

Cézanne & Hemingway; Picasso & Dos Passos: Modernism's

Refiguring of Perspective in Literature and the Visual Arts

In February 1913 an exhibition curated by the Association of American Painters & Sculptors opened on New York's Lexington Avenue. Billed as the International Exhibition of Modern Art, it was comprised of more than 1,200 works by some 300 artists, and arranged throughout 17 gallery spaces in a massive open plan format. Nine of the galleries displayed work in various traditions—from watercolours to sculpture—by American artists, with the remaining spaces given over to the largest collection of contemporary European art yet seen on American shores.

Visitors to the show, of which there were tens of thousands during its month-long run, were faced with a sharp distinction as they wandered from the American works to those of the European schools. The former was largely naturalistic, concerned with the urban environment and its inhabitants, and with the task of representing modern life in a recognisable and relatable form. In the European galleries viewers found distortions: art that was concerned with challenging assumptions about the nature of perception and the very utility of visual art itself. Brought into direct relation with one another, the difference between the two modern approaches was striking, and prompted much debate and satire in the American press.

The Armory Show (as it quickly became known by virtue of being housed in the building of the 69th Regiment Armory) ran for a month in New York before touring Chicago, Boston and San Francisco, and marks a neatly identifiable

watershed moment in America's perception of the visual arts. Among the artists on display were Edvard Munch, Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse, Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp. The very breadth of styles on show, as well as the alien nature of the work, was in direct comparison to the more easily understandable American realism. The journalistic nature of the American work—characteristically that of the so-called 'Ashcan School' of William Glackens, George Luks et al.—gave the viewer American life as it was lived; even where it was dirty or hard it was at least reassuringly recognisable. By comparison the European work, full of unnatural angles and altered features, presented what many saw as an unflattering distortion.

What upset the public about expressionist art was, perhaps, not so much that nature had been distorted as that the result led away from beauty. That the caricaturist may show up the ugliness of man was granted—it was his job. But that men who claimed to be serious artists should forget that, if they must change the appearance of things, they should idealize them rather than make them ugly was strongly resented.

(Gombrich 424-27)

The debate that arose in the wake of the Armory Show was the same one that had fuelled the composition of the diverse European work to begin with: what was art's responsibility to 'truth' in interpreting the world, and how might that 'truth' be best represented?

Also in 1913 came the publication of what effectively amounted to a manifesto of the cubist movement: Guillaume Apollinaire's *The Cubist Painters*. Apollinaire argues that 'It is the social function of great poets and artists to renew continually the appearance nature has for the eyes of man' (Kolocotroni 266). In the case of the Modernists this took the form of finding new ways of representing the familiar. With a root in Kantian philosophy, and informed by advances in physics and psychology, Modernists began to think futile the task of

rendering a singular, objective image. In its place a number of diverse attempts were made at questioning the distorting role of human perception¹.

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The approach to the painting of landscapes and figures that Paul Cézanne developed in his Impressionist period of the mid 1870s onwards, seeks to inquire into the role of human perception in interpreting the natural world. In his 1945 essay 'Cézanne's Doubt', Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes how what had been traditionally thought of as naturalistic painting is in fact compromised by the artist's (mis-)perception of his subject:

When our gaze travels over what lies before us, at every moment we are forced to adopt a certain point of view and these successive snapshots of any given area of the landscape cannot be superimposed one upon the other. It is only by interrupting the normal process of seeing that the painter succeeds in mastering the series of visual impressions and extracting a single unchanging landscape from them.

(Josipovici 94)

The result of ignoring, or being unaware of, the distorting factor of perception was that naturalistic landscape painting had unknowingly presented the viewer with an image that is 'no more than a compromise between these various different visual impressions' (93). That is to say that naturalism, whilst claiming to present a *true* picture of the world was in fact producing a falsified compromise.

Cézanne began to employ techniques to reduce or eliminate the element of human perception in rendering the image. Painting the same landscape time after time he attempted to train himself to get down on canvas an impression of what really lay before him instead of what he saw. Cézanne's work of this period

¹ Similar enquiries are being made in other fields in the same period, including the philosophical school known as Phenomenology, which sought to separate real world phenomena from human cognition of them.

exhibits his attempts to eliminate the separation between foreground and background, which he came to see as a perspectival distortion. French novelist and painter Claude Simon terms the technique ‘refus de valorisation sélective’: the refusal on Cézanne’s part to elevate in importance any one element of a painting above others (Josipovici 93). Thus in *Baigneuses* (which was present at the Armory Show) the titular bathers seem blended in some respects with their surroundings, their limbs captured in the same short downward strokes as the grass on which they rest and the trees which stand around them – everything imbued with the same sense of motion. In one of the paintings depicting Mont Sainte-Victoire the branches of a foreground tree seem to merge with the foothills of a distant mountain despite the swathe of fields that lie between the two. It is as if the artist has negated the focusing function of the human eye.

Cézanne’s task in reducing the interfering element of human cognition is not to be confused with an attempt at photorealism. Rather, he aimed to first conceive of the landscape as it was and then to replicate that *impression* on the canvas. Often this led him to move elements, omit them entirely, conflate or otherwise alter them to give a picture of the landscape that conveyed the sense that he wanted it to.

Three works from this period (*L’Estaque*, *La Maison du Pendu*, *Auvers-sur-Oise* and *Les Peupliers*) were the subject of much attention from Ernest Hemingway whilst they were on display in the Musée de Luxembourg, Paris. In *A Moveable Feast* Hemingway recalls going to see the Cézannes ‘nearly every day’ (17), and cites the impression they made on him as formative in his writing of some of the stories in what would become *In Our Time*. Suffering a block in his writing at that time, Hemingway reports telling himself ‘Do not worry.... All you

have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence you know' (16). But he quickly admits that 'I was learning something from the painting of Cézanne that made writing simple true sentences far from enough to make the stories have the dimensions that I was trying to put in them' (17-18).

In a 1984 essay on Hemingway and Cézanne, Kenneth G. Johnston argues that what Hemingway learns is the value of depicting landscape subjectively. Comparing descriptive passages from 'Up In Michigan' (1923) with those in the story 'Big Two-Hearted River' (1925), Johnston finds that the earlier work is rendered almost journalistically and without diversion from fact, whereas the latter contains elements only ascribable to Hemingway embracing the lessons of Cézanne's work. Johnston tells us that the descriptions of landscape in 'Big Two-Hearted River' are factually false: the terrain in the area is not hilly but flat; the train tracks straight as opposed to curved, and not all of the details which Nick Adams reports would be visible from his vantage point.

Hemingway, instead of feeling bound to recreate a place as it appears, has molded the landscape about his character and made the story much richer for having done so. The setting in which Nick Adams is placed is symbolically rich by virtue of it having been created around him and through his eyes. The 'burned-over country' has seemingly followed Nick home from the war, and the 'trout keeping themselves steady in the current' (Hemingway 2004, 375) mirror Nick's effort throughout the story to do the same². Johnston argues that '[l]ike Cézanne, Hemingway learned to be selective in his detail, to eliminate non-essentials from his landscapes, to simplify, to blend reality and abstraction' (36), but he does not

² For a more complete catalogue of the story's symbolism see Johnston.

go so far as to analyse the importance of the vantage point from which things are seen and reported.

Hemingway has taken to heart the idea that a stronger impression of a place can be committed to the page if it is rendered as seen by his protagonist. Although the story is written in the third person it is filtered through Nick's consciousness so that emphasis is placed on the elements of greater importance to him. Whilst Johnston is correct that Hemingway's debt to Cézanne is figured in his abandonment of naturalistic reportage in favour of more impressionistic description, it is also true that Hemingway's story owes a great deal to his acceptance of the distortions of perception. Where Cézanne seeks to eliminate the cognitive process and render an unaltered impression of a landscape's essence, Hemingway is using comparable techniques to different ends: to show the natural world as perceived by Nick Adams.

Here we encounter one of the most complicating factors in a comparison between literature and visual art. Faced with a painted canvas or a sculpted form it does not occur to the viewer to ask himself who is reporting the world to them: the work is that of the painter / sculptor. Any deviation between the viewer's perception of an object and how it is depicted in the work can be attributed to the artist. The matter is not as straightforward in the realm of literature where there exists in almost all cases an intermediary between the writer and the reader. It could be that the structure of the novel allows explicitly for an additional voice through which the story is relayed (e.g. Willa Cather's *My Antonia*). The novel may be told in the first person and therefore subject to the narrator's partial emphasis and omission (e.g. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*). Or, as is the case with 'Big Two-Hearted River', the story might be told from a third-

person vantage point that is nevertheless informed by the perceptions of its protagonists.

It can be argued, of course, that all elements of a fiction are ultimately in place through the choice of the writer. But the fact that the struggle of the trout is described at length because it is of symbolic importance to Nick, is a very different thing to it being there because *Hemingway* feels it is important to Nick. Though the ultimate decision to include it is the author's, the reader is to understand that the element has prominence in the text because the character—whether consciously or otherwise—finds it important.

No such distinction has to be made in the parsing of Cézanne's landscapes, though the artist does raise questions pertaining to unity of vantage point in certain of his still-life works. *La Table de Cuisine* (1888-90) offers a kitchen scene complicated by elements in impossible relation to one another, so that the viewer is made aware that the blue-grey vase which we see down the throat of is not being seen at the same time (or, we might prefer, by the same person) as the table which supports both it and a basket which is seen more neatly side-on and not tilted. Similarly the angle at which the chair in the background is seen does not correspond to the way the table is presented.

Here we are more aware of the workings of perception—perhaps even multiple perceptions—but each is Cézanne, and where there is disharmony we might infer some motive of Cézanne's behind it. In Hemingway, and in fiction generally, the presence of the intermediary consciousness means the separation remains less neat and something more is required of the reader in examining the motivation behind what is reported to him.

In addition to the impressionistic, subjective rendering of landscape suggested by Johnston, there are other interesting parallels between the work of Cézanne and Hemingway. The writer's comments on the painter's work in *A Moveable Feast* are brief and fail to reveal what it is Hemingway finds instructive in Cézanne, but I would suggest that he was also impressed by the painter's command of detail, or rather his ability to give forms full expression whilst sometimes showing only their basic essence.

For instance, one of the paintings Hemingway visited daily—*Les Peupliers*—is a depiction of a stand of poplar trees which Cézanne achieves masterfully though many of their forms are little more than suggestions. They blend into one another as though in motion and are distinguishable more by the direction of the brush strokes which comprise them than by any detail of the foliage. Beneath them is the briefest suggestion of a path, and a plain rectangle stands in for what is perhaps a man-made structure of some kind.

The principle seems markedly similar to the theory of omission as often attributed to Hemingway. In *A Moveable Feast* he writes:

I had omitted the real end of ['Out of Season']... on my new theory that you could omit anything if you knew that you omitted, and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood.

(69)

He goes on to qualify his last statement with the remark, 'they will understand the same way that they always do in painting'. Although Hemingway does not develop this thought any further here, we might take it as meaning that where detail is omitted from forms in painting—such as Cézanne's poplars—the viewer nevertheless understands perfectly the content of the image, as its essence is still unfailingly conveyed.

Hemingway further explicated and qualified his theory some years after the publication of *In Our Time* (1925). In a passage in *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) he writes:

If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing.

(183)

That is to say that every absence must be active, not passive, and come about by way of a conscious decision on the part of the writer. It must be prefigured by and integrated into the surrounding work so as to achieve unity rather than to detract.

In his later work Cézanne too had taken to utilising less detail, and to leaving white spaces of canvas active within his pieces. His 1905 painting depicting La Montagne Sainte-Victoire, when compared to 1885 (and even 1898) pieces showing the same landscape, is strikingly undetailed almost to the point of abstraction and contains numerous blank patches of canvas that serve to add depth to the landscape as their dimensions recede towards the mountain. Despite the merely sketched detail the impression of the mountain and rural landscape is unmistakable; comparison leaves the viewer in no doubt that it is the same scene.

The works best exhibiting Hemingway's experiments with lack of detail and inclusion of active omission, are a pair of short stories. 'A Clean, Well-Lighted Place', published in 1926, is a sparse piece from which Hemingway claimed he 'left out everything' (Hemingway 1990, 11). The brief story is little more than characters talking, and culminates in a version of The Lord's Prayer in which

every other word is replaced with 'nada', followed by a recital of a Hail Mary which reads 'Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee' (Hemingway 1993, 362). These staccato injections of absence give the reader the impression of the story almost collapsing around him. In his 1959 essay 'The Art of the Short Story' Hemingway says of the amount he omitted, '[t]hat is about as far as you can go' (Hemingway 1990, 11), and whilst the white spots of 'nada' are certainly powerful absences it is perhaps not quite what Hemingway meant when he said that he 'left out everything', or when he wrote of his theory of omission in general.

A better example is provided by another Nick Adams story: 'The Killers'.

In the aforementioned 1959 essay, Hemingway writes:

That story probably had more left out of it than anything I ever wrote. More even than when I left the war out of "Big Two-Hearted River." I left out all of Chicago, which is hard to do in 2951 words.

(Hemingway 1990, 11)

The assertion that it is difficult to leave a lot out within a small word count speaks to the qualification from *Death in the Afternoon* quoted above, and to the necessity for omissions to be counterbalanced by and couched within material that is made richer by their absence.

'The Killers' also makes use of another technique frequently found in Cézanne's work: counterpoint. The story begins and ends with very similar scenes of characters entering a lunchroom under streetlights: a repeated image that helps frame the story. In a 1999 essay, Theodore L. Gaillard, Jr. notes the similarity between these instances of mirrored imagery and Cézanne's propensity for repeating figures in his work, or using identical coloration to strengthen the relationship between elements in a painting. In Gaillard's analysis

the repeated images that begin and end ‘The Killers’ serve to physically frame the story:

“The Killers” unfolds almost literally within the finality and enclosed confines of these two vertical planes that loom in this story with the same stolid significance that the steep slopes of Mont Sainte-Victoire did for Cezanne.
(Gaillard 75)

This technique also occurs elsewhere in Hemingway’s fiction, notably in another of the Nick Adams stories from *In Our Time*: ‘Indian Camp’. Here the story is bookended by images of father and son crossing a lake by boat: the first time in a misty darkness, and latterly in clear sunlight. We might well apply Gaillard’s analysis here and note that all of the story’s action takes place within this mirrored frame. But of equal importance to the similarities are the differences. Whereas the resolution of ‘The Killers’ is tonally not far removed from its beginning, Hemingway’s choice to make the environmental conditions of the two lake crossings which frame ‘Indian Camp’ diametrically opposed is obviously freighted with symbolic meaning. The analogy to Cézanne here is less with the use of repeated colour than the repeated form: the mountain range duplicated in a tree branch. In both cases the technique facilitates an agreeable symmetry, and allows Hemingway to neatly delineate the time and space within which his stories take place.

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Whilst Ernest Hemingway was seeking to refine his craft by omitting the extraneous and employing Cézanne’s techniques of enquiry into perspectival distortion, other authors were making examination of the modern condition by very different means. Where Cézanne had pursued simplification to the point of

rudimentary form and white space, other artists were actively complicating their canvasses and seeking to find pattern or meaning within multitudinous forms or fragments.

Perhaps the most notorious piece at the 1913 Armory Show was Marcel Duchamp's *Nu Descendant un Escalier n° 2*. Its abstraction of the human form to an almost unrecognisable degree prompted widespread satire among viewers who failed to understand that it was intended to challenge the conventions of human perception. In Apollinaire's 1913 manifesto of Cubism he writes that the 'plastic virtues: purity, unity and truth, keep nature in subjection' (Kolocotroni 262). Duchamp's painting sought to depict a simple human figure descending a staircase as seen unburdened by the constrictions of unity of perception. Instead of capturing the figure in one moment (which, Cubism would argue, is impossible) the canvas overlays moments one on top of another so that the motion of the body is seen in repeated fragments. Like Cézanne, Duchamp is seeking to eliminate the element of human cognition and present the form as it *is* as opposed to how it is perceived.

Fragmentation as a means of deconstructing the unity of perception was present in many of the European works at the Armory Show. Georges Braque's *Violin and Candlestick* sets the titular forms in semi-complete states amid a riot of brown and grey fragments; Picasso's *Le Guitariste* similarly abstracts both the human form and that of the instrument so that geometric renderings of limbs and the guitar's body, though discernable as disparate elements, are only barely recognisable.

Though the pieces were not on display in New York, Picasso was, at the same time, working in a new medium which was to serve as one of Modernism's

most widely adopted techniques: collage. Employing the fragmentation exhibited in the painted works, whilst also affording the artist a greater range of textures provided by the inclusion of diverse elements, collage proved to be a powerful tool in the challenging of perspectival distortion.

Rosalind Krauss calls collage 'the first instance within the pictorial arts of anything like a systematic exploration of the conditions of representability' (Krauss 16). She argues that through choice of materials and their placement and interrelation on the canvas, the artist is simultaneously able to challenge the nature of conventional perception, whilst enriching the symbolic meaning of the work exponentially. Krauss pays particular attention to a Picasso collage from 1912, in which the form of a violin is both supplemented and interrupted by two halves of a newspaper clipping. The newspaper is cut to repeat the violin's form, and whilst one half of the clipping adjoins the instrument's sketched neck to provide that form, the second piece echoes the violin separately. The repetition of the form is compounded by the fact that the drawn elements of the instrument also provide it as seen from multiple perspectives (as discussed above in reference to Cézanne's *La Table de Cuisine*). Krauss argues that Picasso's use of real newspaper fragments grounds the work in a concrete reality, making the disunity of perspective even more powerful.

The violin collage is relatively simple in comparison to some of Picasso's other collages of the same period. *The Scallop Shell (Notre avenir est dans l'air)* and *Compote Dish with Fruit, Violin, and Glass* (both 1912) both employ a greater number of elements, each providing a new direction from which the pieces can be approached. Picasso's introduction of fragmented typography, perhaps more

than any other single facet of the compositions, speaks to the fragmentation of reference and concomitant breaking down of the unity of signification.

We see similar techniques at work in John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*. The novel is a *mélange* of voices, people, sense impressions and places which abut one another on the page and comprise a fragmentary and yet cohesive impression of the modern city. Like Picasso, Dos Passos constructs his novel by laying one element on top of another, each a different voice or story which gains meaning by virtue of its place in the whole.

Dos Passos employs any number of techniques to blur the distinction between the novel's moving parts. Though told in the third person the narrative, as we have seen with Hemingway, includes and omits dependent on the bias of its characters. Here however, Dos Passos slips between several consciousnesses without pause, with the result that the reader is given multiple perspectives on scenes that the third person narrative mode might seem at first to have rendered objectively. On the first page alone we see a nurse from a seemingly omniscient perspective; a newborn from the perspective of the nurse; a violinist from Bud Korpenning's perspective, and Bud from that of the young man in the straw hat. All of this passes without comment from Dos Passos, so that the voices bleed from one to the other and the overall impression of the prose is a unity from fragments. As with Picasso's collages there is no dialogue between the elements other than what the viewer / reader deduces. The consciousnesses Dos Passos renders do not interact even where the characters do, leaving the narrative as a whole the product of multiple unreconciled subjectivities.

But Dos Passos's collage is built out of more than just people. He lays in snatches of song and nursery rhyme (228), letters between characters (255),

and, like Picasso, newspaper. Headlines, set in capitalised type, often occur in the text and perform various functions. Like the first newspaper fragment in Picasso's 1912 violin collage they sometimes tie together story elements that do not otherwise marry up: such as when Baldwin reads of a milkwagon driver hit by a train (55). For the reader the report recalls the earlier incident, of which Baldwin was no part, and as such provides a connection between two otherwise independent story fragments.

Alternatively, newspapers sometimes point to elements outside of the frame of the novel. Like Hemingway's use of counterpoint, Dos Passos begins and ends *Manhattan Transfer* with a character arriving in and leaving the city respectively. All of the action of the novel takes place within the geographic confines established by the title, so when the reader encounters a headline predicting the build up to the first World War (170) he knows that it is unlikely to affect the narrative directly. Instead it performs the same function as Krauss suggests for Picasso's use of newsprint: anchoring the work in the same world inhabited by the reader / viewer.

And just as the parts of the collages are often curtailed or occluded, Dos Passos distorts his scenes through compression of time, the repetition and compounding of words and the use of disordered, impressionistic stream-of-consciousness. As Ellen walks down the street in the third chapter we are given her impressions of what she sees, and the thoughts these things incite in an unfiltered litany of imagery:

The man on the bench has a patch over his eye. A watching black patch. A black watching patch. The kidnapper of the Black Watch, among the rustling shrubs kidnappers keep their Black Watch.

(Dos Passos 59)

Similarly when Jimmy goes for a walk in the subsequent chapter:

A man with a can of coaloil brushes past him, a greasy sleeve brushes against his shoulder, smells of sweat and coaloil; suppose he's a firebug. The thought of firebug gives him gooseflesh. Fire. Fire.

(83)

Taken alone each of these excerpts means little. The repetition, the frantically noted smells, sights and sensations are not conducive to giving the reader a cohesive picture of either the characters or the city. In context however, as two fragments of the larger whole, they both offer a glimpse into the sinister tone Dos Passos finds pervading the city environment. They both present to us characters at a particular moment, in a narrative where even identity is malleable. Ellen, though she appears several times in the novel, takes different names and associates with different people, offering the reader multiple perspectives on the city, whilst simultaneously embodying the break down of the unity of perspective.

Manhattan Transfer begins with a character declaring, 'I want to get to the center of things' (16). Bud is new to the city, and his belief in the concept of unity—that Manhattan is an ordered whole revolving about a central point—is the conception of one not yet introduced to the world of Dos Passos's novel. His naivety is undercut almost immediately by another character asking a nurse how they tell the newborn babies apart, and receiving the answer, '[s]ometimes we can't' (18). With these two scenes in the novel's early stages Dos Passos introduces the idea of the singular, and corrupts it with the reality of the many.

In his introduction to the Penguin edition, Jay McInerney writes that Dos Passos was 'more interested in society than in the individuals who composed it'

(Dos Passos 7). The composition of his novel as collage certainly supports this, but should not be confused with fondness for the condition of the modern city.

Joseph Warren Beach writes of Dos Passos:

It was not by choice that he wrote of America in his day as the heartless arena of commercial anarchy; he was forced to build his whole artistic structure out of materials naturally repugnant to his nature.

(Beach 10)

Beach's analysis speaks both to the anarchic nature of the novel's construction as well as the fact that this is resultant of Dos Passos's decision to build it out of the multiplicity of 'materials' he saw before him in the city. In his 1935 essay 'The Writer as Technician', Dos Passos states his belief that a true writer 'discovers some aspect of the world and invents out of the speech of his time some particularly apt and original way of putting it down on paper' (Kolocotroni 545). Instead of exploring a single consciousness—which McNerney terms 'the predominant mode' of American fiction (Dos Passos 10)—Dos Passos's chosen technique in *Manhattan Transfer* is to comprise from multiple perspectives a collage of a city.

This form facilitates the author's questioning of the quintessentially American concept of *e pluribus unum*. By placing on the page the disorder of the urban collective Dos Passos suggested that the modern democracy—and the city as a microcosm of it—was no longer a place where the single voice could be heard above the din of the many. He states that '[o]ur books are like our cities; they are all the same' (Kolocotroni 334) and then seeks to confront that homogeneity by revealing the cacophony beneath the 'surface of opinions, orthodoxies, heresies, gossip and journalistic garbage of the day' (548).

But Dos Passos's interest in society over the individual also sets him apart. If Picasso's aim with collage, and the aim of much of Modernist art, was to admit into the work multiple perspectives (or deny the possibility of a singular perspective), that is distinct from Dos Passos's questioning the validity of the concept of *e pluribus unum*.

With *Manhattan Transfer*, and the USA Trilogy that was to follow, Dos Passos's self-imposed task was to examine the impact of what he called 'all-enveloping industrialism, a new mode of life' (Kolocotroni 336) on the city, the country and its people. His work is a kind of fusion of the two traditions that sat side-by-side at the Armory Show: the social documentary of the Ashcan School's realist painters, and the fragmented disorder of the Modernists.

Dos Passos was not alone in establishing this fusion. As mentioned above, collage was a technique adopted widely amongst the arts. In cinema, Sergei Eisenstein was to become renowned for refining the use of montage in several films of the mid 1920s, but a cinematic short of 1921 uses the technique in a very similar manner to Dos Passos. *Manhatta* was the work of Charles Sheeler, a painter of the Ashcan School. In 65 shots over 10 minutes he composes a picture of New York's architecture, transport, climate and its swarming masses of inhabitants, all intercut with lines from Whitman's 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry'. Like Dos Passos's novel, the film begins with a disembarking from a ferry, and ends with a sunset. The film shows Manhattan's dimensions, its complexity and—despite its static camera—gets something of its dynamism. What it can not capture is the same thing missing from the Modernist painting and collage discussed here, and the very thing Dos Passos achieves a sense of in his novel: the inner life of the people.

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In comparing Modernism as it manifested in literature and art, Pericles Lewis suggests the following:

The reorganization of space was undertaken primarily in the visual arts. Its counterpart, the transformation of time, was central to modernist narrative. (31)

There is certainly textual evidence to support this argument³, and both Hemingway and Dos Passos compress and warp time in their work. But by failing to enquire into the reasoning behind the 'reorganization' and 'transformation' this formulation ignores something essential in the conception of the Modernist project in both media.

Malcolm Bradbury defines Modernism as 'naturalism in process of decomposition', a new form in which 'consciousness dominates' and the aim is 'a neo-scientific study of the rhythms of mind' (Bradbury 47). It is in service to this study that Modernism reorganises, transforms, distorts and refigures. Taking the lens of human cognition as its subject Modernism reshapes how every part of the world is perceived. Cézanne attempts to remove the distorting effect of that lens; Hemingway seeks to see as clearly as possible through it in rendering a complete character; Duchamp and Picasso shatter the lens and offer up the world as seen through the resulting fragments as proof of the impossibility of unity; and Dos Passos multiplies the lens a thousandfold and, moving from one to another, pushes back against homogeneity. More than merely the reorganisation of space or time, Modernism represents a refiguring of perspective. From this starting

³ The first to mind is Faulkner's manipulation of time as a central theme in *The Sound and the Fury*, as explicated in detail by Jean-Paul Sartre.

point the Modernist project produced a great variety of works across all media, united by a distrust of a singular, objective truth.

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