promote the sense of bodies subsumed by forces different from and larger than the individual will.

Deren's films treat movement as a force which mediates subjective and objective experience, as an event which is not independent of bodies but is independent of any one person's body. In *Ritual in Transfigured Time,* Deren joined "together a shot of one person beginning a movement and another person continuing it and still another completing it. These shots are held together not by the constant identity of an individual performer, but by the motional integrity of the movement itself, independent of its performer."[55] Movement and repetition—both that of the camera and of the actors—depersonalize her films and connect filmmaking to ritual:

> I have called this new film ritual, not only because of the importance of the quality of movement . . . but because a ritual is characterized by the de-personalization of the individual. . . . The intent of such a depersonalization is not the destruction of the individual; on the contrary, it enlarges him beyond the personal dimension, and frees him from the specializations and confines of "personality."[56]

This enlargement or extension beyond the individual is made possible because the camera can represent movement so that it no longer is associated with a single body. Deren's camera choreography renders movement in ways that reorganize subject and object categories.

In particular, Deren uses motion and choreography to animate: "if it can move, it lives. This most primitive, this most instinctive of all gestures: to make it move to make it live. So I had always been doing with my camera . . . nudging an ever-increasing area of the world, making it move, animating it, making it live."[57] To animate the world, Deren does not merely "add" a category of objects that move. Rather, the act of animation forces one to reconsider the entire structure of movement and the role and location of the individual object/body. In each of the three films I discuss, Deren unsettles traditional relationships between bodies and motion and questions the stability and cohesiveness of the individual, explicitly critiquing gender relations and the politics of image production in the process.

Meshes of the Afternoon. Deren's first film was a collaboration with her second husband, Czech filmmaker Alexander Hammid. As a result, *Meshes* bears a strong resemblance to Hammid's own first film, *Aimless Walk* (1930), particularly in terms of the iconography of the doubled self.[58]

Meshes appears to record a woman taking an afternoon nap in a house whose interior becomes increasingly and surprisingly gothic, given that the dream takes place, in Manny Farber's words, "on a lazy California day in a stucco bungalow."[59] By depicting the dreamer's imaginative representations of herself and meshing those dream representations with the film's initial "reality," the film questions the stability of vision, the power of (self-) images, and the integrity of the individual. Deren acts as the dreaming protagonist whose body is both divided and multiplied; her movements are repeated, and certain inconsistencies arise which are incapable of recuperation in the figure of the initial dreamer. Deren's notes suggest that the

film "does not record an event which could be witnessed by *other* persons."[60] But in fact, the point-of-view structure is such that no person within the film could witness all the events, not even the dreamer who appears to be the origin of the film's events.

Repetition and symbolism displace narrative in *Meshes.* The use of spatial and temporal triples—in the stairway sequences and through the three dream doubles—ensures that the film conveys a mood of obsessive, ritualistic reiteration.[61] A key falls out of Deren's hand before she enters the house and reappears from a different location (e.g., her mouth) each time a dream double attempts to enter the house. Deren watches her double chase a robed, mirror-faced figure and enter the house three times; she and her dream doubles climb and fall down the stairs in pursuit of the figure. The three dream doubles confer over the dining room table, apparently determining which one will kill the dreamer. When the third double approaches Deren with a knife, the now-restless dreamer is awakened by the kiss of her male lover, played by Hammid.

We are encouraged to think the dream has ended when the lover hangs up the telephone Deren left off the hook prior to the dream. Yet, the dream is not over; for after she follows him upstairs to the bedroom, his sexual caress, which visually parallels her earlier autoerotic caress prior to her nap, incites her to slash him with a knife. Her gesture reveals that the space where his head appeared has become, or always was, a mirror—possibly the mirror face of the robed figure in which the woman has not been able to see her reflection. The mirror shatters: through a frame of broken mirror we see the ocean, and the next shot depicts shards of a mirror falling onto a sandy beach. In the final scene, the male lover enters the house to find the dreaming woman in her chair covered with seaweed and apparently dead. These final point-of-view shots are inconclusive, however: if the dreamer's imaginative world seeped into the film's "reality," then viewers must also question the male lover's "reality."[62]

P. Adams Sitney argues that the woman in *Meshes* "encounters objects and sights as if they were capable of revealing the erotic mystery of the self."[63] Sitney is correct in observing that objects, vision, and the erotic are important to the film's construction of a repressed and resistant female sexuality and subjectivity. Sitney's is one of several excellent readings that provide insight into the film's psycho-sexual tensions and suggest their source in the Deren-Hammid relationship.[64]

My focus, however, is on the fact that objects and sights in this film, most importantly the protagonist's sights of her fragmented and multiplied self, undermine vision as a sense which offers access to the truth of the individual. This process is not without gender implications, of course; the notion of woman as knowable through her image is one that the film takes issue with. Deren argued that photographic images always refer to other images but also constitute their own reality,[65] and her images emphasize that constructed, photographic reality at the expense of the referential reality of the subject-effect. The framing of Deren's face by its own reflection in the Botticelli shot, for example, foregrounds that vision cannot guarantee one's position—we see the face and its reflection as both objects and sub-

jects. Later in the film, an image of Deren's moving reflection in the knife blade echoes and answers the Botticelli shot by demythologizing and, in fact, deforming Deren's face.

Lauren Rabinovitz writes that in *Meshes* "the relation of subject to object is reversed: the woman becomes passive while the objects act aggressively."[66] Yet bodies and inanimate objects are not easily distinguishable as either subjects or objects in *Meshes.* Deren's treatment of the properties of subjects and objects thwart our expectations regarding the definitions of those categories. For example, the sequence in which the dreamer enters the house contains a shot of a knife falling out of a loaf of bread. The key the woman drops early in the film bounces down the outdoor steps in slow motion. Later, the woman is forced down the stairs several times and in several different ways. In each scene, an "object" falls down, yet each time the repetition of the act of falling is complicated by the peculiar behavior of the object itself. By virtue of the slow motion filming, the key seems to dance in the air, to be suspended in its rebound from each step, and to almost intentionally avoid capture by the hands that seek it. The dream figures, however, resist falling down the stairs; one grips the edges of the stairs, and another moves down and up the stairs, coming to rest in a variety of locations on the staircase in a series of disconnected shots. Inanimate objects like the key are fluid and mobile in this film, whereas the human bodies move stubbornly and appear gravity-bound.[67] The knife easily slides from the bread onto the table, yet it initiates the fall by an apparently self-induced pulling away from the density of the bread. In these moments, the behavior of the objects does not conform to expectations regarding the volitional nature of human bodies (which move according to the will of the subject) and things (which are objects acted upon by subjects).

Furthermore, the interplay of subjective and objective camera angles prohibits any clear distinction between the dreamer and the dreamed event, a confusion emphasized by the woman's apparent death at the end of the film. The camera's positioning varies from subjective (in the tunnel zoom shot that begins the dream sequence) to objective (we see the dreaming Deren from positions that are neither her optical point of view nor that of any of the doubles). Neither position, nor the combination of them, provides a stable ground from which to assess the dreamer's identity or even her bodily integrity. This ambiguous camerawork is signaled in the opening sequence, where the establishing shot of the street and house reveals the protagonist's body in shadow; viewers see her "whole" body only as a silhouette.

By investigating the problems of the individual body in terms of subject, object, singularity, and multiplication, *Meshes* makes it apparent that conventional films construct personas through single-bodied images, conventional point-of-view structures, and realist acting conventions. The film probes the relationship between the real (presumably the dreamer) and the role (the dream doubles), ultimately confounding the distinction between the two. Annette Kuhn writes: "In effecting a distance between assumed persona and real self, the practice of performance constructs a subject which is both fixed in the distinction between role and self and

at the same time, paradoxically, called into question in the very act of performance."[68] The multiplied representation of the female protagonist produces a distinction between the dreamer (self) and the three dream doubles (roles), then calls that distinction into question. The use of Deren herself as dreaming and dreamed woman/women, the agency and autonomy of the dream doubles (they apparently succeed in doing violence to the dreamer), and the complex use of camera angles and editing confound the distinction between "role" and "self." The film thus calls into question the continuity, stability, and location of the ostensible "self" or subject while at the same time confirming the power of images—and, importantly, women's images of themselves—to produce their own realities.

At Land. The title of this 1944 film is a pun that reverses "at sea," and the opening scene cites the final scene of *Meshes:* the ocean's waves roll (in reversed-motion photography) as Deren's body is washed up on the sand. In the scenario for *At Land,* Deren describes the woman's relationship with the ocean in these terms: "She watches the sea desert her with inactive longing, accepting the sand which, as she dries off, slowly collects around her."[69] Deren's language reflects the reversed relationship between the human as active subject and the sea as passive object—the sea "deserts" the woman, and she inactively longs for it. As in *Meshes,* the woman confronts a hostile and uncaring environment, although the settings are not claustrophobic domestic spaces but are oceans, fields, and other public spaces. Unlike *Meshes,* where the protagonist is multiplied, embodied four times over, here she is single and decidedly solitary until the concluding sequence, often "pass[ing] invisibly among [the] people" in the film.[70]

Repetitive motions and Deren's body structure the film. The montage editing, organized around Deren's body and her eyeline matches, juxtaposes vastly different locations but presents them as continuous. In a sense, Deren's body performs the work of continuity editing because her body and the chess piece she pursues are the figures that create graphic and narrative connections among the scenes.[71] Her body stretches across these spaces to create continuity, yet she is also fragmented because she occupies, and sutures together, impossible spaces.

After she emerges from the sea, Deren crawls from a piece of driftwood on the beach up to a table; eyeline matches suggest that her body occupies both spaces simultaneously. She crawls along the table, unnoticed by the people sitting at the table, and spots an unusual chess game. The chess pieces move themselves across the board. When a white piece moves itself off the board, she watches intently; like the key in *Meshes,* however, it escapes her, tumbling into a stream of water. Deren then encounters a man along a country road and enters a house in which a man lies in a bed and stares at her. A cat suddenly appears in her arms and leaps from them, initiating the motion which allows her to escape from the room. In the final scene, Deren returns to the beach and watches two women play chess. Deren steals the white queen as it is about to be conquered and runs down the beach in a series of shots edited so that Deren is seen looking at herself from several locations and so that she appears to make extremely rapid progress across vast sand dunes.

The New Image

Anagram, Gestalt, Game in Maya Deren:
Reconfiguring the Image in Post-war Cinema (excerpt)

These attitudes towards recording, recombination, and structure are embodied within the anagrammatic logic and structure of Deren's films. Her first movie, *Meshes of the Afternoon (1943)*, made with her husband, the Czech émigré Alexander Hammid, animates this recombinatorial aesthetics, illuminating, in her words, "the malevolent vitality of inanimate objects" (*Meshes*).[5] Her definition of the film--joining vitality with the inanimate--already suggests a revision of ontology and perception. The movie is, indeed, a psychotic dream world, perhaps reflecting and advancing the on-going war condition. More importantly, it is a world where the interiority and exteriority of the subject are confused. The film is, in Deren's estimation, "a dream that takes such force it becomes reality" (*Legend* 78). It is a film where the abstract processes of perception take material form through editing and repetition.

Since *Meshes of the Afternoon* is the most narrative of her films, many critics argue that the movie wavers between this emergent aesthetic and older classical forms of cinema. However, the dominant device in the film is a rhythmic mirroring, or feedback, between the possibly exterior and interior states, that anticipates the anagrammatic method. Every scene is filled with parallels: a falling flower transforms into a knife, the telephone off the hook is doubled by a knife falling onto a table, and a potentially loving caress between a man and knife redoubles upon itself as a potential murder scene ("Pre-production Notes"). These scenes repeat themselves in the course of the film, each time slightly mutating to produce different comprehensions. Deren also regularly doubles or multiplies the same image in the scene, for example in a moment when she encounters herself in multiple:

The logic of the film is thus one of repetition and multiplication. Like the anagram, "nothing is new" in that everything has been recorded. The movie keeps repeating its own operations and images, and also regularly recombining montage and symbolic elements from cinema's history-particularly from Surrealism and Constructivism, both movements producing movies that Deren claims to have seen.

However, while Deren may repeat convention and tactic, she does not recuperate these images in the name of unearthing the unconscious or revealing the reality behind ideology. Deren violently opposes any comparison between her work and the psychoanalytic films of surrealists (*Legend* 280).[6] She steadfastly maintains that between the screen and the spectator a new reality is emerging, as well as a new psychology. Novelty here is relocated from the scene of capture to the production of this "whole" that encompasses the act of seeing and involves the spectator and the apparatus in producing an experience.

In subsequent production notes Deren writes: "Everything which happens in the dream has its basis in a suggestion in the first sequence--the knife, the key, the repetition of stairs, the figure disappearing around the curve of the road. Part of the achievement of this film consists in the manner in which cinematic techniques are employed to give a malevolent vitality to inanimate objects" (*Legend* 78). This lively malevolence emerges from the recombination of set patterns that produces more than the sum of the stills. Careful mapping of repeated images is critical to this form. The archive generates the movie and also produces a new form of liveliness that is beyond the sum of its parts, an accident that emerges from this structured practice.

Deren's film generates a form of attention through rhythmic patterns, not through the conventional integration of sound and image in causal relations. As Wendy Haslem writes, "The rhythm of the sound, movement and editing conspire to produce the effect of a trance film. *Meshes of the Afternoon's* dream-like mise-en-scène, illogical narrative trajectory, fluid movement and ambient soundtrack invite a type of contemplative, perhaps even transcendental, involvement for the spectator."[7] The diegesis emerges through the repetition and cadencing of elements, the regular interruption of action, and the discontinuity between movements and spaces. The repetition of form and the direct relationship *between* images produce movement.

Deren is explicitly recombinatorial in her logic. She correlates this cinematic practice directly with memory, archiving, and storage. Recalling a history of photography as indexical, she assumes the availability of the image to memory for recombination. She writes:

But the celluloid memory of the camera can function, as our memory, not merely to reconstruct or to measure an original chronology. It can place together, in immediate temporal sequence, events actually distant, and achieve, through such relationship a peculiarly filmic reality.

Cinema here takes the place of memory, but this is a particular memory. In this formulation, the work of cinema is to provide a structure that may produce new forms of time, not merely reflect a time that comes from outside of it. The camera works like our memory, "not merely to reconstruct or to measure an original chronology," but rather through a "relationship" between images that comes from different situations to produce a new time, "a peculiar filmic reality." Memory is thus a process of recombination that is not attached to the recollection of the past so much as the production of future imaginaries. The filmic medium, then, is the structure that creates the conditions for this recombination to occur. Deren's practice integrates both temporal conceptions of chance (the accident of encounter between different images) and statistical control (the production of equations, diagrams, graphs, and other mechanisms) through the structured "game" that is the anagram.