experience. She takes an essentialist positive stance on the embodiment of pregnancy that occasionally gestures towards temporary inconvenience and annoyance but does not explore the potential for a truly negative experience of pregnancy, such as could be caused by intense physical or psychological discomfort. In contravention to Young’s argument, I would suggest that it is perfectly possible for a woman to have a negative experience of pregnancy even if she is supported by caring, female physicians who allow her agency and authority over her own experience. For me, Young’s understanding of pregnant experience itself as essentially positive has consequences for the persuasiveness of her representation of pregnant embodiment.

spectacle of her pregnant body so alienating to him. Later in the novel, Lawrence uses another description of dancing to reveal the possible reciprocity of tangible experiences outside of pregnancy.

That later dance takes place at the wedding of Fred Brangwen, where Anna's daughter Ursula and her partner Anton Skrebensky engage in social dancing. The description evokes Merleau-Ponty's conception of fleshy reversibility:

At the touch of her hand on his arm, his consciousness melted away from him. He took her into his arms, as if into the sure, subtle power of his will, and they became one movement, one dual movement, dancing on the slippery grass. It would be endless, this movement, it would continue for ever [sic]. It was his will and her will locked in a trance of motion, two wills locked in one motion, yet never fusing, never yielding one to the other. It was a glaucous, intertwining, delicious flux and contest in flux. They were both absorbed into a profound silence, into a deep, fluid underwater energy that gave them the unlimited strength. All the dancers were waving intertwined in the flux of music. Shadowy couples passed and repassed before the fire, the dancing feet danced silently by into the darkness. It was a vision of the depths of the underworld, under the great flood. (318)

In this passage, Lawrence emphasises the primacy of the tangible over the visible in his description of Skrebensky's consciousness dissolving at the touch of Ursula's hand. Whereas Bowen's and Mansfield's descriptions of social dancing record controlling males overpowering passive female bodies, Lawrence presents two equal "wills locked in one motion".⁵³ Ursula's and Skrebensky's flesh "intertwining" to create a shared oblivion, but they never completely "fuse", remaining instead in the "constant flux" that marks Merleau-Ponty's concept of reversibility. As with Merleau-Ponty's description of the "intertwining" of flesh, Lawrence's portrayal of this dance could, if taken in isolation, be read as an evocation of pregnancy. The "two wills" locked in "one motion" but "never fusing" implies the I/Other engagement of the mother and the foetus. As with pregnant tangibility, the touch of flesh on flesh is prior to the "vision" of the other dancing bodies. The "intertwining" that is constitutive of pregnant experience appears in tandem with a "profound silence" and a "deep fluid underwater energy" that calls to mind not only the "great flood" that drowned the father, and the divine Father's punishment of the Great Flood, but also the conditions of the mother's amniotic sac. Finally, the blue-grey tinge of "glaucous" suggests the distinctive hue of

⁵³ For my discussion of social dancing in Bowen and Mansfield, see chapter four (109-116).

new-born skin. Birth is a subject that Lawrence considers in both its tactile and visual qualities twice in *The Rainbow*.

Birth as Dehiscence

In both of the descriptions of childbirth that Lawrence gives in the novel, the pregnant woman gives birth in the traditional environment of the home attended by a female midwife, and the only man who is present is the father of the child. However, the process of giving birth undergoes great change in the twentieth century as childbirth moves out of the home and into the hospital. The centuries-old female realm of childbirth is taken over by men as male obstetricians replace female midwives as the greatest source of authority at the side of the laying-in bed. Alan Friedman argues that a similar process of men replacing women occurs at the laying-out bed as the undertaker replaces the female family members who traditionally care for corpses. He links this change to suffrage and war: “as women claimed places in the male work world, politics, and higher education, men denied them their traditional roles as midwives ... and guardians of the corpse: domestic, reproductive and ritual roles” (316) In my next chapter, I explore how hosting is at play at the end of life in women’s engagement with dead bodies, but here I remain focused on woman hosting at the start of life. Literature offers a record of the twentieth-century shift of the birthing scene away from the female-centric home to the male-dominated hospital. I offer readings of childbirth in Lawrence, Joyce, and Loy as a way to track the change from the traditional home birth that was prevalent in the nineteenth century, to the newly medicalized births of the twentieth century.

In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence presents two descriptions of nineteenth-century birth that both take place on the traditional “bed of conception and dying” and are attended by female midwives (Friedman 316). The male perspective dominates the first description of childbirth that Lawrence gives in the novel. Tom Brangwen’s birth is presented entirely through the eyes and ears of his father, Tom senior: “Sometimes there sounded, long and remote in the house, vibrating through everything, the moaning cry of a woman in labour. Brangwen, sitting downstairs, was divided” (75) Despite the presence of a female midwife, the reader is never given a female

perspective on the experience; instead, Lawrence places the focus on the father's experience of the birth. For the majority of the description, Tom's body lingers downstairs, whilst his mind is on the memory of owls he saw as a youngster. He does, however, invest some mental energy in considering the birth of his child: "Elsewhere fundamental, he was with his wife in labour, the child was being brought forth out of their one flesh. He and she, one flesh, out of which life must be put forth" (75). Here Lawrence extends the idea of "flesh" to represent the intertwining of the separate fleshs of Lydia and Tom: it is out of their two fleshs joined together as one that the new life must come.

As with pregnancy, Merleau-Ponty does not describe childbirth *per se*, but his discussion of flesh does provide a term that is useful in thinking through the fleshy process of birth that Lawrence's novel describes. Discussing the reversibility between the flesh of the body and the flesh of the world, Merleau-Ponty uses the term "dehiscence" – literally the "splitting open of flesh" – to relate the body's opening unto the world:

When I find again the actual world such as it is, under my hands, under my eyes, up against my body, I find much more than an object: a Being of which my vision is a part, a visibility older than my operations or my acts. But this does not mean that there was a fusion or coinciding of me with it: on the contrary, this occurs because a sort of dehiscence opens my body in two, and because between my body looked at and my body looking, my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping/or encroachment, so that we must say that the things pass into us as well as we into the thing. (VI 123)

Merleau-Ponty's overarching image of "intrauterine nesting" reappears in this quote with the addition of an opening which allows for the movement between the looked at and the looking; the touched and the touching; the flesh and the world. "Dehiscence" is a medical term – a telling common usage is the phrase "dehiscence of uterus" to indicate the rupturing of a wound or scar made by a caesarean section. In opening the body, birth itself is a form of dehiscence: "Female bodies live the openness of the human body and its insertion into the life of other beings viscerally" (Simms "Eating" 277). In birth, the labouring mother's body "opens in two" and exposes that which was previously inside the flesh of the body to the outside flesh of the world. As Young suggests, "the birthing process entails the most extreme suspension of the bodily distinction between inner and outer" (50). As the time at which the combined flesh of

pregnancy becomes the separate fleshs of mother and baby, birth is also the splitting open or “dehiscence” of the I/Other ambiguity that defines pregnancy.

Lawrence uses terminology that is reminiscent of the splitting and rupturing of dehiscence in his description of Lydia birthing:

The rent was not in his body, but it was of his body. On her the blows fell, but the quiver ran through to him, to his last fibre. She must be torn asunder for life to come forth, yet still they were one flesh, and still, further back, the life came out of him to her, and still he was the unbroken that has the broken rock in its arms, their flesh was one rock from which the life gushed, out of her who was smitten and rent, from him who quivered and yielded. (75)

There is a triple dehiscence at work in this description of birth. The first two examples are in the senses given above; the literal dehiscence of the flesh of the mother “tearing asunder” to bring forth life; and the splitting apart of the fleshs of mother and foetus. The third sense of dehiscence comes from the rending of the metaphorically joined fleshs of mother and father: in Tom’s conception of Lydia’s labour, their disparate fleshs combine in “one rock” which splits apart as “life gushes” forth. Even before the dehiscence of the “one rock”, Tom is able to perform a further singular act of “splitting” flesh. The mother is tied to the bodily experience of giving birth, but the father can tear asunder from the “one flesh” he postulates:

His lower, deeper self was with her, bound to her, suffering. But the shell of his body remembered the sound of the owls that used to fly round the farmstead when he was a boy. (75)

In opposition to Anna’s pregnant dancing, Lawrence suggests, in childbirth, it is the woman who remains immanently tied to the Earth whilst the man can escape in the transcendental consideration of the infinite: “The swift, unseen threshing of the night upon him silenced him and he was overcome. He turned away indoors, humbly. There was the infinite world, eternal, unchanging, as well as the world of life” (81). The pre-birth splitting apart of the “one flesh” reinforces the alienation of the man from the woman that the experience of pregnancy generates:

He started. There was the sound of the owls – the moaning of the woman. What an uncanny sound! It was not human – at least to a man. He went down to her room, entering softly. ... She was beautiful to him – but it was not human. He had a dread of her as she lay there. What had she to do with him? She was other than himself. (80)

Moving from the aural to the visual spectacle of Lydia birthing, Lawrence presents the sight of birth through male eyes as something “not human”, uncanny: a perfect counterpart to the “strange” and “terrifying” image of pregnant Anna dancing. Tom may try to share in “one” body with Lydia but, in his “dread” of her otherness, there remains an insurmountable rent in the flesh.

Lawrence is not alone in his partial neglect of the female perspective of childbirth: in the early twentieth century, descriptions of birth from the parturient woman’s point of view were rare. Quoting from Otto Weininger’s work *Sex and Character* (1903), Ellis discusses how the arts are complicit in the silence around the female experience of birth: “Never yet has a pregnant woman given expression in any form – poem, memoirs, or gynaecological monograph – to her sensations or feelings’ (229). The male ownership of the discourse around female reproductive organs in the Victorian era motivates, or at the very least compounds, this female reticence. As Sara Crangle notes:

Throughout the nineteenth century, gynaecology was dominated by male practitioners who perceived themselves to be their patient’s protectors, even as they wrote articles in leading medical journals about finding timid, pliant women for their studies. (152)

Mina Loy’s poem “Parturition” (1914) engages the female physical and emotional response to childbirth and can be read as a direct, if perhaps unintended, response to both Ellis’s call to action and to the male-penned studies of the previous century. Yet Loy is not alone in describing the female experience of birth; Lawrence too attempts to give a description of the labouring woman’s experience of childbirth.

The attempt comes in his presentation of Lydia’s daughter Anna giving birth to her own daughter, Ursula. The first thing to be said of Lawrence’s description of Anna travailing is that the writer presents a woman who feels a “fierce, tearing pain” that is nonetheless “exhilarating”: “She screamed and suffered but was all the time curiously alive and vital. She felt so powerfully alive and in the hands of such a masterly force of life that her bottom-most feeling was one of exhilaration” (192). Lawrence presents Anna’s labour as a life-affirming battle with pain, and one that she is, “winning winning ... always winning” (192). However, whilst Lawrence describes Anna’s labour the actual moments of birth are problematically missing from the narrative. This curtailment divests the experience of its ecstatic conclusion and leaves the description

of birth unsatisfyingly incomplete. In the course of the narrative Anna will enter into a “trance of motherhood”, going on to birth a further four children, but the novel never again describes Anna in labour, or for that matter, any other character (220). Therefore, Lawrence’s description of a woman’s experience of labour may be applauded for its rarity, but, in its brevity and in its inescapably male perspective, it does little to really counter the traditional artistic silencing of the woman’s experience of bringing life forth out of her body. Moreover, it reinforces the traditional understanding of artistic creativity as enabling male access to the female sphere of reproductive creativity.

Lawrence may not describe birth again, but he does present a further presentation of dehiscence in his representations of breastfeeding.⁵⁴ There he reveals dehiscence is not always permanent and tears in the flesh can be sewn back together. The dehiscence that splits the child from the mother at birth can be partially reversed in breastfeeding: “Breast and baby are an intercorporeal form, and breastfeeding reveals the ambiguity and chiasmic entwining of maternal and infant bodies” (Simms “Eating” 266). Lawrence describes breastfeeding at two separate points in *The Rainbow* and he categorises both experiences as “bliss”. In the first instance he presents just the mother’s perspective, as a triumphant “Anna Victrix” holds “the child to her breast with her two hands covering it, passionately” (192). In the second, the experiences of the mother and the child intertwine:

Oh, oh, the bliss of the little life sucking the milk of her body! Oh, oh, the bliss, as the infant grew stronger, of the two tiny hands clutching, catching blindly yet passionately at her breasts, of the tiny mouth seeking her in blind, sure, vital knowledge, of the sudden consummate peace as the little body sank, the mouth and throat sucking, sucking, sucking, drinking life from her to make a new life. (213)

Here Lawrence once more reveals his understanding that the tangible overpowers the visible in pregnancy: the “blindness” of the child is reinforced twice, and the “clutching” and “sucking” of hands and lips takes precedence over sight in the experience of both the child and the mother. Breastfeeding, in Lawrence’s description reintroduces the ambiguous separate/togetherness of pregnant embodiment that birth appears to end.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ As with Lawrence’s descriptions of the female experience of birthing, his representation of breastfeeding is a modernist rarity.

⁵⁵ The aim here is not to privilege breastfeeding over bottle-feeding, or, indeed, maternal care over paternal care.

Returning to the subject of birth specifically, if *The Rainbow* presents the typical nineteenth-century childbirth occurring in the female space of the home, then *Ulysses* gives the more classically twentieth-century experience of birth taking place in a male-governed hospital. Joyce's novel reveals the recent shift from the midwife to the doctor: "Seeing a midwife, Stephen Dedalus thinks, 'One of her sisterhood lugged me squealing into life' (*Ulysses* 32); but in the novel's present Mina Purefoy gives birth in a hospital" (Friedman 316). That Joyce should mention the "sisterhood" of midwives is interesting because *The Sisters* was the title of the novel that Lawrence originally began in early 1913 and which later became *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. The sisters of this early title are presumably Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen, the characters who take centre stage as the heroines of the later novel; however, *The Rainbow* is a novel in which the sisterhood of midwives plays an important, albeit silenced, role.⁵⁶ In *Ulysses*, a sister attends to Mina Purefoy, but the midwife's position is subordinate to that of the male doctor who appears at the completion of the birth. Even the name of the hospital in which Mina gives birth – the fantastically phallic "Horne's House" – alludes to the male control of twentieth-century birthing. Joyce puns on the other traditional use for the female genitals – housing the penis in copulation – and he makes the male domination of the hospital painfully clear:

Of that house A. Horne is lord. Seventy beds keeps he there teeming mothers are wont that they lie for to thole and bring forth bairns hale so God's angels to Mary quoth Watchers tway there walk, white sisters in ward sleepless. (315)

Here the labouring women and the midwives are drawn together in the images of the "teeming mothers" and sleepless "white sisters" all of whom are under the dominion of "A. Horne", the lordly man who rules the restless roost.

Joyce's archaic use of Middle English in this passage is part of a chapter-long allusion to the historical development of language through the use of varying linguistic styles. In this early example, he uses Middle English to present the men who gather on the ground floor of "Horne's House" as knights of the realm. The revelry of the men distresses the attending midwife who begs them to "leave their wassailing for there was above one quick with child, a gentle dame, whose time hied fast" (317-8). Like Lawrence before him, Joyce presents the male experience of listening to the birth from

⁵⁶ The first of Joyce's short stories in *Dubliners* is likewise called "The Sisters". In that story the sisters referred to are the sisters of the dead central male character who are involved in laying out the corpse.

a different room. "Sir Leopold" hears the cries from above and wonders whether it is from a child or a woman, and he pities Mina Purefoy who has by that time been in labour for three days. Bloom talks to another older gentleman and they drink the woman's health together. He then sits with the attending scholars and they "fest him" in the "honourablest manner" (318). Here masculine hospitality contrasts the fleshy maternal hosting that is being noisily brought to fruition over the men's heads. The form of hospitality that the men extend to one another is encapsulated in the labouring woman's last name – "Purefoy". "Foy" is a Scots word that alludes to hospitality, chiefly meaning a farewell gift, a feast, or drink. The birthing woman is "pure foy" – pure hospitality – and this sensibility is reflected by the men's carousing. The idea that giving birth can itself constitute a "farewell gift" appears in the men's discussion of death in childbirth. Noting that one or other of the parties most intimately involved in birth can die in the process, all the men agree, "the wife should live and the babe to die" (319). Nonetheless, should the mother die and the child survive then the baby itself becomes a "farewell gift". The links between birth and death that pervade this scene are taken up in my next chapter.

Another allusion that Joyce makes in "The Oxen of the Sun", and that once again ties his and Lawrence's descriptions of birth together, is the religious making flesh of the word. A drunken Stephen announces to the men gathered at the laying-in hospital, "In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the postcreation. *Omnis caro ad te veniet*" (all flesh shall pass unto thee) (320). Like Lawrence's foreword, and his focus on the religious transcendence of pregnant dancing, Joyce sublimates the female bodily creation of life within the divine Father's creation of life: women may make flesh, but God ultimately makes *all* flesh. Just as the male doctor replaces the female midwife, so too does the divine Father supersede the birthing woman.

Joyce reinforces the male ownership of the female experience of birth through an encyclopaedic list of

all the cases of human nativity which Aristotle has classified in his masterpiece with chromolithographic illustrations. The gravest problems of obstetrics and forensic medicine were examined with as much animation as the most popular beliefs on the state of pregnancy. (336)

In all this long discussion of pregnancy – which moves from ancient philosophy through folklore and common knowledge, to cutting-edge scientific discourse – not once do the debating men invite a woman to share her personal experience of the event. Bar the occasional appearance of the midwife Nurse Callan, who first admonishes the noisy men and later announces the birth of the baby boy, all of the principal characters of this chapter on birth are men. The labouring woman screams in the background and her condition, and that of other women like her, forms the discursive backbone of this chapter. However, the female perspective of birthing is absent up to the point at which the birth is complete.

Even Mina's eventual, long-delayed actual giving of birth is presented as a lesser achievement than that of the "young surgeon" who appears only at the end of the woman's three-day ordeal:

Meanwhile the skill and patience of the physician had brought about a happy *accouchement*. It had been a weary weary while both for patient and doctor. All that surgical skill could do was done and the brave woman had manfully helped. She had. She had fought the good fight and now she was very very happy. (343)

Joyce feels it necessary to repeat the affirmation that the woman has "manfully helped" the surgeon, but it is the surgeon who he presents as the true facilitator of this happy ending.⁵⁷ The nurse who attends throughout the labour is even more speedily dismissed and is entirely absent from the praise of "skill and patience" which has enabled the birth. Again like Lawrence, Joyce gives the glory of the birth first to man and then to God: "she reclines there with the motherlight in her eyes ... in the first bloom of her new motherhood, breathing a silent prayer of thanksgiving to One above the Universal Husband" (343). Joyce concludes his short foray into the delivery room by commending the absent father Doady who "will call in His own time. You too have fought the good fight and played loyally your man's part. Sir, to you my hand. Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" (344). Like Tom Brangwen from whose flesh birth is supposedly rent, here the godlike "Doady" can come to the arena of birth "in His own time" and, despite his absence, can claim some of the praise for the success of the birth. In summation, Joyce's description of Mina Purefoy's labour reveals how, in

⁵⁷ In keeping with the mocking tone of *Ulysses* as a whole, it is entirely possible to read Joyce's work on pregnancy as satirical. However, even if his work is intended to teasingly gesture towards the male ownership of the discourse on birth, his decision to present a birth from an entirely male perspective, and from outside the birthing room, may highlight the inequality in representations of birth, but in practice it does little to actually shift the balance towards the pregnant woman's point of view.

the early twentieth century, births move into male hospitals and are taken over by male doctors whilst remaining a subject for male discussion and discourse. A complementary desire to Lawrence's wish to dispense with the "Magna Mater" in deference to the divine Father also surfaces here. Finally, Joyce aligns birthing with the logic of hospitality through the men's knightly feasting and through the birthing woman's last name.

The first name that Joyce gives to his labouring woman is likewise no accident "Mina Purefoy" is a neat match for "Mina Loy": a poet who publishes "Parturition" in 1914; this famously visceral poem of birth is thus published as Joyce is writing *Ulysses*. Joyce's decision to present his Mina birthing out of sight is perhaps a direct retaliation against the bodily description of childbirth that Loy presents. Written from the birthing woman's perspective, Loy's poem describes parturition as an experience that is screamingly painful, but potently positive. Her detailing of childbirth is a rare in its refusal to shy away from the sheer physicality of the act of birthing: she describes the body of the woman giving birth in all its "congested cosmos of agony" (l.6). Rather than focusing on the "payoff" of a child, as Lawrence and Joyce do, Loy "celebrates the act of parturition as an experience worthy in and of itself" (Prescott 197). In "Parturition", the woman's body is undeniable in its insistent, pervasive presence: "I am the centre / Of a circle of pain / Exceeding its boundaries in every direction" (l. 1-3). In this poem the agonising birthing mother cannot be avoided, and she will not be shut away. In labour, she is refined through pain down to the very essence of existence: "the pinpoint nucleus of being" (l. 10). This creates a transcendental "elevated consciousness" (Prescott 196). Female genitalia is notably absent in Lawrence and Joyce's description of childbirth; Loy, conversely, presents the searing of the "sensitized area" (l. 15) that gapes in its intense extension, whilst nerves tremor under time-bending contractions. The reader witnesses the "within"/"without" (l. 12-14) struggle for self-control in which the pain of birth threatens to obliterate both the birthing woman's body and her ego, but instead finds an equal resisting force. The birthing woman is willing to "traverse herself" (l. 50), and bravely mounts the "unavoidable", "distorted mountains of agony" (l. 41) that heap up as her uterus pushes forth life.

Behind the repose-less delirium of a night that leaves the heroine's foam-flecked mouth gargling like a "crucified wild beast" (l. 55-7), is the image of the "irresponsible"

(l. 38) impregnating man whose lips form a song of “nice girls with their hair in curls’ (l. 32-3) as he swiftly mounts a back staircase in the woman’s memory of the conception. “He is running upstairs” (l. 40) whilst she climbs up her mountains of pain. As with Lawrence’s description of Lydia birthing, man escapes the experience whilst woman remains tied to the agony of birth: “superiorly Inferior” (l. 39). And yet for all its bodiliness, this presentation of birth touches the infinite: the “infinitesimal motion” (l. 101) of “incipient life” (l. 105) precipitates within the gestating woman. “The contents of the universe / Mother I am / Identical / with infinite Maternity’ (l.107-110). With the body of the new-born damp between her legs, the exhausted but exhilarated woman transcends her temporally-bounded existence and is “absorbed’ into the line of women whose own bodies have birthed to allow her to live: “The was - is - ever - shall - be / Of cosmic reproductivity” (l. 112-5). The simplicity of Loy’s final lines – “I once heard in a church / - Man and woman God made them - / Thank God” (l. 120-3) – counters the complex, transcendental bodily presentation she has given of the woman’s experience of birthing and gives the lie to Lawrence and Joyce’s simplification that birth is the product of divine male intervention. In Loy’s glorious paean to birthing, it is the mother’s, not the Father’s, body that subtends, extends, and transcends.

In her poem “Parturition”, Mina Loy gives the missing birth of Mina Purefoy in advance. Loy physically and emotionally distances the man from the experience of birth, contrasting the father’s frivolous, light-hearted song on the backstairs with the meditative female experience in the birthing room. Writing after Loy, Joyce shuts his Mina away, allowing only her intermittent cries to creep through half-closed doors. In Joyce’s novel, the female experience of birth is an occasional, but easily ignored interruption in an extended, explicitly male, discourse on pregnancy and birth. It is difficult to locate Loy’s poem within the contemporary development away from the female home towards the male hospital because it is not clear where exactly the birth that Loy describes is taking place, and nor is the reader told who the attendees are. In fact, there may be no attendees at all to this birth: Loy presents the parturient woman as resoundingly independent. Loy’s focus on the complicated negotiation between “without” and “within”, and her suggestion that birth blurs “spatial contours”, reveals how the slippery negotiation between the “inside” and the “outside”, which is such a central part of the maternal hospitality of pregnancy, continues in the female

experience of birth. Merleau-Ponty largely avoids the subject of maternity, whilst Lawrence and Joyce privilege paternity over maternity because the latter is presented as ultimately under the direction of earthly and divine male hands and eyes. In contrast, in Loy's poem paternity is not ignored, but the father and the Father have precious little to do with the woman whose searing body shudders forth life. Loy's remarkable, rare poem presents dehiscence in all its gynocentric glory, and describes the woman's lived experience of the body hosting life into the world in a way that has few equals.

Metaphorical Maternal Hostesses

From the literal bodily hosting of pregnancy and birth, I move now to a related discussion of woman as a metaphorical hostess. Lawrence and Merleau-Ponty both questionably use the language and imagery of pregnancy to describe experiences that go beyond the strict realm of childbearing. As an early feminist critic of *The Rainbow* claimed: "every event, whether it be falling in love or attaining maturity, is described in terms of fertility, gestation, parturition and birth" (Millet 257 – 258). The words "fecund" and "fecundity" each appear eleven times in *The Rainbow*. Both terms are repeatedly used to bring Lawrence's metaphysical ideas to life in a way that matches Merleau-Ponty's appropriation of the language of pregnancy for his ontological purposes in *The Visible and the Invisible*. In that late text, Merleau-Ponty suggests a different kind of being to the one that he describes in *The Phenomenology of Perception* and elsewhere. Flesh is the expression of this type of being. It is: "a new type of being, a being by porosity, pregnancy, or generality, and he before whom the horizon opens is caught up, included within it" (148-149). A being by "pregnancy". being in this new formulation is all encompassing and exists between, beneath, and within all bodies and all things. It is also what allows for any relativity to exist within the world. Merleau-Ponty terms this version of being "wild Being" or "brute being" and claims that it "is the common tissue of which we are made" (WN VI 203).⁵⁸ For

⁵⁸ Perhaps due to the unedited form of *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty inconsistently begins "Being" with both capital and lower case letters in the text and in the working notes *The Visible and the Invisible*. "Being" and "being" are synonymous in the text. This chapter follows Merleau-Ponty's convention of using the capitalized "Being" in conjunction with "wild", and "being" when used more generally or in connection with the word "brute".

him, “wild Being [exists] beneath the cleavages of our acquired culture” (121) and, as such, forms the foundation for all intellectual life:

We will not admit a preconstituted world, a logic, except for having seen them arise from our experience of brute being, which is as it were the umbilical cord of our knowledge and the source of meaning for us. (157)

Merleau-Ponty uses the language of pregnancy to reveal the vital newness of “brute being” and its regenerative capabilities. Like the umbilical cord that bonds foetal to maternal flesh, “wild Being” forms the reciprocal link between humankind’s intellectual lives and the world.

Merleau-Ponty describes the ontological significance of emotional relationships in the *Phenomenology of Perception*:

If then we want to bring to light the birth of being for us, we must finally look at that area of our experience which clearly has significance and reality only for us, and that is our affective life. Let us try to see how a thing or a being begins to exist for us through desire or love and we shall thereby come to understand better how things and beings can exist in general. (154)

In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence foreshadows Merleau-Ponty’s method of reaching a primary understanding of being through the “affective life” of relationships. He aims to

discover through sex a world beyond or below words, a naïve consciousness that civilized man has crusted over with self-consciousness and the accompanying experience of separation and aloneness. (Gordon 363)

The “naïve consciousness” that Gordon locates at the centre of Lawrence’s discussion of affective life is the complement to the pre-knowledge, pre-logic understanding of being that Merleau-Ponty proclaims. In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence explores the constitution of the ideal relationship between man and woman and couches this discussion in pregnant language. Early in the novel, the widow Lydia experiences a premonition of the “rebirth” that she will undergo in her acceptance of her new partner Tom:

She looked at him, at the stranger who was not a gentleman yet who insisted on coming into her life, and the pain of a *new birth* in herself strung all her veins to a *new form*. She would have to begin again, to find a *new being*, a *new form*, to respond to that blind, insistent figure standing over her. A shiver, a sickness of *new birth* passed over her, the flame leaped up him, under his skin. She wanted it, this *new life* from him, with

him, yet she must defend herself against it, for it was destruction. (40, emphasis added)

Lawrence makes clear that beginning a new relationship is akin to starting a new life. In Lydia's premonition, he allows the reader to "see how a thing or a being ... begins to exist ... through desire or love", as Merleau-Ponty stipulates in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Like literal births, the metaphorical birth that Lydia envisages is painful: a nerve-stretching, nausea-inducing experience that "shivers" through the body and has the potential for destruction. Just as the birthing woman of Loy's poem defiantly climbs her mountains of agony, Lydia "defends" herself against the "new birth" even whilst she desires the new life that Tom holds out to her. Lawrence viewed the

exploration and the establishment of a new relation between men and women as the critical issue of the age, and as such [it is] central to both his theory of being and his literary mission. (Harrison 35 – 36)

The question of the ideal relationship between men and women dominates Lawrence's non-fiction as well as his novels.⁵⁹ "I am I, but also you are you", he claims in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, "and we are in sad need of a theory of human relativity" (22). The theory of "human relativity" that Lawrence devises is "polarity." This theme comes to its fullest expression in *Women in Love*, but it appears in nascent form in *The Rainbow*.

In essence, "polarity" designates a specifically heterosexual relationship that is based on total acceptance of the alterity of the desired other. Lawrence claims that it is only in the acknowledgement of the absolute otherness of the other that the necessary balance is found between man and woman. As the description of a relationship between two separate but intertwined fleshs, polarity comes close to Merleau-Ponty's theory of reversibility:

The word "polarity" itself has an internal dichotomy in that it can mean the possession of two opposite or contrasted principles, but can also mean, especially in a figurative sense, the direction of thought or feelings towards a single point, and this ambiguity is implied in Lawrence's conception. (Harrison 32)

Like the reciprocal relationship between the flesh and the world, "polarity" defines the

⁵⁹ The relationship between men and women is a major theme in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and in Lawrence's articles. The titles of Lawrence's late essays and articles reveal a particular fascination with sex relations. They include: "Master in His Own House"; "Matriarchy"; "Cocksure Women and Hen-sure Men"; "Is England Still a Man's Country?"; "Do Women Change?"; and "Give Her a Pattern" amongst others. In these truly troublesome essays, Lawrence consistently posits men as superior beings to whose higher power women must concede and bend. His novels may argue for "polarity" between the sexes, but his essays posit a patronising, and deeply objectionable, paternalism.

separateness of the “opposite” fleshs that are man and woman, but it also suggests their intertwined aims and intentions. In *The Rainbow*, Anna and her husband Will move through interspersed phases of polarity and antagonism. They first come together in polarity at the point of their marriage:

One day, he was a bachelor, living with the world. The next day, he was with her, as remote from the world as if the two of them were buried like a seed in darkness. Suddenly, like a chestnut falling out of a burr, he was shed naked and glistening on to a soft, fecund earth, leaving behind him the hard rind of worldly knowledge and experience. (145)

Here being acts as the “soft, fecund earth” in which Will germinates, allowing him to leave behind the “hard rind” of human knowledge. The being that he encounters is complementary to the mute, fertile ground of “wild Being” in Merleau-Ponty’s work. “Wild Being” is beyond space and time and predates, as well as sustains, the human world of meaning. Lawrence’s description of the being that Anna and Will experience together through their polarity matches this definition:

Here at the centre the great wheel was motionless, centred upon itself. Here was a poised, unflawed stillness that was beyond time, because it remained the same, inexhaustible, unchanging, unexhausted ... it was as if they were at the very centre of all the slow wheeling of space and the rapid agitation of life, deep, deep inside them all. (145)

The “unchanging, unexhausted” “stillness”, that is both at the centre, and beyond space and time, secures the “great wheel” of existence and the “rapid agitation of the life” like the umbilical anchor of “wild Being”.

Yet, whilst Lawrence makes great claims for the equality of polarity, the act of regenerative re-birthing that polarity provokes – and that enables access to “wild Being” – is reserved for men. Women offer access to this being specifically by allowing men to be hosted within their bodies in the act of sexual consummation. Hence Lawrence portrays Lydia and Tom as equally “involved in the same oblivion, the fecund darkness” of post-coital bliss, but it is Tom alone who is “newly created, as after a gestation, a new birth, in the womb of darkness” (46). In the sexual act, woman becomes a new type of “maternal hostess”, re-birthing the adult man in a new, more powerful, incarnation. In one of his particularly contentious comments in the “Foreword to *Sons and Lovers*”, Lawrence goes so far as to suggest that the nightly re-birth of the male through the female body is actually a female decree:

Now every woman, according to her kind, demands that a man shall come home to her with joy and weariness of the work he has done during the day: that he shall then while he is with her, be re-born of her; that in the morning he shall go forth with his new strength. (102)

In Lawrence's conception, the woman "demands" the man's participation, foisting his rebirth upon him, before sending him out with "new strength" whilst she remains at home awaiting his return. As the point of access to regenerative wild Being, Lawrence makes women's bodies the site of "metaphorical" as well as literal "maternal" hosting.

However, it is not always so clear who precisely is fulfilling the hospitable role. This ambiguity is at work in the case of Will and Anna's first experience of polarity. The renewing culmination of their "fecund" experience together appears whilst they are lying in bed, a few pages after their communion with "wild Being":

When they came to themselves, the night was very dark. Two hours had gone by. They lay still and warm and weak, like the new-born, together. And there was a silence almost of the unborn. (156)

Here, the lovers are reborn together into the silence of wild Being. But the question remains, if both partners are reborn, then who is actually performing the maternal function in these births? A similar anxiety surrounds Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of intersubjectivity in *The Visible and the Invisible*: "Merleau-Ponty compares the relation between self and other to a pregnancy. But it is not clear who – or what – occupies the place of the mother in this comparison" (Guenther 20 – 21). In Merleau-Ponty's metaphysical conception, and in the traditional understanding of the artist as "pregnant" with creative illumination, pregnancy becomes an experience that is open to everybody – not just to women. In *The Rainbow*, Lawrence extends the experience of pregnancy beyond the borders of hospitable maternal flesh, creating pregnant male bodies that outrank the pregnant female bodies that the novel superficially privileges.

The opening passage of *The Rainbow* reveals just how fluid the idea of pregnancy will be in the text. The first pages of the narrative describe the men of the Brangwen family farming. Lawrence does not deny the role that the Brangwen women play in the physical continuation of the family at the centre of the novel, but it is the men in the fields who are his fecund focus at the very start of the novel. Lawrence's description of the men's engagement with the seasons of the land on the family farm portrays a male productivity that comes close to paternal parthenogenesis:

They felt the rush of the sap in spring, they knew the wave which cannot halt, but every year throws forth the seed to begetting, and, falling back, leaves the young-born on the earth. They knew the intercourse between the heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn, showing the birds' nests no longer worth hiding. Their life and interrelations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away. (7-8)

In this revealingly gendered passage, an active male fertility dominates a passive, inert female landscape: in the place of female loins, a "wave of seed" brings forth the young-born on the face of the earth; the fluids of sap and seed and rain take supremacy whilst the birds' nests lie empty of eggs; the male "breast" appears in place of female life-giving breasts; furrows are opened to accept the seed and grain; and the soil becomes smooth and supple after the all-too-Freudian "ploughing". A fruitful symbiosis exists between the flesh of the men and the flesh of the world. There is a sense both of reversibility and of polarity in the relationship between the farmers and the world around them: the land "opens" to their hands and they live in the fullness of their experience through "exchange and interchange" with the animals and the objects of their surroundings. Throughout, the flesh of the body and the flesh of the world remain distinct and separate entities, but they are portrayed as being constellated together as both man and land tend toward the shared aim of continuing the plant animal, and human generations of the farm. Only after the men have mastered the land do they return to the domesticized, female space of the home:

Then the men sat by the fire in the house where the women moved about with surety, and the limbs and the body of the men were impregnated with the day, cattle and earth and vegetation and the sky, the men sat by the fire and their brains were inert, as their blood flowed heavy with the accumulation from the living day. (8)

In the place of the fertilised land, the men themselves are "impregnated"; Lawrence reverses the natural maternal order, and gluts the men with fecundation.

Nevertheless, for all their self-fulfilment, Lawrence's male pregnancies cannot fully deny women's involvement in the human life cycle. Yet, whilst Lawrence presents the fecund men as content and completed by their impregnations, he portrays the actual maternal hostesses of the family as looking beyond the cyclic world of

incubation toward a new form of life-making: “[they] wanted another form of life than this, something that was not blood-intimacy [and] stood to see the far-off world of cities and governments” (9). But Lawrence, not content with signing over the natural physical creation of life to men, gives man sole dominion over the social creations of government and cities too. In *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, he comments on the building of the Panama Canal and locates the project within a self-sustaining male desire to build the world: “Not ‘to build a world for you, dear’; but to build up out of his own self and his own belief and his own effort something wonderful” (12-13). Channelling this male creative force, man’s body becomes a “paternal host” charged with bringing to life the “wonderful creations” of the cultural world. Lawrence’s complementary belief that women ought to be satisfied with their traditional flesh-nurturing roles is revealed in Ursula’s response to the news of her pregnancy: “What had a woman but to submit? What was her flesh but for childbearing, her strength for her children and her husband, the giver of life? At last she was a woman” (486). In the solution to these questions, Lawrence holds out the heroic hosting of pregnancy and the habitual hosting of motherhood as the height of female achievement. The fate of transcendental “Anna Victrix” reinforces that Lawrence believes women should find sufficiency in maternity:

soon again she was with child. Which made her satisfied and took away her discontent. She forgot that she had watched the sun climb up and pass his way, a magnificent traveller surging forward. She forgot that the moon had looked through a window of the high, dark night, and nodded like a magic recognition, signalled to her to follow. Sun and moon travelled on, and left her, passed her by, a rich woman enjoying her riches. She should go also. But she could not go, when they called, because she must stay at home now. With satisfaction she relinquished the adventure to the unknown. She was bearing her children. There was another child coming, and Anna lapsed into vague content. ... She was a door and a threshold, she herself. Through her another soul was coming, to stand upon her as upon the threshold, looking out, shading its eyes for the direction to take. (196)

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A woman “rich” with offspring, Anna willingly gives up her transcendental relationship with the infinite and abandons the chance to create beyond the borders of her maternal flesh. Instead she chooses the “satisfaction” and contentment of maternal

⁶⁰ The notions that a child takes away Anna’s “discontent” foreshadows Mrs. Ramsay’s belief in the complete contentment of motherhood: “She would have liked always to have had a baby. She was happiest carrying one in her arms” (54).

hosting. In her acceptance of the total fulfilment of maternity, Anna allows her body to become the point of dehiscence to experience: a place for her children to “stand upon” and look out to the flesh of the world. Later in the novel, Anna’s daughter Ursula suffers a miscarriage and decides that a man rather than a child will fulfil her. This man will be the creation of the Father:

It was not for her to create, but to recognize a man created by God. The man should come from the infinite and she should hail him. She was glad she could not create her man. She was glad she had nothing to do with his creation. (494)

In this denouement, Lawrence once again stipulates that woman is dependent on another for fulfilment. Therefore, despite his extended discussion of maternal hosting Lawrence’s overriding suggestion throughout *The Rainbow* is that maternal hosting is subject to a higher male authority – an authority that allows the earthly and the divine “host” to master the hostess. To Lawrence’s attempts to place the hostess at the mercy of the host, Loy’s transcendental vision of maternal hosting forms a reply. Moreover, irrespective of the neglect or the appropriative annexations of men, maternal hosting ultimately holds out to women a collective position of creative power that cannot be taken from them nor be carried out on their behalves.

This discussion of “fleshy hospitality” shows how Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the “flesh” relies upon the images and language of pregnancy. Lawrence’s portrayal of pregnancy reveals that the reversibility that is characteristic of the “flesh” is at work within the reciprocal experiences of pregnant flesh and of childbirth. Irigaray’s insistence on the primacy of the tangible over the visible in intrauterine experience and Dufourmantelle’s suggestion that “hospitality is the pre-condition to life”, find confirmation here in the suggestion that the primary hospitality offered by the maternal hostess forms the pattern for all later I/Other, host/guest, experiences. Lawrence’s discussion of childbirth reveals how the dehiscence of birth modifies – but does not shatter – this intersubjective ambiguity. Taken together, Lawrence’s and Joyce’s works describe how the place of birth, and woman’s role as the hostess of the birthing process, undergo changes in the twentieth century as childbirth becomes part of a male-dominated medical domain. Loy’s poem “Parturition” presents the often unremarked upon lived female bodily experience of birth. Finally, Lawrence’s theory of “polarity” aligns with Merleau-Ponty’s late concept of “Wild Being”. Lawrence and

Merleau-Ponty both make female bodies into metaphorical hostesses by using female experiences as vehicles to promote theoretical ideas whilst ignoring the female perspectives of those experiences. Lawrence's focus on sexual rebirth provides a further example of woman as metaphorical hostess. In closing, as Ellis and Dufourmantelle suggest at opposite ends of the twentieth century, pregnancy is an existential as well as a biological and sociological concern: therefore, it is rightly celebrated as a joyous and exhilarating experience that forms the human pattern for the intersubjective world. However, maternal hosting is certainly not the only form of creativity open to women. This thesis, and the female authored texts that it discusses, form part of the reply to Lawrence's suggestion that women should find ultimate and complete fulfilment in their potential for maternal hospitality: within their flesh, or at the borders of it, women too can create the flesh of the world. In my next and final chapter, I turn from the start of life to its end, to discuss how women host the dead.

Chapter Five

Hosting-After-Death and the Lived Dead Body in Modernism

What would one like if one died oneself? that the party should go on.

(Virginia Woolf *Diary IV* 65)

For all too obvious reasons, death is omnipresent in modernism: it arrives in telegrams delivered to doors; happens in hospitals attended by nurses; appears in hotels in far-away lands; and breaks into parties as an uninvited guest. Death as the unexpected guest at the modernist party brings death into the realm of hospitality. Death has an uncanny effect: it makes the familiar unfamiliar, the everyday strange. Here I take the uncanniness of death – its literal ability to make the homely un-homely – as a starting point for a navigation of deathly hospitality. I argue that Woolf uses her famous hostess Clarissa Dalloway to present a positive resolution to the uncanny experience of death. Woolf's positive portrayal of the possibility of death chimes with the understanding of death that Merleau-Ponty puts forward in his essay "Hegel's Existentialism". It is Martin Heidegger who introduces death as a suitable subject for phenomenological studies through his extended exploration of death in *Being and Time*. Coming after Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty does not present a full discussion of death. In fact, his comments on the subject are surprisingly brief and there is one particularly glaring omission in his short treatment of death: the dead body.⁶¹ Throughout his work, Merleau-Ponty consistently and systemically argues that the body is constitutive of the self and other people's impressions of the self. I argue here that this signification does not end at the point of death. In this final chapter, I explore how the body retains meaning after death, and I describe the heroic and habitual hospitable acts that women perform for continually signifying dead bodies. Modernism is replete with descriptions of the dying and the dead. From this vast resource, I select a small range of texts to examine my theme of deathly hospitality.

⁶¹ Martin Heidegger also fails to examine the figure of the corpse in his theory of Being-toward-death. However, Heidegger's omission is less surprising because his theory is specifically concerned with the ontology of existing towards death: a process that is completed at the moment of death.

These key texts include: Woolf's novels *The Waves*, *The Voyage Out*, and *The Years*; Evelyn Waugh's mid-century novel *The Loved One*; Mansfield's short story "The Daughters of the Late Colonel"; the "Hades" episode of Joyce's *Ulysses*; and finally Lawrence's short story "The Odour of Chrysanthemums" and his novels *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, and *Women in Love*.

Dying to Party with Woolf and Merleau-Ponty

Before turning to my main question of what Merleau-Ponty fails to say about death, I wish to briefly examine what he does have to say on the subject. Passing comments aside, Merleau-Ponty's engagement with the subject of death is limited to the single brief essay "Hegel's Existentialism" which is part of the posthumous collection *Sense and Non-Sense* (1964). In the essay, Merleau-Ponty argues for a Hegelian reworking of the concept of Being-toward-death that Martin Heidegger famously puts forward in *Being and Time* (1927).⁶² Heidegger suggests an experience of anxiety triggers the primary knowledge of death because anxiety "prevents Dasein from relating to itself and to its world in an everyday manner" (*Being and Time* 232).⁶³ Contrary to Heidegger's argument in favour of the primacy of anxiety, in Merleau-Ponty's concept of death, the tussle for subjectivity that occurs between people triggers the knowledge of death. Thus, he claims that the awareness of death originates in the Hegelian encounter with the other. In such encounters, the other has the potential to objectify and annihilate the self; this temporary dissolution of subjectivity brings with it the awareness that the total annihilation of the self is possible. This focus on otherness brings his analysis into conversation with the Freudian concept of the uncanny – specifically with its potential to make the other and the self, strange. The uncanny is likewise central to Heidegger's concept of death

⁶² Heidegger sets out his theory of Being-toward-death in Part Six of *Being and Time*. For the sake of retaining my focus on Merleau-Ponty's work, my discussion of Heidegger's concept of death is necessarily brief. Here I reject a sustained discussion of Heidegger's theory in favour of an exploration of how Merleau-Ponty reimagines his idea of death as the ultimate possibility. For particularly astute discussions of Heidegger's work on death, see Havi Carel, "Temporal Finitude and Finitude of Possibility: The Double Meaning of Death in *Being and Time*". *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 15.4 (2007): 541-556; and Magda King, *A Guide to Heidegger's Being and Time*. Ed. John Llewelyn. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001.

⁶³ Heidegger uses the term "Dasein" to designate "self-conscious being".

Before I consider how Merleau-Ponty rewrites Heidegger's presentation of death, a brief foray into uncanny hospitality via Freud and *Mrs. Dalloway* is in order.

In his essay "The Uncanny" (1919), Freud suggests that the uncanny is "related to what is frightening", but that it also has a "special core of feeling" rather than being concerned with "what excites fear in general" (339). Heidegger takes this idea of unrelated fear forward in his concept of anxiety. It is also from Freud's essay that Heidegger gains his understanding that anxiety makes the everyday world unfamiliar and unsettling: it is that "old and familiar world" which, through the experience of anxiety, "has become inhospitable, uncanny, through Dasein's sudden inability to care about it" (Carel 86). In *Mrs. Dalloway* we see this process in action as the hostess Clarissa, in the act of hosting her party, recalls an uncanny experience she has undergone earlier in the day and which made the hospitable world inhospitable:

Then (she had felt it only this morning) there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading the Times, so that she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, she must have perished. (182)

Here Clarissa's "terror" generates an "awful fear" that uncannily overwhelms her. Clarissa can only return to the safety of the present through the social world of *Times*-reading Richard and the everyday links of "one thing with another" (182). She returns from her uncanny experience with a heightened awareness of the possibility of her own death. The uncanny is intimately involved in the experience of death. As Freud suggests, "many people experience the [uncanny] feeling in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead" (364). Death is a transformative experience that makes the familiar unfamiliar and the friendly strange. Woolf's describes the transfiguration of death in "A Sketch of the Past" when she notes how her mother's familiar face, in death, becomes "immeasurably distant, hollow and stern" (102). It is key too that Clarissa should be at home when she recalls her death-revealing uncanny experience because the uncanny literally translated is the *unheimlich*: the unhomely. Clarissa's retreat from her "awful fear" into the safe world of marriage and orderliness reveals the permeable and changeable border between the homely and the unhomely. The fact that Clarissa is *a hostess* undergoing this

unheimlich experience is even more central: for the uncanny is fundamental to the very idea of hospitality.

The logic of the uncanny is at work even within the etymology of hospitality. J Hillis Miller describes how, in the pairing of host and guest:

Each word in itself becomes separated by the strange logic of the “para”, membrane which divides inside from outside and yet joins them in a hymneal bond, or allows an osmotic mixing, making the strangers friends, the distant near, the dissimilar similar, the *Unheimlich heimlich*, the homely homey, without, for all its closeness and similarity, ceasing to be strange, distant, dissimilar. (442-3)

The invitation to replicate the most personal experience of environment – the home – in another’s home, that the phrase “make yourself at home” suggests, reveals the uncomfortable similar/dissimilar bind of hospitality. The slipperiness of the guest/host paradigm – the pervasive potential of the one to become the other – evokes the doubling that is central to Freud’s concept of the uncanny. This doubling appears in *Mrs. Dalloway* through the pairing of the hostess Clarissa Dalloway and her unexpected, uninvited, figurative guest Septimus Smith. Conceived as a pair throughout the writing of the novel, in the manuscript version it is famously Clarissa not Septimus, who dies at the end of the text:

About 9 November 1922, Woolf devised the double design that displaces Clarissa’s death onto Septimus: “All must bear finally upon the party at the end; which expresses life, in every variety & full of conviction: while S. dies” (*The Hours*, 415)”. (Froula 131)

Extending the work of Otto Rank, Freud notes how “the ‘double’ was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an ‘energetic denial of the power of death’” (356). That Septimus literally dies in the place of Clarissa appears to reinforce the understanding that the death of the doubled other prevents the death of the self. Moreover, Woolf’s statement that the party expresses life as “full of conviction” does chime with Rank’s notion that the death of the other is an “energetic denial of the power of death”. However, Clarissa’s consideration of Septimus’ death leads to an acceptance, not a rejection, of death.

Merleau-Ponty puts forward a similarly positive understanding of the potential of death that complements Clarissa’s acceptance of death. Working against Heidegger’s claim that the uncanny experience of anxiety leads to knowledge of the ultimate nothingness and nowhere of death, Merleau-Ponty’s anti-nihilistic stance

provokes his argument that places plenitude, rather than nothingness, at the centre of existence.⁶⁴ He views plenitude as primary and as the natural ultimate conclusion of the argument towards nothingness:

There is no being without nothingness, but nothingness can exist only in the hollow of being, and so consciousness of death carries with it the means for going beyond it ... my consciousness of myself as death and nothingness is deceitful and contains an affirmation of my being. (HE 67-8)

Woolf's diary includes an account of her personal "consciousness of death" that directly evinces the "affirmation" of personal being that Merleau-Ponty suggests is the result of "going beyond" the idea of death as nothingness. She describes her

new vision of death; active, positive, like all the rest, exciting; & of great importance – as an experience. "The one experience I shall never describe", I said to Vita yesterday. (23 November, 1926, *DVWiii* 117)

Here the positive, affirmative potential of death inspires excitement in place of anxiety, action in place of passivity. Merleau-Ponty shares Woolf's focus on the ineffability of personal death:

Neither my birth nor my death can appear to me as experiences of my own, since, if I thought of them thus, I should be assuming myself to be pre-existent to, or outliving, myself, in order to be able to experience them, and I should therefore not be genuinely thinking of my birth or my death. I can, then, apprehend myself only as "already born" and "still alive" ... my birth and death belong to a natality and a mortality which are anonymous. (HE 215-6)

For Woolf and Merleau-Ponty, as well as for Heidegger, an inability to know your own death does not preclude the possibility of death acting as an existential structure. Moreover, whilst Merleau-Ponty sees his belief in the primacy of plenitude as an absolute break with Heidegger's thinking, it seems that in fact both conceptions of death amount to the same thing: the awareness of death is reciprocal and so brings with it a heightened awareness of life. Bryan Smyth claims the key tenet of Merleau-Ponty's argument is:

"consciousness of life is, in a radical sense, consciousness of death" [MP HE]... That is, the awareness we have of life is ultimately *rooted* in our awareness of death, which enjoys a certain priority. (76)

⁶⁴ In this instance, it is the Heideggerian, rather than the Sartrean, understanding of nihilism that Merleau-Ponty is working against.

Therefore, whether taken positively or negatively, the idea of death reinforces the value of life.

Heidegger completes his theory of death with the conclusion that death reveals our individuality. Merleau-Ponty argues that any such individuality is quickly subsumed into an awareness of communality. For Merleau-Ponty, “what alone is thinkable is on the contrary that death *communalizes*” (Smyth 77). This focus on the communal stems from Merleau-Ponty’s idea that nothingness is always inescapably entwined with plenitude:

If I am negation, then by following the implication of this universal negation to its ultimate conclusion, I will witness the self-denial of that very negation and its transformation into coexistence. (HE 68)

Thus, in Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the knowledge of death, we become aware of our oneness only to learn that we are alive together. This understanding privileges the shared life over the individual death: “So I live not for death but forever, and likewise not for myself alone but with other people” (HE 69-70). He reinforces this idea of an individual death that contrasts a communal life in “Man, the Hero”: “We die alone, but we live with other people; we are the image they have of us; where they are, we are too” (186). Fittingly, given her position as the hostess who uses her body to unite people, Clarissa Dalloway shares Merleau-Ponty’s fundamental belief that the communal life is more essential than the individual death. In the next section, I engage the communality of death by arguing that the body does not fail to encounter, or to be encountered, by the living once it is dead. Moreover, I argue that the process of the dead body retaining limited existential significance is constituted by, and constitutive of, the same social structures that affected it in life – structures that include hospitality.

Deathly Hospitality

The death of another is undoubtedly his end and the transition to his no-longer-being-in-the-world. For those who are left behind, however, he has not totally vanished. His body is still with them in their world. It is taken care of and honoured in funeral rites and the cult of the burial ground. (Magda King 146)

Via our dead body, we leave behind a complicatedly signifying artefact of our existence: a thing that no longer “is” us, but nor is it “not” us. The dead body is perhaps the clearest evocation of the fleshy hospitality inherent in the famous final sentence of *Mrs. Dalloway*: “For there she was” (191). As the flesh that houses us, the lived body is our constant and inescapable spatial and social marker; therefore, the dead body shows where the person who no longer “is”, actually, and in every sense, “was”. There is a culturally specific period of time between the point at which the body dies and the point at which it disappears from sight either through burial or cremation. Like all human processes, human hands curate this movement from the deathbed to the grave. Like the hands that manage the transition from the womb to the world, the hands that enable this deathly passage are traditionally female. Further, the acts that women perform for dead bodies can be read through the structure of hosting. Ariela Freedman points out that it is necessary that scholars “remain sensitive to the way death is understood within a network of social meaning which includes categories of gender” (119). As elsewhere, here I use hosting as a way to reveal how sexual difference is at work, in this instance, in the social conception of death.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I argued for a broadened understanding of hosting that connotes the provision of care, sustenance, and protection within a habitation or dwelling place. It may seem strange to suggest that form of hospitality has a role to play in interactions between women and dead bodies; after all, the dead no longer need sustenance nor can they appreciate nurturance. However, in death, the care that hosting describes preserves and protects not a live body, but what that body stood for in life, as it transitions from the dead body in sight to the dead body out of sight. As with the “perfect” hosting of the first chapter, this deathly form of hospitality is both heroic and habitual. The heroic form of hosting death is the sombre counterpart to party-giving: wake-hosting and funeral-giving. As with its more jubilant equivalent, the heroic hosting of death is predicated upon an habitual hospitality that women extend to the bodies of the dead. Society expects women to perform acts of care and preservation both for the dead body and for the legacy of the person who has died. To offer the dead body habitual hospitality then is to welcome it into the home, to ensure that it is presentable to those that will be guests in the home to view it, and to make certain that its presentation in death matches its presentation in life, whether this be through bathing, clothing, or aestheticizing the body, or by

controlling the stories that are told about the dead body and its departed inhabitant. I end this thesis with a discussion of modernist representations of women hosting dead bodies as a way to present the phenomenological reading of the dead body that is missing in Merleau-Ponty's work and to bring awareness to women's important role in deathly hospitality.

The Lived Dead Body

The corpse "is death's central artefact, a powerful object and symbol that connects individual fate to social order" (Friedman 95). Alan Friedman claims, "in treating the corpse, a society enacts its profoundest understanding of death and life" (97). In her novel *The Waves* (1931), Woolf explores how the dead body retains social and personal signification through her discussion of the death of the soldier Percival in India. The character of Percival is based on Woolf's adored brother Thoby: a distinguished young man who contracted typhoid in Greece in 1906 and died at the age of twenty-six. However, it is clear that Woolf is also using the character of Percival to draw attention to the countless young men who died in foreign lands during the First World War: "They came running. They carried him to some pavilion, men in riding-boots, men in sun helmets; among unknown men he died. Loneliness and silence often surrounded him" (99). Through Percival, Woolf reinforces the image of the modern young man dying amongst unknown people that she first set out at the close of her novel *Jacob's Room*. Like the dead bodies of Andrew, Prue, and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, Percival's corpse enters in parentheses, bracketed from the body of the text in resounding significance: "(He lies pale and bandaged in some room)" (100). Woolf expands on her description of the placement of Percival's body: "He is dead ... He lies on a camp-bed, bandaged, in some hot Indian hospital while coolies squatted on the floor agitate those fans – I forget how they call them" (100). Whilst the location of the corpse seems clear in this second quote, Woolf actually seems unsure about where exactly to place Percival's dead body: the bracketed musing and the expansion above is Bernard's, but a page before a distraught Neville has claimed that Percival is already "buried" (99). This may be a deliberate artistic attempt to replicate the muddling of information that occurs after a death – when

those who are left behind try to come to terms with the event in its immediate aftermath – or perhaps both suggestions are simply figments of the imaginations of the two bereft friends who do not, in truth, know where the body lies. Yet the distinction between the body bandaged in the room, and the body buried beneath the earth, is far from trivial. For, between the moment of death and the moment of burial the body remains open to the care and, as is always the case with hospitality, to the potential violence of the other.

The second image that Bernard gives the reader of Percival's body, in which "coolies" fan the bandaged corpse, reveals just how the dead body can still be subject to care. In life, Percival was an officer – a man of importance with a golden future:

I can assure you, men in felt hats and women carrying baskets – you have lost something that would have been very valuable to you. You have lost a leader whom you would have followed; and one of you has lost happiness and children. (100)

Bernard's elegy for his lost friend highlights the general and the particular: Percival would have been publically and privately successful: both a great leader of men and an admired family man. He was, and would have continued to be, a man of status. What the image of his bandaged body lying in hospital shows us is that this social status clings to his body even once life has left it. Tended by servants in life, Percival is attended by others in death. His body is fanned in the Indian heat to deter the indignity that is commensurate with a rapid, visible decomposition. Woolf's archaic, offensive, racist term "coolies" reveals that the people who tend to Percival's body are of a lower social class and a different race to Percival and are subject to an imperialistic hierarchy. Like the ancient Egyptians who were buried with the signs of their wealth and with the artefacts and heirlooms they wished to take with them into the afterlife, Percival's body is treated in the manner that his class position demands even though he himself can no longer be aware of this service. Woolf's description of the fanning of Percival's corpse exposes how, in the liminal space between death and burial or cremation, the dead body is not as uncompromisingly objective as it might appear. The fact that one can "be" dead, and that when one dies one "is" dead, reveals the on-going ontological significance of corpses. The linking of the present with the past that statements such as "She is dead" contain highlights our human desire to not consign those who have died wholly to the past. Our bodies, therefore, retain an

element of existence even when existence has left. This lingering signification is the reason that people usually continue to treat a dead body as though it were still alive by affording it the same level of dignity and respect as it commanded in its lived state. In looking for a way to describe this phenomenon, I take a cue from Merleau-Ponty's phrase "the lived body" – so called because of the philosopher's desire to draw attention to the active signification of the body, and to the fact that consciousness is manifested through the body, rather than distinct from it. Just as the lived body is neither passive nor inert in life, nor is it without meaning in death. The body does not then simply become a *dead* lived body; that is, a body that once was lived but is now dead. It does not wholly take up the passivity and inertia of a thing at the moment that existence leaves it. Rather, it is a *lived* dead body and, like the "lived body" it once was, it remains part of a shared subjective understanding of the world because it has personal significance for living people.

Of course, as with all human relationships, the level and depth of that significance is dependent upon the nature of the relationship between the living and the dead. It is perfectly possible for the dead body to take up an objective "thingness" for some of the people who encounter it. In fact, for those people who work in the business of death and who come into contact with a high volume of dead bodies, it is a psychological necessity that the dead body can be an objective thing.⁶⁵ However here, as elsewhere in this study, I am interested in the personal and the familial relationships that help to constitute the subjectivity of lived bodies. For those tied to the dead body by blood or by love, it is unlikely that the dead body can ever achieve a similar level of non-meaning objectivity as it can for those who process the corpse in a business-like fashion. This distinction between subjective engagements with "lived dead bodies", and objective engagements with "dead lived bodies", is of particular significance for the modernist period because – as I briefly claimed in the last chapter and as I will explore in greater detail later – it was the first half of the twentieth century that saw the rise of the modern undertaker and the movement away from caring for the corpse in the family home.

The men of the new profession confine Percival's body to the earth: "Behind that newspaper placard is the hospital; the long room with black men pulling ropes; and

⁶⁵ This is not to say that funeral workers have no emotional attachment to the bodies that they care for; rather, my claim is that any affective attachment that such individuals do have to a body is likely to be much less intense, and less long-lasting, than those who cared for that body in life.

then they bury him" (101). The funeral workers know nothing of the man they bury so they likely feel no great loss at his death. For Bernard, however, the signification is understandably very different: "But you exist somewhere. Something of you remains" (101). Here the typical Woolfian theme of retaining significance after death surfaces. As Genevieve Lloyd has noticed: "Woolf's writing tries to give expression to the fact - unacceptable to 'normality' - that the dead do not stay tidily absent, and undergo no comforting transformation into public symbols" (151-2). For the men who bury him Percival is a mere "dead lived body", but for Bernard, he remains a person - someone who helps to form the subjectivity of his self: "A judge. That is, if I discover a new vein in myself I shall submit it to you privately. I shall ask, What is your verdict? You shall remain the arbiter" (101). Woolf presents the formation of subjectivity through other people in childhood in the first part of *The Waves*.⁶⁶ In this middle section of the novel she reveals how that process of intersubjective constitution can extend beyond the death of the person on whom the subject relies for meaningfulness. She also shows how this process is temporally constituted; the further from the immediate point of death the body is, the less power it holds over those who remain alive. Following his claim that Percival shall remain a "judge", Bernard ponders: "But for how long? Things will become too difficult to explain ... The sequence returns; one thing leads to another - the usual order" (101-2).⁶⁷ Time, as they say, is a great healer.

Another of Woolf's characters endures a similar feeling of the hold of the dead over the living to Bernard. Evelyn, from Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915) experiences the resurgence of the dead when she takes up a photograph that the newly dead Rachel recently handled:

Suddenly the keen feeling of someone's personality, which things that they have owned or handled sometimes preserves, overcame her; she felt Rachel in the room with her; it was as if she was on a ship at sea, and the life of the day was as unreal as the land in the distance. (425)

Evelyn's uncanny feeling that she is on a ship on top of the sea contrasts with Rachel's hallucination of herself at the bottom of the sea as she lay dying. Again, as with Percival's power over Bernard, the hold of Rachel's lived dead body over Evelyn is brief, and Rachel soon slips back to the position of a dead lived body: "But by degrees

⁶⁶ For more, see my discussion of psychogenesis in *The Waves* in chapter two of this thesis (71-76).

⁶⁷ Joyce, with typical plainspoken brevity, makes a similar comment to Bernard when he writes of the dead: "People talk about you a bit: forget you" (*Ulysses* 91).

the feeling of Rachel's presence passed away and she could no longer realize her, for she had scarcely known her" (425). With its quietening objectification of the dead complete, Evelyn's mind, like Bernard's, turns away to projects of its own. However there remains the impression that in life one both is and is not present, whilst in death one is and is not past. We live our lives in the endless slippage from the immediate present to the immediate past, and this complicated, non-sequential movement - which does not move fluidly from present to past, but rather seesaws between the two positions - continues to occur in death. As Percival and Rachel's signifying remains reveal, after death, we are retained in the memories of others, in the things we touch and in the places we make our homes. There is not the simple transition from existence to non-existence that death appears to promise. Therefore, understanding the effects of death on the body involves distilling the point at which the dead body is at its most significant for the living: the stage at which it is, in a sense, still "lived". I argue that the body holds most of its life-like power whilst it remains in sight: not yet buried; not yet burned. Women preside over this period by performing the heroic hosting of funeral-giving.

Heroically Hosting the Dead: The Funeral-Giving Hostess

In *The Loved One* (1948), Evelyn Waugh references the role that women play in the giving of funerals when he describes one of the women employed at the Whispering Glades funeral parlour and cemetery as a "*Mortuary Hostess*" (36). The mortuary hostess helps clients to arrange all of the particulars of funerals, either for their deceased "Loved Ones" or for themselves in the eerily capitalised "Before Need Arrangements" (360). In Waugh's mid-century novel, the undertaker and the funeral-giving hostess are united in the figure of the economically rewarded mortuary hostess. Nevertheless, the mortuary hostess remains subject to the higher male authority of her line-manager, Mr. Joyboy, and the pseudo-divine owner of Whispering Glades, "the Dreamer". During her consultation with the novel's hero Dennis, the mortuary hostess guides him to the fittingly termed "Slumber Rooms" - the place where the dead body is viewed for the final time. She accidentally lets Dennis into an "occupied" room

where the body of a woman lies. In the image of the dead body, the heroic party-giving hostess blends with the heroic funeral-giving hostess:

Bowls of flowers stood disposed about a chintz sofa and on the sofa lay what seemed to be the wax effigy of an elderly woman dressed as though for an evening party. Her white gloved hands held a bouquet and on her nose glittered a pair of rimless pince-nez. (42)

Lying in repose, this dead hostess is all ready to meet the guests at her final party: her funeral. The party-giving heroic hostess is pervasive in modernist literature, but her funeral-giving counterpart appears much less frequently.⁶⁸ One reason for the relatively small number of modernist descriptions of funeral-giving hostesses is that although characters regularly die in modernist texts, they are much less regularly buried. This scarcity is in stark contrast to the literature that went before it: "Victorian literature is replete with funerals: Dickens, for example, depicts numerous burials, as well as the digging-up of corpses" (Friedman 73). Friedman offers one reason for this change in literary focus when he attributes the lack of real-life funerals to World War One – "the first time corpses were not shipped home for burial" (16). He further suggests that the War, "with its vast numbers of sudden dead who could not be properly memorialized, overwhelmed and disabled the last remnant of the Victorian apparatus of mourning" (Friedman 127). Whether the infrequency of modernist funerals is accredited to the effects of war, or to a wariness to repeat a tired Victorian motif, or simply to a preference for dramatic deathbed scenes over graveside trivialities, there is much to learn about hosting the dead from those modernist who do describe funerals.

Woolf takes her readers to a funeral in her novel *The Years* (1937). The funeral commemorates Rose Pargiter: the habitual and maternal hostess of the novel. The death of Rose Pargiter is loosely based on the death of Woolf's own mother Julia Stephen, which she describes in "A Sketch of the Past".⁶⁹ Delia's emotions as she looks down into her mother's grave mirrors Woolf's complicated feelings - part reverence part scorn - towards her own mother: "There lay her mother; in that coffin – the woman she had loved and hated so. Her eyes dazzled" (*The Years* 84). Woolf does not

⁶⁸ For a fuller description of the party-giving hostess in modernism, see chapter one of this thesis (23-63).

⁶⁹ Of the writers under discussion here, Woolf was not alone in rewriting the death of the personal maternal hostess in fiction. In *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence draws on his own experience of the death of his mother when he writes of the death of Mrs. Morel. Meanwhile, in Joyce's *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus is tormented by the figure of the maternal ghost because he failed to kneel to pray at the dying mother's deathbed, an action that Joyce likewise failed to perform in life.

describe Julia Stephen's funeral in "A Sketch of the Past", but in her fictive rendering of the experience a full funeral does take place. Delia does not lead the funeral in the plot; nevertheless, it is her experience of the event that guides the reader through the funeral. Delia hosts the funeral as she moves from the house in mourning, through the procession, on to the church service, and finally, to the committing to the earth at the graveside (80-4). There she looks down into the earth,

afraid that she might faint; but she must look; she must feel; it was the last chance that was left her. Earth dropped on the coffin; three pebbles fell on the hard shiny surface; and as they dropped she was possessed by a sense of something everlasting; of life mixing with death, of death becoming life. For as she looked she heard the sparrows chirp quicker and quicker; she heard wheels in the distance sound louder and louder; life came closer and closer . . . (84)

The "active, positive" life-affirming vision of death that Woolf attests to in her diary and that she presents in *Mrs. Dalloway*, is also apparent in Delia's experience. For Delia, witnessing her mother's death and burial results in a Merleau-Pontian awareness of the positive plenitude of life in birdsong. Funereal festivity occurs at the close of the event when parties and funerals are united once more: "It was becoming a shrouded and subdued morning party among the graves" (85).

In contradistinction to *The Years*, when Woolf describes death in *The Waves* she does not bury the dead. She describes Bernard's imaginative musings on Percival's funeral, but she does not give a complete description of the event. There is, then, no true funeral-giving hostess in the novel because there is no funeral given. However Woolf makes Rhonda into a metaphorical funeral-giving hostess through the images that come to her mind as she attends a concert whilst thinking about Percival's death. Before showing how those images make funereal allusions, it is worth noting the multiple phenomenological concerns at play in Rhonda's mental response to the concert. The concert players create such perfect symphonic harmony that Rhonda sees the structure of existence revealed. Tellingly, this structure is conveyed through the language of habitation. The description of the structure is a famous and often quoted passage from the novel, but it is worth recounting in full here because it is such a perfect match for the structure that Merleau-Ponty sees at the basis of all existence. As we saw in the previous chapters, Merleau-Ponty suggests that there is a primordial realm – which he latterly terms "wild Being" – that runs beneath things and objectivity

and acts as a foundation for our human experience of the world. Woolf argues for a similar existential underpinning when she describes Rhonda's concert-driven revelation:

"Like" and "like" and "like" – but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing? Now that lightning has gashed the tree and the flowering branch has fallen and Percival, by his death, has made me this gift, let me see the thing. There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation. (107)

Woolf presents a Merleau-Pontian insistence on a fundamental, primitive, and pre-objective structure that exists beneath our shared lifeworld: "beneath the semblance of the thing". Her focus on the "thing" beneath the "semblance of the thing" echoes Husserl and Heidegger's attempts to "get back to the things themselves" (*Ideas* 81). What was "inchoate" becomes coherent: "The structure is now visible". The making visible of that which was invisible, and the near perfect reciprocity of this experience – "Very little is left outside" – reflects Merleau-Ponty's late understanding of the intertwining between the flesh and the world.

In Rhonda's phenomenological exploration of the structure of life, death, hospitality, and habitation are woven together – just as they are when death comes to the party that Clarissa Dalloway throws in her home. Rhonda's perception that Percival's death is a "gift" enters the experience into the gift-logic of hospitality. The description of the "perfect dwelling-place" (a key phenomenological concern for Heidegger) reinforces the image of hosting that this statement sets up. Finally, Rhonda uses the gift of Percival's death, as Clarissa uses the death of Septimus, to found a new appreciation of life that results in a positive affirmation of communal existence: death reveals that "we" are not so mean, exposing this as both "our triumph" and "our consolation".

On the surface, this rich, multi-layered quote describes the movements of the concert players at their instruments; however, that orchestral imagery combines with the focus on Percival's death that pervades the whole chapter, and therefore also brings to mind a funeral procession. The "beetle-shaped men" (107) of the orchestra moving their bows across their string instruments recall the black men with ropes

lowering Percival's coffin into his grave that appear in the funeral Bernard imagines. The concert players "take the square and place it upon the oblong"; this raises the image of a square gravestone atop a buried oblong coffin (107).⁷⁰ The players place the square "accurately" to make a "perfect dwelling-place"; Percival's grave will likewise be his final "dwelling-place". Like mourners, the concert players who partake in the ceremony "mop their faces" and end the event no longer so "spruce" or "debonair" (107). The significance of this graveside scene is solidified when, after the concert, Rhonda closes the reciprocal circle of hospitality by scattering her violets into the sea as an "offering to Percival" (108). If doubts remain about the funereal allusions, the italicised interlude that follows this chapter sees darkness "heaped up" in "mounds of un moulded shape" (109), emphatically replicating the image of the fresh-dug grave. In Rhonda's contemplation, Woolf weaves together reciprocal hospitality through the giving of gifts and the receiving of offerings, with "dwelling-places" and death, placing this network of funereal hospitality against a phenomenological revelation of the structure of existence.

Woolf is not alone in describing modernist funeral-giving; Katherine Mansfield also explores heroic deathly hospitality. Her description of hosting the dead comes in her presentation of two sisters struggling to come to terms with the death of their father in her short story "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" (1922). The story opens with the depiction of the deceased father as a "lived dead body" with his daughters Josephine and Constantia worrying about how to manage his affairs in a way that reflects his lived character. Considering their father's porter, Constantia suggests: "We ought to give him a present, too. He was always very nice to father" (88). The present she suggests is the father's top hat. Despite Constantia's argument that the funeral-going, bowler-hat-wearing porter will appreciate the top hat, Josephine finds Constantia's suggested gift scandalously inappropriate: "What a very extraordinary idea!" (88). This example highlights the difficulty of bequeathing effects appropriately but it also reinforces how objective things can become infused with the very idea of the person who uses them: "But! ... father's head!" continues Josephine, as though

⁷⁰ Throughout the passage from which the quote is taken, Woolf swaps the positions of the square and the oblong so that first the square is placed upon the oblong, then the oblong is set upon the square, and, finally, the square stands upon the oblong (107-8). The shifting position of the oblong, which represents Percival's coffin-encased body in this funereal allusion, replicates the early uncertainty that Woolf creates around the position of Percival's body. The dual placement of the oblong as both above and beneath the square emphasises that Rhonda's attendance of Percival's funeral is, like Bernard's, imaginary; she too cannot be certain whether Percival's body is still above, or is now buried below, the ground.

Constantia had suggested bequeathing the part of the body that wore the hat in place of the hat itself (88). The ludicrousness of this idea combines with the surreal fact of her father's death to generate in Josephine a hard-to-quell giggle: "Remember", she admonishes herself, "terribly sternly" (88). Despite her best efforts to portray an appropriate response, Josephine struggles to suit her emotions to the gravity of the incomprehensible situation in which she finds herself.

Social propriety is also at play in the decision that the motherless daughters make to invite their father's nurse to stay as a guest with them for a week after his death. They immediately regret their decision because of the constraints that having a guest places on their mourning:

But it was a bother. It meant they had to have regular sit-down meals at the proper times, whereas if they'd been alone they could have just asked Kate if she wouldn't have minded bringing them a tray wherever they were. (92)

Feeling themselves the daughters of an important man, the sisters are compelled to host the woman who has hosted - in the sense of cleaned, cared for, and fed - their dying father once she relinquishes her role as the deathly hostess. Having transformed themselves into the hostesses of the nurse, the sisters go a step further and become funeral-giving hostesses. When Mr. Farolles of the church comes to discuss the proceedings, Josephine requests a funeral that is simple and not too expensive, but "suitable to our father's position" (96-7). This comment reveals the competing demands of means and ends in the act of giving funerals: the funeral must suit the status of the departed individual, yet the individual is no longer there to provide the required monetary compensation for such an act. In the economic and organisational demands of funerals, the dead become parasitic: dependent on living hostesses to provide what they need.

Despite hosting his funeral, the sisters are unable to process the finality of their father's death. Mansfield deploys black comedy appears once more as Josephine watches her father's coffin descend into the ground. Her inability to align the reality of his death with the character of her father means that, for her, his body remains alive:

What would father say when he found out? For he was bound to find out sooner or later. He always did. "Buried. You two girls had me *buried!*" She heard his stick thumping ... It sounded an appallingly heartless thing to do. Such a wicked advantage to take of a person because he happened to be helpless at the moment. (98)

Josephine's fear that her father has not actually died is motivated by her incredulity that such a man as her father *could* die. Rather than force herself to accept the conclusive nature of death, Josephine's impractical solution is that they ought to have kept him, "just for a time at least. To make perfectly sure" (98).⁷¹ After the funeral, the dreamlike reality of dealing with the death of an imposing individual strikes home once more as the sisters arrange their father's effects: "Father would never forgive them. That was what they felt more than ever when, two mornings later, they went into his room to go through his things" (98). In their discomfiture with their new positions, the funeral-giving hostesses feel themselves to be the *hostis*: the feared enemy at the door to the home that buries people alive and ransacks their belongings. Unable to face the task in its totality, they instead try to decide whether the Ceylon-dwelling son or the round-the-corner grandson should take their father's gold watch. As with the bequeathing of the top hat, tied up in this decision are multiple questions about how best to convey the intentions of the dead father: to whom should the symbol of male social status pass? Who earns the right to inherit the rank? How should women contribute to the generational continuance of the patriarchy?

Assuredly, the daughters of the late colonel do not have their own children who could inherit the hat, the watch, or the name of the father. Both women have sacrificed the possibility of marriage to tend to their father. Except for a brief and trivial episode with a potential suitor in Eastbourne, they have devoted themselves wholly to the care of their father: "The rest had been looking after father, and at the same time keeping out of father's way" (117-8). In this short story, Mansfield makes clear the perils of playing the role of the habitual hostess at the expense of all else:

There had been this other life, running out, bringing things home in bags, getting things on approval, discussing them with Jug [Josephine], and taking them back to get more things on approval, and arranging father's trays and trying not to annoy father. (118)

⁷¹ Leopold Bloom presents a similar solution to the disbelief of death at the open grave of Paddy Dignam's in the "Hades" episode of *Ulysses*: "Mr. Bloom turned away his face. And if he was alive all the time? Whew! By jingo, that would be awful! No, no: he is dead, of course. ... They ought to have some law to pierce the heart and make sure or an electric cork or a telephone in the coffin and some kind of canvas airhole. Flag of distress. Three days. Rather long to keep them in summer. Just as well to get shut of them as soon as you are sure there's no" (91).

This “other life” of habitual hosting is, for Constantia at least, contrasted with brief episodes of transcendence that mirror Anna Brangwen’s excitement in her pregnant eurythmic dancing:⁷²

She remembered too how, whenever they were at the seaside, she had gone off by herself and got as close to the sea as she could, and sung something, something she had made up, while she gazed all over that restless water. (“Daughters of the Late Colonel” 118)

As with Anna’s experience, Constantia’s transcendence away from the immanent habitual life of hosting happens in solitude and is provoked, and expressed, by a private rhythmical engagement. These vivid, seaside experiences make the life of the habitual hostess appear unreal:

it all seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn’t real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself. What did it mean? What was it she was always wanting? What did it all lead to? Now? Now? (118-9)

The artificial life of “getting things on approval” and “carrying trays” contrasts with the natural splendour of the moon, the sea, and the storm, which provoke in Constantia a sublime feeling of being “really herself”. Having fulfilled the role of the heroic hosting of funeral-giving, Constantia is faced with the freedom from the life of habitual hosting that the death of her father presents, but she struggles to know how to exist outside of the confines that her life of habitual hospitality has laid out for her. “She wanted to say something to Josephine, something frightfully important, about - about the future and what ...” (119, ellipsis in original). Her sister Josephine too tries to grasp the freedom of an alternative type of life, but when it comes to speaking to each other of their desire for a different future, both sisters renege and claim to forget the subject of their thoughts. Mansfield ends the story there, with the hostesses lost in an uncomfortable limbo: somewhere between habitual hosting and a future in which singing at the seaside need not be only a momentary escape. The overarching sense of the story is that women struggle to find places for themselves outside of the strict role of the habitual hostess once they complete their duties as the funeral-giving hostess. Through this story, Mansfield makes clear that, had the imposing colonel allowed his daughters a life beyond the habitual hospitality of his home, or had the daughters

⁷² For more on Anna’s pregnant dancing in Lawrence’s novel *The Rainbow*, see chapter four of this thesis (127-133).

themselves rejected the all-encompassing nature of the habitual hospitality their father demanded, then they could have lived fuller lives that allowed them to care for others (if they so wished) and to do so without ignoring their own seaside-singing potential. Instead, the sisters stare into the void of being out-of-place and not-at-home after the completion of their father's funeral.

Of course, it is not just women that host funerals. Describing Patrick Dignam's funeral in the "Hades" episode of *Ulysses*, James Joyce presents a strikingly male funeral: the corpse, Dignam's mourners, the priest, and the gravediggers, are all male. Dignam's funeral is prepared by women but largely attended by men. Nonetheless throughout the description of the funeral, Joyce continually highlights the fundamental place of women in both birth and death, emphasising women's roles as "life's gatekeepers" (Summers-Bremner 267).⁷³ He links birth to death in Bloom's mental response to the woman who presses her nose to the window as the cortege passes: "Extraordinary the interest they take in a corpse. Glad to see us go we give them such trouble coming" (72). The links between the coming of birth and the going of death, and the female involvement in both, strengthen as the hearse continues its journey. Joyce deliberately contrasts "How life begins" (74) with how it ends, as Bloom considers how his deceased son Rudy was conceived and grew big in the belly of his wife Molly as he sits in the funeral cortege. Seeing the "whiteline deal box" of an infant's coffin arouses in Bloom further thoughts of his own dead infant son (79). The final pairing of birth and death comes in the figure of the medicine student who has changed from working at the hospice and mortuary to being employed at the birthing clinic: "From one extreme to the other" (80). Later, in the birthing scene in "Oxen of the Sun", Joyce reaffirms the links he makes between birth and death in the funeral scene:

Therefore, everyman, look to that last end that is thy death and the dust that gripeth on every man that is born of woman for as he came naked forth from his mother's womb so naked shall he wend him at the last for to go as he came. (316)

In this quote, the dust that "grips" in birth foreshadows the dust to which the body returns in Christian burial services, the text of which is derived from a biblical passage: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto ground; for

⁷³ Joyce may describe death as a female domain but, as is the case with the description of the female experience of birth that is given in *Ulysses*, it is a female domain that is presented in the main through a male perspective.

out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (*King James Bible*, Gen. 3.19). In Joyce's text, death also enters the realm of birth in the talk of the men who gather at the birthing hospital and discuss abortion and death in childbirth, setting Bloom's mind to thinking once more of his son who died at eleven days old (320). Earlier, at Dignam's funeral, Bloom muses on his own bodily demise. Through Bloom's thoughts, Joyce highlights the explicit role that women play in death: women lay out the corpse. In abject terms, Bloom presents the spectacle of his imagined laying out:

Then getting it ready. Laying it out. Molly and Mrs. Fleming making the bed. Pull it more to your side. Our windingsheet. Never know who will touch you dead. Wash and shampoo. I believe they clip the nails and the hair. Keep a bit in an envelope. Grows all the same after. Unclean job. (72)

The hands that Bloom imagines tending to his own corpse are specifically female, and they are engaged in the "unclean job" of providing Bloom's dead lived body with the deathly habitual hospitality I now wish to discuss.

Habitual Hospitality: Hosting-After-Death

The aged sisters draw us into life: we wail, batten, sport, clip, clasp,
sunder, dwindle, die: over us dead they bend. (*Ulysses* 322)

Seeking a term for the habitual hospitality that I claim women perform for dead bodies, I turn to Heidegger's concept of Being-towards-death. Heidegger adopts his hyphenated term to reveal the fundamental connection he sees between lived existence and death. I am compelled to take up a similarly hyphenated term here because of the role that I see women as playing in protecting the legacy of the dead. Legacy is the limit of knowledge of a person: after death it is all that remains. Therefore, it constitutes a final possibility. I adopt the term "hosting-after-death" here as a way to explain how women perform habitual hospitality upon bodies once they have died and become "lived dead bodies". Joyce's description of Dignam's funeral and his complementary presentation of birth highlight women's traditional involvement in birth and death. In many cultures, it is women who historically laid out, or who

continue to lay out, the corpses of the dead, preparing them for whatever culturally specific physical or spiritual development comes next.⁷⁴

However, as with the story of twentieth-century birthing, the twentieth century witnessed a similar medicalization and economization of the process of death. As Friedman suggests:

just as doctors were pre-empting midwives, modernists attempted a male takeover of dying by removing civilian death from the family setting to the realms of medical personnel and the funeral industry. (81)

Whereas in the past, it was the ladies of the house (whether they were family or paid servants) who cared for and presented the corpse before arranging its journey to the graveyard, in the early twentieth century male outsiders begin to take part in the business of death on a wide scale. The men who perform these new roles take up positions that are socially and economically superior to the women who historically undertook the same work. Consequently, the modernist period sees the rise of the paid obstetrician and the financially rewarded undertaker who replace the women who have traditionally done this work within the home, often without payment. The economisation and medicalization of birth and death results in a complementary devaluation of the vital work that women have for centuries performed, and in many cases still do perform, for other bodies at the start and at the end of life. Modernism bears witness to the inauguration of the process away from women caring for the dead body in the family home, to the rise of the modern funeral parlour – a telling term that reveals the traditional environment for the corpse is the front room, or “parlour”, of the deceased’s home. Waugh’s mid-century novel *The Loved One* reveals the completion of this process: the aesthete Mr. Joyboy has greater power, wealth and social respect than the flock of female cosmeticians that work beneath him.

Lawrence, who describes the bodily hospitality of maternity at length, stands out as a modernist that also repeatedly describes the habitual hospitality of women engaging in the bodily acts of hosting-after-death. He gives one brief description of hosting-after-death in the novel of pregnancy explored in the last chapter. In *The*

⁷⁴ Laying out a body involves undertaking preparative action that prevents the body from too rapidly beginning the process of decomposition or from settling into unseemly or unnatural poses prior to the viewing of the body by relatives and acquaintances. Some of the stages of laying out a body are: removing the clothing; washing the body; combing the hair and clipping the nails; plugging natural orifices; and manipulating the body so that the hands rest on top of the corpse, the eyes are shut, and the mouth is closed. The hope is that the body will fix through rigor mortis into a position that is suitable for the viewing of the living. Finally, the body is clothed and other cosmetic procedures, such as the application of make-up, might be carried out.

Rainbow, it is the stepdaughter Anna (now a mother herself) who takes over from her aged mother and performs the role of the family hostess. She leads the process of laying out the body of her drowned stepfather Tom:

Almost in horror she began to take the wet things from him, to pull off the incongruous market-clothes of a well-to-do farmer. The children were sent away to the Vicarage, the dead body lay on the parlour floor, Anna quickly began to undress him, laid his fob and seals in a wet heap on the table. Her husband and the woman helped her. They cleared [sic] and washed the body, and laid it on the bed. (294)

Anna's husband and "the woman" assist Anna in the undressing and the cleaning of the body; nonetheless, it is Anna who initiates and dominates the process. Both Anna and her mother feel the father to be beyond them in death and are gladdened by this transcendence: "Neither the living nor the dead could claim him, he was both the one and the other, inviolable, inaccessibly himself" (294). The inaccessibility of the dead father reveals how the dead no longer have the ability to change their legacy, and so are reliant upon the living to perform the final acts for their body in a way that protects that legacy. The "livedness" of the father's dead body is made clear through the assertion that his body is neither living nor dead, but "both the one and the other". In the description of the laying out, Lawrence claims that a woman's place is at the side of the dead family member. Excepting Anna's husband Will, the other men of the family are apart from the body, and the sons, in particular, "could not bear it" (294).

In *Sons and Lovers* (1913), Lawrence gives an example of deathly familial hosting that runs in the opposite direction to that given in *The Rainbow*. In the earlier novel, it is the maternal hostess who performs hosting-after-death on the dead body of her son.⁷⁵ In the middle of the text, Mrs. Morel arrives in London to visit her sick child William, but there is nothing to be done, and within hours of her arrival he dies from pneumonia:

Mrs. Morel sat perfectly still for an hour in the lodging bedroom; then she roused the household. At six o'clock, with the aid of the charwoman, she laid him out; then she went round the dreary London village to the registrar and the doctor. (169).

Having laid out the corpse and arranged the legalities, Mrs. Morel telegrams the father to come with money. Over the following days, she organises William's coffin and his

⁷⁵ Like Lawrence's description of the death of Mrs. Morel, the death of her son William is taken from life and gives Lawrence's impressions of the death of his own brother.

transportation home, and she picks out the parlour as the place where he will rest when he arrives home for the final time:

The family was alone in the parlour with the great polished box. William, when laid out, was six feet four inches long. Like a monument lay the bright brown, ponderous coffin ... His mother was stroking the polished wood. (173)

Mrs. Morell cannot fail to extend maternal hospitable warmth to the monumental polished box that holds her son's body. Lawrence does not dwell on the burying of that box:

They buried him on the Monday in the little cemetery on the hillside that looks over the fields at the big church and the houses. It was sunny, and the white chrysanthemums frilled themselves in the warmth. (174)

Despite Lawrence's negation of the detail, it seems fair – given her arrangement of the other particulars – to presume that Mrs. Morell was the organiser and heroic hostess of William's funeral. Consequently, it is the mother of the novel that plays hostess to the son's lived dead body as it moves from the point of death to the completion of burial. She first enacts a habitual deathly hospitality by laying him out; she then heroically hosts death through the giving of his funeral. Of the few details that Lawrence does give of the funeral, the "white chrysanthemums" stand out. The reason for this is the allusion they make to Lawrence's earlier short story "The Odour of Chrysanthemums" (1909), the text in which he treats the process of hosting-after-death in greatest detail.

In the first half of the story, Mrs. Bates, a pregnant wife and mother, performs the habitually hospitable acts of preparing the meal, cleaning the house, and putting the children to bed whilst she waits for her absent husband. All the while, her repeated refrain – "He'll come home when they carry him" – sets the tone for the deathly return of the master (190). Late in the evening, she receives the news that her husband has died in a mining accident and she sets about preparing to receive his body in her parlour. Lawrence's setting of the scene brings together the arrangements that Clarissa Dalloway makes for her more joyous party: flowers fill vases; glass glitters; candles flicker (194). In this homely hosting environment, the parlour hostess Mrs. Bates prepares to welcome her guests: the dead man and his pallbearers. The body arrives and is set on the parlour floor where the newly widowed Elizabeth resolves to lay him out:

She put on the kettle, then returned and kneeling at the feet, began to unfasten the knotted leather laces ... At last she got off the heavy boots, and put them away. "You must help me now", she whispered to the old woman. Together they stripped the man. (196)

The pregnant body of the wife works alongside that of the dead miner's mother to prepare his body for the business of death. The maternal hostesses here become mortal hostesses: washing, combing, and clothing the heavy, inert body of the dead man. Eventually, they complete the process and leave the body covered with a sheet "lying, with his face bound" (199). By undertaking the process of laying out her husband, Mrs. Bates comes to realise that she did not truly know him in life. The contemplation of her husband's dead body triggers an existential crisis in Elizabeth Bates: "Who am I? What have I been doing? I have been fighting a husband who did not exist. *He* existed all the time" (198). However, as with Clarissa's contemplation of Septimus' death and Delia Pargiter's experience at her mother's grave, thinking about the death of the other results in an affirmation of the life of the self for Elizabeth: "She was grateful to death, which restored the truth. And she knew she was not dead" (198). Lawrence's early story counters Mansfield's later resolution to "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" by presenting the positive effect of the death of the other on the habitual hostess. For the widow, hosting-after-death creates an awareness of the plenitude and the possibility of a life free from the demands of habitual hospitality for her husband.

In *Women in Love*, Lawrence presents a version of the hosting-after-death paradigm that contrasts with the three preceding examples. As does Joyce, Lawrence artistically links birth and death. In *The Rainbow*, he explores the traditional role of women in the laying-in of birth whilst in its sister novel, *Women in Love*, he examines the modern role of women in laying-out the dead. In this later novel, Lawrence uses the figure of Gudrun Brangwen to present the failure of twentieth-century women to host-after-death. The failure comes in Gudrun's neglectful treatment of the body of her lover Gerald Crich: the heir of a coal-mining family and an archetypal leader of men. In *Women in Love*, Gerald is himself twice presented as a host. He first acts as a host at the Shortlands Estate party for the wedding of his sister, and he then hosts the tragic Water-Party at which another sister drowns. Death clings to Gerald all through the narrative: first, in the assertion that he killed his brother in youth; then, in his

dereliction of duty that results in the death of his sister; and later still, in his immature refusal to mourn the death of his father. Ultimately, Gerald meets his own end at the close of the novel and it is in his death that his chosen partner fails to host him. On a trip to the Alps, Gerald tries to strangle Gudrun through jealousy, before wandering away over the mountain into the freezing night. Directionless and disorientated, he sits down to sleep and dies. The following morning, Gudrun fails to perform the role of deathly hostess that society expects of a woman who has loved and lost.

When the woman at the hotel brings the news of Gerald's death, Gudrun reveals that she is unable, or unwilling, to perform the habitual hosting of the dead that society expects of her:

Gudrun did not know what to say. What should she say? What should she feel? What should she do? What did they expect of her? She was coldly at a loss. ... The woman went away mortified. Not a word, not a tear – ha! Gudrun was a cold, cold woman. (534)

Through the hotel worker's mortification, Lawrence reveals the stigma attached to a woman who fails to properly care for "her dead". Gudrun's inability to properly host Gerald also stunts her sister Ursula's mourning of him: "she could not weep, and the sight of her cold, pale, impassive face soon stopped the fountain of Ursula's tears" (535). Birkin's question to Gudrun reinforces the social expectation that women should perform deathly hospitality: "'Have you done anything?' he said. 'Nothing,' she replied, 'nothing'" (536). Appalled at Gudrun's inaction, Birkin leaves to carry out the duty in her place. In response, Gudrun sardonically determines to leave the hosting-after-death to Birkin: "since he was so extremely *good* at looking after other people" (536).

However, Lawrence suggests that the actions that make up hosting-after-death fail when female hands do not perform them; even Birkin, who loved Gerald, cannot help but be disgusted by his, "frozen carcase ... stiff as a board ... with the horrible hardness somehow evident" (537). Through the female acts of hosting-after-death, the husband of "The Odour of Chrysanthemums" becomes "clear as a twelvemonth baby .. clear and clean and white, beautiful as ever a child was made" (197). In Gerald's mother's eyes the body of his dead father Thomas Crich is likewise "beautiful" and youthful: "You can see him in his teens, with his first beard on his face" (377). Tended by a man, Gerald's body fails to undergo the transformative effect of hosting-after-

death that Lawrence describes in his presentations of female hosting-after-death. Rather than becoming a beatific lived dead body as the others do, Gerald remains a dead lived body or, what is even more objective, a “carcase”. Nothing that Birkin does can foster the sense of livedness for Gerald’s dead body: he remains, “cold, mute material” (540).⁷⁶ Whether the bullying Gerald is truly deserving of Gudrun’s hosting is another question; what is key to my argument here is that Lawrence portrays Gudrun’s failure to host Gerald as socially aberrant and as leading to the unacceptable objectification of a previously lived body. In this description, Lawrence makes an emphatic claim for the importance of womanly deathly hospitality: without women’s protection of lived dead bodies the dignity of death and the protection of legacy is lost.⁷⁷

“What would one like, if one died oneself?” Woolf muses in her diary as she considers the recent death of her friend Lytton Strachey, “that the party should go on” she concludes (*Virginia Woolf Diary IV* 65). The ideas surrounding personal death, the protection of legacy, and deathly parties that are operative in Woolf’s question and response also lie at the centre of this chapter. Taking personal death first, Heidegger understands death as an individualizing experience that leads to an acknowledgement of nothingness. To these claims, Merleau-Ponty counters that knowledge of death is knowledge of life and, moreover, that true knowledge of life leads to an awareness of existential plenitude and communality. Reading Clarissa Dalloway’s response to Septimus’ death against the “positive vision” of death Woolf describes in her diary shows that Woolf not only shares, but actually prefigures, Merleau-Ponty’s rewriting of the phenomenological understanding of death as a final possibility. Further, it is not just her personal death that concerns the hostess; women also exhibit a deathly hospitality towards others. Thinking about the deaths of others reveals the troublingly absent dead body in Merleau-Ponty. Against this omission, I contend that the dead body is a phenomenologically and socially compelling artefact: pregnant with meaning and ripe for hosting. Woolf and Mansfield’s descriptions of dying and death have shown that bodies do not cease to have meaning at the point of death; rather, bodies

⁷⁶ An additional argument that could be made here is that Gerald’s objectivity in life has passed with him into death: described from the start of the novel as a “pure as an art thing” (15), and unable to feel the force of his father’s death or of Birkin’s love, Gerald is a character that lacks humanity throughout the story, so the presentation of his body as cold and material in death compliments his lived character.

⁷⁷ Lawrence’s typical phallocentrism is apparent in this denouement; it is the abused Gudrun, not the abuser Gerald, who is censured.

continue to signify even after death. I coin the phrase “lived dead bodies” as a way to represent the on-going signification of deceased bodies. Lawrence’s description of female engagements with lived dead bodies reveals how women traditionally prepare bodies for the viewing of mourners and for burial or cremation in the process of laying-out. I describe women’s actions towards lived dead bodies as “hosting-after-death” to show how bodies, and the legacies of the people who inhabit those bodies, continue to require care and preservation after death. Like the laying-in of the last chapter, the laying-out of the corpse is an act that was traditionally performed by women in the home until the twentieth-century. With the rise of the modern undertaker, women’s traditional hosting of lived dead bodies was either taken over or made secondary to the socially and economically rewarded work of male undertakers. However, the example of Gudrun Brangwen from *Women in Love* exposes how twentieth-century women continue to risk social censure if they fail to perform “hosting-after-death”.

Taking inspiration from Woolf’s command that the “party should go on”, I turn to the subject of “deathly parties”. The modernist funerals in Woolf, Mansfield, Joyce, and Lawrence reveal how the funeral-giving hostess performs an extraordinary version of the care and preservation that hosting-after-death describes. Similarly to the woman who hosts the body after death, the twentieth-century funeral-giving hostess is also subject to the higher male authority of the men of the new profession of funeral directing. The examples of modernist literature collected here present women as fundamental to ensuring that the bodies that they protect and nurture in life are protected and cared for in the final stage of their earthly existence. Consequently, my exploration of women’s actions towards dead bodies extends the modernist discourse on death whilst revealing how the social practices surrounding death underwent change in the modernist period. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the lived body, and his brief comments on death, are extended by my discussion of what happens to the lived body once it has died. Similarly to maternal hosting, the consideration of deathly hosting exposes how Merleau-Ponty consistently devalues or ignores the actions that women perform for other people, even whilst the social expectation remains that female bodies will both bring us to life and protect us in death.

Conclusion: Adieu

Rarely does the hostess get to judge the success of her own party: it is ultimately up to the consensus of the guests to decide whether the offering has been successful, the creation complete, and the entertainment sufficient. It is no different here. But before I blow out the candles and pack away the china, I beg your leave to allow me to beat the curtain back once more and keep you just a little longer whilst I retrace my steps. My thesis title details the two central concerns of my study: the first of which is to explore modernist representations of the hostess and to question what it might mean to “perfectly” host; the second, related concern, is to contribute examples of specifically female bodily experiences to Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the lived body. Taking the philosophical concern first, I began this thesis with an introduction that developed the relationship between phenomenology and modernism that Carole Bourne-Taylor and Ariane Mildenberg, among others, have recently identified as a fruitful but little-explored area of research. My contribution to that field has been an extended study of the links between Merleau-Pontian phenomenology and modernism. I have built on the existing phenomenological studies of Woolf’s work by comparing her “sound-pictures” with Merleau-Ponty’s claims for Cezanne’s painting, finding that they share similar motivations, complementary techniques, and kindred phenomenological conclusions. I have argued that writing, like painting, is world-making, and I have opened Merleau-Ponty’s work on aesthetics to wider literary engagements with the express purpose of revealing how modernist writing and Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy are ultimately driven by the same desire to describe the world as it is presented to intentional, incarnate consciousness.

I hope that this thesis conveys my respect for Merleau-Ponty’s work and my belief in the potential of his method. Through his concept of the lived body, Merleau-Ponty transforms phenomenology into a philosophy that rejects the false dualism of Descartes, and that extends beyond the transcendentalism of Husserl into a school of thought that focuses on life as it is experienced in the everyday interactions between incarnate bodies, things, and the world. His descriptions of the structures of behaviour and the impact of perception on experience are rightly celebrated for the worthy contributions they make to the understanding of how incarnate experiences

define subjectivity. Nonetheless, whilst his philosophy has much to offer, his discussion of lived bodies fails to adequately account for the impact of sexual difference on experience. Of the feminists who rewrite his concept of the lived body paying particular attention to the experiences of female bodies, I am most in debt to Eva Simms, Luce Irigaray, and Iris Marion Young. Young in particular has proved fundamental to my thinking, most especially in her descriptions of how female embodiment impacts upon experience. Her works on the home, on pregnancy, and on moving through space, have all proven key to my discussion of modernist hosting. However, whilst Young's discussions of the body and the home have been invaluable in provoking and guiding my thinking, she fails to discuss what happens when the home – or the female body itself – opens itself as a site of hospitality. Those missing experiences return me to my first concern: the hostess.

I have long been compelled by the idea of the “good hostess”. The social condemnation of failing to live up to this appellation is clear, but the criteria for fulfilling it are intriguingly ambiguous and changeable. Nevertheless, implementing the imperatives of the “good hostess” does seem to involve more than the simple provision of cloth napkins, charming introductions, and sufficient vol-au-vents. The catalyst for my study into the “good hostess” was the realisation that modernist literature is filled with women striving to comply with the social expectations of the “good hostess”. I wondered, why was the modernist hostess in particular so prolific? What could her extended purpose be? And how could she help me to define the slippery idea of the “good” or “perfect” hostess? Looking for roots, I went in search of the hostess in critical theory. With hope, I turned to Jacques Derrida's famous exploration of hospitality, but I found the hostess missing. This pattern of finding the hospitable without the hostess repeated itself time and again as I searched for existing theoretical studies of the hostess. At last I discovered Judith Still, a critic who had cracked open Derridean hospitality slightly, making a little space alongside the mighty host for the hostess. I was keen to follow the implications of Still's suggestion that sexual difference is key to hospitality, and was persuaded by her argument that men and women experience and offer hospitality in different ways. However, I rejected her claims that women could not offer hospitality to those closest to them. On the contrary, to me it seemed that the domestic environment was the very centre of female hosting. Finding “hospitality” inhospitable to my needs, I took up the term

“hosting” as a way to provide a female alternative to the male term. “Hosting” for me designates the bodily provision of care, protection, and sustenance for a network of other lived bodies. It is concerned explicitly with the ways that women use their lived bodies to provide for other lived bodies in relations of exchange that often place them at a disadvantage.

However, conversations that I had at the start of my research period took me back to my original motivation and revealed to me that my area of study set out a common specific conception of the type of experiences that I would be focusing on: mention “hosting” and the assumption is that the subject will be party-giving. This understanding is absolutely legitimate, not least because of the twentieth-century penchant for salons and at-homes, and its famous and prolific professional hostesses and patronesses. Party-giving is an undeniably important part of modernist hosting. Beginning my thesis with a discussion of the “lion-hunting” hostess allowed me to confront this commonly expected representation of modernist hosting at the outset. With Woolf, I realised that the extraordinary, party-giving hostess had a dual representation: she was trifling and insincere, but also highly prized as a woman who brought people together and fostered human connections through the actions of her body. I wanted to capture both the disadvantages and the deceit of the party-giving hostess, as well as her social value and her simple, genuinely expressed desire to move beyond everyday superficiality to make life-affirming connections between people. I realised that Woolfian parties with their world-making potential – their ability to replicate the social world in miniature – also offered me a way in to exploring the less “tinselly”, less “glittery”, hostess that I felt was operative beneath the party-giving frivolity of the heroic hostess. This other hostess acts in a similar way to her party-giving counterpart; she too uses her body to provide for the needs of others, but she operates on a more prosaic, less extraordinary scale. Taking inspiration from Merleau-Ponty’s claim that habitual actions shore up and provide the foundations for extraordinary acts of creativity, I termed this everyday hostess the “habitual hostess”. The habitual actions of the everyday hostess are magnified and extended by the extraordinary hostess, but both forms of hosting are expressions of the same social imperative that encourages women to host the needs of the other through the actions of their bodies. With Young’s work on the home and Woolf’s semi-autobiographical novel *To the Lighthouse*, I explored how the party-scene of the home

becomes the site of familial preservation through the efforts of the habitual hostess, and I noticed how that preservation is threatened by her absence. Finally, reading Woolf's presentation of extraordinary hosting against Campbell's monomyth and Merleau-Ponty's work on heroism allowed me to reveal the party-giving hostess as a modernist heroine: a woman capable of offering a space for much needed social reunification. In my first chapter, then, I set out my fundamental claim that the modernist hostess is multi-layered: negative and positive, heroic and habitual. The modernist hostess, as Woolf reveals her, is neither "perfect" nor is she fixed.

I devoted the remainder of my thesis to exploring how both the habitual and the heroic hostess are created and constrained by social expectations. I wanted to trace the different ways in which women use their bodies to heroically and habitually host at different stages in their lives. Having explored the adult representation of the hostess in my first chapter, I was keen to use my second and third chapters to examine how women's childhood and adolescent experiences prepared them to take up the roles of the habitual and the heroic hostess. In chapter two, I searched for the first habitually hospitable actions of girls. Retaining my focus on the lived body, I turned to the extended work on child development that Merleau-Ponty undertakes in his *Sorbonne Lectures*. Reading that work, I realised that Woolf's fictional and autobiographical descriptions of childhood matched Merleau-Ponty's account in striking ways. It also quickly became apparent that the bodily form of hosting that I was looking for could not be possible in earliest childhood for either Woolf or Merleau-Ponty because both believed that children begin life with a non-dualistic understanding of themselves and the world. Not yet in possession of a bodily schema, young children cannot habitually host through their bodies because they do not have an awareness of the separateness of their bodies (therefore, the offerings that they make to others are really offerings to themselves, and *vice versa*). However, Woolf and Merleau-Ponty both suggest a change in childhood experience that does enable the distinction of separate bodies. It is after the completion of this "psychogenesis" that children acknowledge their separate "lived bodies" and are open to the distortions of society – distortions that, for girls, include the roles of the habitual and the heroic hostess. Woolf's novel *The Waves* provided me with a way to read how young girls and boys are conditioned to display gender specific behaviours in early childhood. Her autobiographical work "22 Hyde Park Gate" allowed me to extend my focus on

domesticity by revealing how gender and class distinctions are conveyed to children through the formative world of the childhood home. Finally, the examples of Cam and Rose Ramsay of *To the Lighthouse* revealed how newly socialised girls are encouraged in their childhood homes to use their bodies to imitate the actions of the habitual and heroic hostess in their play and their interactions with others.

Having born witness to the birth of the bodily schema and to nascent gender identities in chapter two, in my third chapter I wanted to explore how the sexualisation of adolescent girls impacts on their embodiment. I argued that adolescent girls are figured as “in-between” guests – no longer children, not yet adult – they are caught between their childhood and adult homes. Working with Young’s feminist phenomenological discussion of female embodiment, I used Bowen’s description of Portia Quayne in *The Death of the Heart* as a way to explore the habitual embodiment of adolescent girls. Extending that work, I engaged Young’s claims that girls are allowed to be “of” space in their private embodiment, but that they are also taught to be “in” space through the public objectification of their bodies. The description of adolescent girls preparing to attend parties and dances that Bowen, Woolf, and Mansfield provide, offered rich evidence for Young’s claims that adolescent girls are externally and internally objectified. My focus on the specific example of dancing revealed how girls are taught to use their bodies to “dance like a girl”: a style of deferent and dependent comportment that ultimately prepares them to marry and to use their bodies as the site of submission to the needs of others. Chronologically, my first chapter follows my third and completes my movement from childhood to adulthood.

My fourth and fifth chapters mirror my second and third chapters in that they too are sister chapters: they explore how women host other bodies at the start and at the end of life. In chapter four, I moved from sexual maturity to maternity, to explore pregnancy as both the primary experience of hosting for all humans and the event that enables all later intersubjectivity. My search for the pregnant lived body in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology left me empty-handed. However, inspired by the recent feminist work of Irigaray, Simms, and Grosz, I focused my study into pregnant embodiment on Merleau-Ponty’s late concept of the flesh in *The Visible and the Invisible*. Looking for modernist discussions of pregnancy, I discovered Lawrence’s extended description of pregnant embodiment in *The Rainbow*. Yet, as with Merleau-

Ponty's discussion of the flesh, there was a problem in Lawrence's portrayal of pregnant flesh: Merleau-Ponty used the language of pregnancy but failed to discuss the experience; Lawrence engaged the experience but did so in a way that silenced the female body. I examined "maternal flesh" in Lawrence and Merleau-Ponty with these dual deficiencies at the forefront of my reading. Moving beyond pregnancy, I asked: how is hosting at work in childbirth? I read Merleau-Ponty's concept of "dehiscence" against Lawrence's description of birth to discuss the I/Other ambiguity at work in the birthing experiences of the natal guest and the pregnant hostess. Joyce provided me with another male modernist perspective on childbirth in "The Oxen of the Sun" chapter of *Ulysses*. Whilst the descriptions of childbirth in Joyce and Lawrence did not give me the female perspective on birth that I most desired, reading them together did provide me with a way to trace the twentieth-century change in the female role in assisting in childbirth. The different places in which birth takes place in Lawrence and Joyce's descriptions revealed how, in the twentieth century, women's traditional role in the home at the side of laying-in bed was taken over by male doctors in hospitals who subsequently replaced midwives and homebirths. I finally countered the male modernist perspectives on birth that Merleau-Ponty, Lawrence, and Joyce gave with a reading of Mina Loy's extraordinary poem "Parturition" to examine the lived bodily experience of the maternal body positively hosting life into existence. I concluded my fourth chapter with the argument that men make women's bodies into metaphorical hostesses when they appropriate the language or imagery of female experiences for male purposes.

My fifth, and final, chapter formed a counterpart both to the chapter that preceded it, and to my first chapter where I established the habitual/heroic paradigm of hosting. With Woolf, Waugh, Mansfield, and Joyce, I described how the heroic form of hosting that was examined as party-giving in the first chapter, becomes funeral-giving in deathly hospitality. Via Lawrence's work, I also argued that the habitual care and preservation that women extend to lived bodies becomes a form of "hosting-after-death" when women use their bodies to provide care and preservation for the dead bodies of others and their legacies. I extended Merleau-Ponty's argument that the body is constitutive of experience to reveal how the dead body continues to signify after death as a "lived dead body", thereby adding to the scant exploration of death that Merleau-Ponty provides. I also discussed how the traditional female role of

hosting-after-death underwent a similar fate to that of hosting at birth, as the twentieth century saw the male undertaker and the funeral parlour replace women caring for dead bodies in the home. Nevertheless, the example of Gudrun Brangwen revealed that twentieth-century women still received social condemnation if they failed to properly host the dead. My ultimate aims in chapters four and five were to reveal how the changes from homebirths to hospital births, and from hosting-after-death to professional male funeral-giving, combined with the rewriting of female experiences from male perspectives to ignore or devalue the traditional forms of care that women provide for other bodies at the start and at the end of life.

Throughout my thesis, it has been my intention to foreground the lived bodily experiences of women. I wanted to show how the experiences of those lived bodies are not only dissimilar from men's experiences in many ways, but also how they undergo flux and change as a woman moves through her life. Because my intention has been to show how women are socialised into using their bodies to provide bodily care for others, I necessarily present a heteronormative account of a woman's life journey. It is certainly not my intention to privilege this narrative: female experiences are as different as the bodies that bind them and feminist phenomenology has a long way to go in becoming truly representative of what it means to exist within these various and varying lived bodies. Just as I am limited in the scope of female experiences I include, my interest in specifically modernist representations of hosting constrains the historical breadth of my discussions; indubitably, female bodies host in different ways at different historical moments. There is also much that could be said on the experience of hosting through the female body outside of the white Western examples I take here. I leave it to those who have the experience of hosting through those bodies to write their own narratives of hosting.

If the bodies that it explores limit my contribution, my hope is that my work nevertheless goes a way to filling in some of the gaps that the missing female body leaves in classical phenomenology. I aim to have broken new ground in the expanse between phenomenology and modernism by focusing on the similarities between specifically Merleau-Pontian phenomenology and the modernist aesthetic. I likewise hope to have enriched the modernist discussion of party-giving at the same time that I have argued for a broadened definition of what it means to host in the modernist period and beyond. My final sincere desire has been to argue that the hostess is not a

position that is an afterthought, an inferior appendage to a more powerful host: a mere host-ess. I want to counter the idea that hosting is necessarily disadvantageous: the hostess can also occupy a creative, valuable, and unifying position that contains the potential for preservation and care, the fulfilment of which brings people together and enables them to “go deeper” to “discover real things beneath the show” (Woolf, see Bradshaw 91).

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