

MATERIAL CULTURE
OF ART AND DESIGN

JEWELLERY IN THE AGE OF MODERNISM 1918-1940

ADORNMENT AND BEYOND

Simon Bliss



B L O O M S B U R Y

Jewellery in the Age of Modernism
1918–1940

Material Culture of Art and Design

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Jewellery in the Age of Modernism 1918–1940

Adornment and Beyond

Simon Bliss

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To Cath, Tim and Ollie

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Introduction

Since the late 1960s, many individual designers and makers of jewellery have been consistently demonstrating that jewellery and other objects of personal adornment have few limits in terms of scale, materiality and wearability. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the emergence of 'contemporary jewellery' has produced a vast array of interesting, exciting and sometimes baffling approaches to the adornment of the body. For the student, there are now a growing number of exhibitions, books, periodicals and online sources that critique the role of jewellery in contemporary culture. Indeed, the advent of post-modern culture (and other cultural positions that claim to have supplanted it) has had its effect on jewellery as much as on other aspects of design and visual culture in recent years.

However, those who wish to consider the cultural and critical context of modern jewellery in the early part of the twentieth century are less well served. In particular, the position of the decorative arts in relation to the culture of modernism still remains relatively underexplored and jewellery fares particularly badly. As far as the 1920s and 1930s is concerned, the general tendency to label developments in modern jewellery (and sometimes any other kind of jewellery made during this period) as 'art deco' severely limits the possibility of a much wider understanding of the relationship between jewellery, adornment and what lies beyond. This book, therefore, is not overly concerned with identifying styles and approaches that have already been very well described by others. Rather, it attempts, in its five chapters, to consider how the culture of modernism in Europe and America made its impact felt on jewellery through an examination of issues of gender, identity, modernity, materiality, representation, consumption and display.

While acknowledging that both 'modernism' and 'modernity' are, respectively, imprecise and loaded terms, this book adopts perspectives from a variety of historical and contemporary sources to try to suggest new ways of examining the

jewellery culture of the interwar years. Since the French jewellery industry, so closely allied to the other luxury trades, was to a large extent the major stylistic innovator, and Paris the main centre of avant-garde culture, many of the key examples discussed are French. However, objects, ideas, images and events are considered from a range of other countries, including Germany, Great Britain and the United States. However we may wish to define it, modernist culture certainly had international as well as national characteristics.

For those who know something of the history of modern jewellery, there are some familiar names here, and some well-known examples of their works are illustrated. But there is also discussion of some less familiar ideas and works which attempt to shed light on the neglected relationship between jewellery and the culture of modernism in, arguably, the period of the latter's most exciting and dramatic development. The book aims to show, then, that the impact of modernism on jewellery and accessories in the interwar period was not just a matter of the superficial absorption of a range of influences on the part of designers and producers. There are wider cultural forces at work which affected the way jewellery was worn and consumed and which, in some way, affected all types of jewellery at all levels of the market. But, above all, it is the debates about the form, function and meaning of jewellery in a period of rapid social, economic and cultural change that characterize the main arguments put forward in this book. Ultimately, it constitutes a challenge to the view that jewellery and accessories have only a minor role to play in the histories of modernism.

In order to study jewellery and accessories of this (or indeed any) period, it is often necessary to be mildly promiscuous in the adoption of methodologies. In examining objects that are, for example, both personal and social, worthless and valuable, in or out of fashion, enduring and ephemeral, dumb or intelligent, mass-produced or individually crafted, traditional or avant-garde, the researcher must have recourse to a variety of approaches. This account is no exception. In the introduction to the book *The Gendered Object*, Pat Kirkham and Judy Attfield make the following suggestion to those writing about objects: 'Further and broader considerations of design would benefit from studies which do not prioritise the object (thing) over the subject (person/s) or vice versa. Though rendering the process of study and research more complex, this nevertheless makes it more possible to observe the ways in which people construct their identities through object-relations' (1996, 10). Although a generation has passed since these remarks, the emphasis on studying objects through the way they

contribute to the formation of identity remains highly significant and provides a unique way to introduce discussions of the personal into a wider study of jewellery and accessories as cultural artefacts. Perhaps few other subjects can benefit more from this kind of approach than jewellery due to its ability to engender discussions about both individual and collective identities through an examination of material and cultural circumstances. Jean Arnold, writing more recently, puts this well: 'Material objects, then, mean more than calculable monetary value; rather they exist as shared signs for established cultural values and as reservoirs of emotion brought on by individual experiences of those values' (2011, 148). In this respect, Bill Brown's crucial contention is also worth noting that it is the 'work' that objects perform that is the most important element in an object's life. Brown added that it is the 'subject-object relations in particular temporal and spatial contexts' that are most worthy of study (2001, 7). Using these approaches, we can take our study of jewellery beyond the examination of the physical object. Considering jewellery as image or as literary device, for example, can constitute an equally valuable way of assessing its relationship with, in this case, the culture of modernism. This book has been conceived and written in that spirit.

Chapter 1 presents evidence for the changing attitudes to wearing and thinking about jewellery in the 1920s. It shows that along with greater social freedoms for women, and the appearance of the 'new woman' in particular, came a re-examination of how and when jewellery should be worn and what it meant to the wearer. The relationship between jewellery and fashion is important here. In magazines and journals such as *Vogue* or *La femme de France*, jewellery and fashion were often written about in the same context, and jewellery was often promoted on the magazines' covers. However, jewellery was also featured in publications (such as *Art et décoration*) that were more concerned with decorative arts and architecture, thus highlighting the dilemma of jewellery as adornment or ornament. Evidence from an examination of these sources presents jewellery and jewellery-wearing as primarily a concern of women, but not totally to the exclusion of men. The irony remains that most of the major jewellers cited in this book were men, while their products were either purchased by men for women or, as was increasingly the case, by women for themselves. As part of the creation of a *parure* (a matching set of jewels), jewellery was seen as an essential way to project a private, public or professional persona. Jewellery for men did exist, of course, but its low-key characteristics are significant indicators of the requirement for men, still, to dress very properly and usually soberly in the

period covered by this book. The chapter also directly addresses the question of whether the absence of jewellery in certain types of interwar portraiture points to a politics of gender. Also of importance to the argument here is the relationship between jewellery and accessories, for both women and men.

Chapter 2 presents two case studies of well-known 'new women' and their jewellery collections: Charlotte Perriand and Nancy Cunard. Their contrasting tastes and motivations are explored as a way of examining the role of jewellery in the formation of identity. Although the contexts in which these two women lived and worked were different, the role jewellery played in both their personal and professional lives was very important. As these two highly influential women went about their lives, they carried with them an identity partly formed by their jewellery-wearing choices. Both were passionate about the modern world and their place within it, their jewellery connecting them to major intellectual and political circumstances in interwar Europe and America.

Chapter 3 directly addresses the issue of marginalization of ornament and adornment in the discourses of modernist culture. In design, much of the intellectual drift in the 1920s and 1930s was directed against ornament. But ornament and adornment were quietly thriving in this period as much as in any other. However, the nature of adornment was changing, and this chapter reviews the impact of avant-garde art, architecture and design on jewellery of the period in order to understand whether it is possible to speak of a 'modernist' jewellery practice. Here, the works of European jewellers are examined in terms of their links with avant-garde art and design culture along with an account of the relationship between jewellery and wider considerations of the condition of modernity. In addition, the place of metal in modernist aesthetic theory is examined in relation to jewellery-wearing and body adornment at the Bauhaus. The latter's influence on modernist culture is profound, but even this institution produced notable examples of ornament and body adornment, often in surprising ways.

It is clear that jewellery occupies a significant but often overlooked position in relation to modernist forms of visual representation in interwar culture. This is examined in Chapter 4. In the visual arts, jewellery and related accessories can be seen as being consciously used to reinforce radical techniques of visual representation, discourses of commodity culture and notions of identity as well as forming part of the personal pre-occupations and obsessions of individual artists and designers. In all of these contexts, jewellery takes on new meanings. Rather than merely taking its place as an accidental object on the receiving end of

different strategies of representation, jewellery can be seen to become the subject of, or at the very least a significant agent in, critical discourses about adornment, identity, value and the techniques of visual representation. An examination of selected works of photography and film is used to explore these themes.

Display is an important aspect of the history of jewellery in all periods, whether on or, in this case, off the body. Chapter 5 considers the role of display, display equipment and spaces in the promotion and consumption of jewellery in the 1920s and 1930s. This takes the form of an examination of some of the design strategies used to promote and exhibit jewellery in the public realm. Through discussion of the shop mannequin (used by hard-nosed retailers and surrealists alike to provoke interest in adornment), retail spaces, exhibition design, display techniques, events and publications, it focuses on how jewellery and accessories were consumed as images as well as objects in the growing democratization of jewellery consumption. In relation to the development of twentieth-century jewellery, literary theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes had identified this trend in a famous essay from the early 1960s, but it was another French author of numerous texts on the decorative arts, Henri Clouzot, who declared in 1929 that large-scale jewellery exhibitions had the potential to be as important as a motor show in cultural, commercial and social life.

Wearing (and Not Wearing) Jewellery in the 1920s

On 29 August 1928 the British Pathé company issued a short silent film entitled *Jewels*, introduced by the intertitle 'Joys in Gems for Milady' (Pathé 1928). The film was shot as a cameo in the form of three *tableaux vivants* featuring models wearing what appears to be antique jewellery. All three models are dressed in the fashionable clothes of the late 1920s. In the first scene, the model is seated on a stool and very deliberately draws on a cigarette and slowly blows out the smoke. Her raised left hand in which she holds the cigarette shows off the bracelet, the low neckline allows her necklace to be easily visible and, at the end of the shot, she turns her head slowly to reveal the pendant earrings. The scene is shot against a background split into two halves; on the right a William Morris style wallpaper and on the left what appears to be the back of a screen with crossed supports forming an asymmetrical geometric pattern (Figure 1.1).

This footage was probably meant to be spliced into a much longer piece of film, probably a newsreel. As such, it will have invited the audience to reflect on the fashions of the day, the freedoms associated with smoking (particularly new for women at this time) and, crucially, the role of jewellery in completing an outfit. We are to presume from the use of the word 'milady' in the intertitle that the model is playing the part of an aristocrat in an effort to associate the wearing of jewellery not only as something that comes naturally to the upper classes, but that wearing it is in itself a pleasure. Her pose and body language reinforce this idea. She is also performing the role of a modern woman who is up-to-date in her choice of clothing and accessories and, through her physical position situated between the reassuringly traditional wallpaper and the modern fragments of a set from a film studio, appears at ease with both the past and the present. It is not the individual pieces of jewellery that make this an image of a modern woman (the jewellery itself does not appear to be particularly modern or modernist) but



Figure 1.1 Still from Pathé film *Jewels*, 1928. © British Pathé Ltd.

the way it takes centre stage in the ensemble. Dress, coiffure, pose of the model and the setting all contribute to an attitude to jewellery wearing that, by the end of the 1920s, would have been familiar to a cinema-going audience.

In the decade following the First World War, a number of changes occurred in attitudes to wearing and thinking about jewellery. In France, Britain and America greater freedoms for women, partly brought about by the war itself, by the introduction of universal suffrage and by the prospect (however distant) of greater sexual equality, prompted a re-examination of how and when jewellery should be worn, what it meant to the wearer and what it should be made of. What makes these discussions interesting is not that they are peculiar to the 1920s (they are not) but that they took place against a backdrop of social, economic and cultural change that was increasingly an international phenomenon. Furthermore, the impact of modernist culture and technological progress meant that the consumer of jewellery was increasingly targeted as someone who was meant to be in tune with their time, aware of the latest developments in style, taste and modes of behaviour in dress and adornment. This included, in the case

of women, taking more control over their jewellery buying and having greater flexibility in their jewellery wearing.

The phenomenon of the 'new woman', normally discussed in relation to literature, dress and changing social mores, can be usefully examined in relation to the wearing of jewellery in the 1920s. In particular, it is worth considering how jewellery was 'performed' by the new women of the 1920s. An examination of contemporary magazines, consumer guides, designers' work and literary sources of the period reveal a shifting set of attitudes to the wearing of jewellery. In a decade conventionally defined by excess (the 'Jazz Age'; *les années folles*; the 'Roaring Twenties'; and so on) there are also some more subtle forces at work and it is useful to consider the strategies of jewellery wearing on the part of women and men of the 1920s and the relationship between this and the politics of gender.

The *garçonne* and the modern woman

The representation of the new woman has been extensively discussed in recent years from a variety of perspectives, social, political, sexual and cultural and attention has recently been drawn to this as a global phenomenon (Otto and Rocco 2012). Although initially a manifestation of the late nineteenth century, her image in fashion, advertising, film, painting and a variety of literary forms was, from the middle of the 1920s, ubiquitous. Always controversial, as well as being an object of ridicule and often the subject of satire, she is also known by the pejorative term 'flapper' or, in French, *garçonne*. French novelist Victor Margueritte's 1922 novel *La Garçonne* originated the term, used with subsequent abandon to loosely describe any young, rebellious, androgynous, fashionably dressed and coiffured woman. Although opinion remains divided on Margueritte's feminist credentials, the novel's depiction of the protagonist Monique Lerbier's sexual experimentation and overt challenge to existing social mores provoked such controversy that the author's *Légion d'honneur* was withdrawn by the French government. The impact of the *garçonne* on post-war cultural life in France has been thoroughly assessed (Roberts 1994; Bard 1998) but Linda Nochlin has produced one of the best concise characterizations of the new woman:

In general, the New Woman, wherever she might be, was a beacon to the adventurous and a threat to the upholders of traditional values. To female

youth, the New Woman offered a paradigm of liberation and agency: liberation from corsets, long hair, and bulky skirts; bodily freedom through participation in sports and dance; and equally important, liberation in the even more encumbering realm of ideology. (Nochlin 2011, viii–ix)

The ‘liberation’ referred to by Nochlin was achieved not just through changes in clothing and fashion. Along with the fairly swift rejection of pre-war attire, which included all the common physical restrictions mentioned above, came a new attitude to jewellery and accessories.

The role of the accessory is important in any attempt to describe the new relationship between adornment and the body that came about in the 1920s. Even if sometimes classified as a secondary item, the accessory wields power as part of a wider set of relationships set up by its configuration with a particular mode of dress. As Cristina Giorcelli has argued, the accessory occupies a position of ‘decentred centrality’ in its ability to ‘crown’ an outfit, yet also indicate status, social class, formality or informality. Furthermore ‘whether the accessory is an absolute *sine qua non* (like shoes) or a non-essential item (like a brooch), it has ended up becoming the quintessence of fashion and market forces’ (Giorcelli 2011, 4). The author cites Jacques Derrida’s account of Kant’s discussion of *parerga* (decorative, ornamental embellishments in Greek art and architecture) in which these ‘accessories’ are considered as something extra, peripheral and yet important to the overall understanding of the relationship between interior and exterior in a building. Hence ‘neither inside nor outside, neither superfluous or necessary, the accessory is thus almost indispensable, particularly to any investigation into identity through dress’ (4).

A clear train of thought emerges in the 1920s that sought to directly link jewellery with dress. Indeed, this seems to have been a dedicated strategy for many jewellery designers concerned with a demonstrably modern outlook. French jeweller Georges Fouquet looked back at the work of his firm from the 1920s and commented that jewellery should always be chosen to compliment the wearer’s outfit. This way, an unthinking approach to accessorizing could be avoided (Fouquet 1942, 93–4). He goes further, to describe a precise relationship between jewel and wearer: ‘The quality of a jewel is not only in manufacturing, it is also in its artistic value, it is not enough that it is pretty in itself, seen in isolation, it is necessary that its destination harmonizes with the context in which it is called to live . . . And this context is the woman who wears it, this is the dress on which it is hung, the neck on which it is suspended, the head on which it rests’ (96).

In 1928 Roger Nalys, regular contributor to *L'Officiel de la couture et de la mode de Paris*, commented that French jeweller Raymond Templier always considered his pieces as having a strong relationship with dress. Although his view of what constitutes an accessory is at odds with Giorcelli's contemporary reading, Nalys suggests that Templier 'never thinks of a jewel isolated in space', but that he places it 'in its proper frame: fashion, and makes of it what it ought to be; not an accessory but an essential element in the actual feminine silhouette, sober and neat for day-wear, imponderable and sumptuous at night' (Nalys 1928a, 50). Fouquet and Nalys are keen to stress that one of France's biggest exports in the 1920s (particularly to the United States) was fashion, if not the whole idea of style. For them, jewellery had a key role to play in exporting the idea of Paris as a place where a coherent look could be either physically bought or consumed in mediated form.

The decade also saw a demonstrably clear pattern of contrasting what was worn for the day and for the evening. Though not new in itself, this practice was given a different emphasis that would have been alien to many pre-war practices. In an article in *The New York Sun* in January 1929, columnist Dorothy Dayton in an interview with Franco-American fashion designer Yvonne Davidson makes the point that ignoring the difference between practical day-wear and evening-wear was becoming unacceptable. At the start of the year that was to see the Wall Street Crash, she writes, 'It is rather like a punch in the face of the proletariat, and women of wealth these days are too sensitive and too understanding to flaunt themselves. No well bred woman wears her jewels or her sables or too ornamental clothes in the daytime these days' (Dayton 1929, 22). This is a sentiment endorsed by contemporary entertainer Josephine Baker. In an interview for *La femme de France*, Baker refers to a shoulder piece made for her by Jean Després in 1931: 'She was delighted with the idea of wearing a piece of jewelry made by one of the great designers. "Something that's not over the top", she specified however, "[because] in town I hardly wear any jewelry, and then only simple things"' (Gabardi 2009, 55).

In her book *Civilisation without Sexes*, Mary Louise Roberts is clear about how fashion had changed in the early 1920s. Accessories were no exception: 'In the somber spirit of the war years, the old ornamental frou-frous and decorative accessories were put away, and neutral colours adopted . . . Even after the war, large jewelry or ornaments of any kind that drew attention to itself remained out of fashion' (Roberts 1994, 68). Although this situation was not as clear-cut as Roberts suggests, there were indeed practical reasons for rethinking how to

accessorize. Women were undertaking more active pursuits in the day as well as in the evening, or at least there were a growing number of options for activity available. Dressing differently for a more active life was a necessary consequence of changes in behaviour and constituted a significant challenge to the norms of pre-war society. Christine Bard notes that the *garçonne* occupied a flexible position in relation to dress and accessories by being 'androgynous by day, ultra-feminine by night' while also pointing out that she was 'forever associated with luxury accessories and décor at the heart of a time heavy with snobbery and consumerism' (Bard 1998, 42).

Evidence of these attitudes appears in an image published in the American popular magazine *Motion Picture Classic*. Clara Bow, star of the 1927 film *It* (which gave rise to the phrase 'It girl'), has her flapper's outfit subjected to a kind of trial by consumption (it would not look out of place in a contemporary low-rent gossip feature) the writer delivering on the piece's title 'what it costs to be a well dressed flapper'. Adopting a mocking tone, the author points out the price of each garment and accessory (including Bow's three strings of pearls) concluding that 'it costs about as much to dress a modern girl in a genuinely modish flapper outfit [here \$346.50] as it does to equip completely a reasonably well-furnished three-room flat' (Pierce 1927, 44). The piece also declares that men will never be able to understand how 'simplicity is one of the most expensive effects a designer can achieve' (44). In the same magazine a year earlier, a similar article 'what it costs to be a well dressed auto' exhibited much less concern about the expense that must be incurred to appropriately accessorize a roadster (Dow 1926, 43). Using statistics published by the US government in 1928, it is possible to put the apparent costs of Bow's outfit into perspective. A carpenter, for example, working a forty-four-hour week would take home around \$250 a month in 1927 (Davis and Stewart 1928, 4–6). Bow was modelling an outfit that (through its simplicity, but not exclusively so) had become a direct affront to the norms of feminine attire that were still adhered to by many men and, indeed, considered a threat to the conventional relationships between the sexes. For example, Mary Louise Roberts writes of some extreme conservative reactions to the adoption of the 'bob' in France, noting that it became a volatile political issue in the 1920s and the issue of modern fashions for women was a favourite subject of many contemporary satirists (Roberts 1993).

In order to complete the look adopted by the likes of Clara Bow, stock jewellery was produced which was more in sympathy with the fashions of the day. Further, the fashion for short hair immediately affected jewellery design,

lessening the desire for the usual array of hair ornaments which had been popular in the belle époque (Philips 2003, 274). Similarly, the cloche hat gave rise to a new approach to jewellery for hats, good examples being produced by Paris jeweller Paul Brandt as illustrated in *L'Officiel* in 1928 (Figure 1.2). These pieces were often directly modernist in inspiration with their geometric forms adapting well to the new, rational form of headwear.

In this spirit, Paul Brandt also produced a range of 'bijoux sport' (exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in 1929) 'with restrained designs in silver, gold and lacquer, to be worn during the day with tailored suits or driving clothes' (Mouillefarine and Ristelhueber 2005, 108). This is clearly related to the appearance of activity-specific clothing for women, ranging from work-wear to evening-wear and points in between. The new lines and cuts of clothing made any required changes of outfits for women a quicker and less complicated affair, a situation best observed in the ranges of sportswear available for women, including trousers and skirts that made rapid and more agile movement possible.

However, not all fashion enthusiasts approved of the necessity to adopt activity-specific attire. Romanian-born French stage and screen actress Elvire Popesco, interviewed in 1927, took the view that:

I do not understand that a woman must be dressed in a special way in her car, the expression 'car costume' has always seemed absurd to me. A car is, in my opinion, neither a distraction nor a goal but a means of transport. Also, when a woman goes out, I think she only has to worry about where the car is going to take her. (Prade 1927, 13)

Unfortunately, Popesco remained silent on the subject of jewellery. But the article in which this interview appeared contains a number of photographs of well-known Parisiennes and their cars in which it is tempting to suggest that they are showing them off as they would their jewels or, rather, as accessories. None of the women appear to be wearing very much jewellery at all. Those outfits of the time that are directly inspired by modernism (such as those by Sonia Delaunay, also famously modelled next to cars) tend to completely eschew jewellery. Perhaps, as Wendy Steiner has pointed out, this is because 'modernists vilified aesthetic pleasure, defining the sublime aspirations of art as unrelated or antipathetic to the pleasures of feminine allure, charm, comfort' (2009, 45).

In 1925, modernist architect Le Corbusier (a strong advocate of modern, functional dress for women) asserted in *The Decorative Art of Today* that 'glitter is going under', a view entirely in keeping with his puritanical design

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Broche perles fines incrustées dans une plaque de lapis-lazuli et brillants.
(Photo Louise Albin-Guillet.)



Brooch in fine pearls incrustated in a plate of lapis-lazuli and brillants.
(Photo Louise Albin-Guillet.)

PAUL BRANDT

Àu dernier Salon des Décorateurs, une vitrine de joaillerie appelait tout particulièrement l'attention. Elle comprenait quelques bijoux de Paul Brandt absolument nouveaux dans leur forme, comme dans leur matière ; judicieusement construits, ils offraient, selon l'esthétique d'aujourd'hui, des oppositions très heureuses de plans et de volumes et présentaient, malgré leur rythme excessivement sobre, un caractère d'extrême somptuosité.

Paul Brandt avait eu l'ingénieuse idée de faire tourner ses bijoux, en sorte que la lumière accrochait les pierres, vibrât sur les facettes étincelantes, disparaissait au contact des masses sombres, pour rebondir avec éclat sur la rondeur des perles. Aussi bien, l'impression produite sur les sens était-elle analogue à celle qu'ils éprouvent quand, alanguis par la musique, ils frissonnent aux cadences charmeuses, pour se fondre sur un accord final plein d'harmonie.

On pourrait se montrer surpris de voir réunies dans de tels ensembles, en somme fort rigides, ces deux qualités contraires : la froide discipline et le plus chaud lyrisme. Mais, à la réflexion, on conçoit que Paul Brandt ait pu tenir cette gageure.

Paul Brandt apparaît, en effet, comme un artiste infiniment sensible dont les œuvres sont sobres par raison et non par nécessité. Chez lui, la simplicité n'est pas due, comme on le constate trop souvent, à un défaut d'inspiration ou à un manque de métier. Tout au contraire, Paul Brandt considère la simplicité comme une fin, comme le couronnement d'une œuvre, comme une difficulté, et s'il agit ainsi, c'est qu'en dehors de son ardent tempérament d'artiste, il possède des connaissances techniques peu communes. Paul

Brandt est à la fois joaillier, peintre, sculpteur, graveur en médailles et sur pierres fines, ciseleur, émailleur, orfèvre... et je n'aurais garde d'omettre qu'il détient un brevet d'ingénieur.

Cet étonnant éclectisme permet à Paul Brandt de puiser, dans le bouillonnement des idées, des conceptions nouvelles toujours empreintes d'un cachet personnel, qu'il développe avec mesure et qu'il conduit jusqu'à l'épanouissement.

Pour n'en citer qu'une, nous rappellerons l'introduction que Paul Brandt a faite de la pierre fine dans le bijou moderne.

Brandt incruste la perle dans un champ de lapis-lazuli, qu'il oppose ensuite à des brillants en masse et à des plans de métal poli. Il obtient ainsi une symphonie blanche dont le rythme discret s'éloigne heureusement des gammes polychromes proposées si souvent à notre choix depuis l'Exposition de 1925.

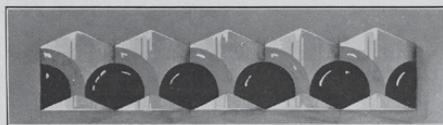
La tentative de Paul Brandt mérite la plus grande attention, car depuis la plus haute antiquité, la perle fine n'a guère été employée que dans le collier et dans la baguette.

En la faisant entrer dans le bijou moderne, Brandt ouvre à la perle des voies nouvelles où son orient nacré, sa richesse, sa féminité peuvent prendre toute leur valeur. Il y a là, au surplus, un bel effort pour donner au bijou son véritable caractère d'objet précieux déifiant l'imitation et susceptible de s'harmoniser avec plusieurs toilettes.

Aussi bien, Paul Brandt semble-t-il avoir, dans une sorte de prescience, saisi et fixé des formes qui, en matière de joaillerie dureront, réalisant ainsi le désir du calculateur comme du poète : celui d'échapper aux lois cruelles qui veulent que tout vieillisse et meure.

Roger NALYS.

Bracelet or poli et laque.
(Photo Rep.)



Bracelet in polished gold and laquer.
(Photo Rep.)

Figure 1.2 Jewellery by Paul Brandt featured in *L'Officiel de la mode*, no. 87, 1928.
© Les Editions Jalou 'L'Officiel 1928'.

philosophy (1987, xxv). There is little evidence, though, that a modernist-inspired total rejection of the wearing of jewellery (or even of glittering surfaces) was widespread. Surviving photographs tell us that wearing jewellery was not anathema to the 'new women' of the Bauhaus. Indeed, it could enhance a wearer's modernist credentials – as photographs by Florence Henri and Marianne Brandt demonstrate (see Chapter 4).

It was not unknown for celebrated modern women to be depicted in their work clothes while wearing jewellery. Good examples can be seen in photographs from 1928 of French sculptor Jane Blanchot and American aviator Amelia Earhart. In the latter, Earhart is shown before her 1928 transatlantic flight. An image shows her in the cockpit of her plane not only clearly at ease with her technological surroundings, but also able to (literally) hold on to her femininity by entwining a simple string of pearls in her fingers. As Kristen Lubben puts it, this pose was probably adopted 'as an expedient image with which to convey the aviatrix as a daring and technologically adept – but genteel – "lady flyer". It presents her as both "machine savvy" and feminine' (2011, 301). Furthermore, as Prudence Black writes in relation to Amy Johnson, 'it was the aviatrix who symbolized more than anyone else the kind of modernist subject it was possible to be. She was a key figure in creating an "image" of a growing *international* modernism as an historical and cultural formation' (2009, 71). Johnson apparently emerged from the cockpit after her flight from Croydon to Darwin in 1930 in a terrible mess but with her blouse still fastened at the neck with her mother's swastika brooch (Indian design).

Less well known, but equally significant, the image of Jane Blanchot seeks to radically feminize the image of the working sculptor (interestingly, Blanchot was also a noted designer of clothes and accessories). In the pages of *L'Officiel* Blanchot is pictured in a sculptor's overalls, traditionally a practical and not particularly flattering garment (Figure 1.3). It is open at the neck, revealing a simple string of pearls. Below Blanchot's portrait, her latest work *S'évader* (escape) is shown along with a text interpreting it as either a statement of feminism (woman struggling to throw off the male yoke) or, as the author of the adjoining commentary prefers, an expression of the struggle to escape the sad material realities of life (Nalys 1928b, 52). The image of Blanchot is of a confident, modern woman who maintains her femininity in her working environment. In combination with her fashionable coiffure, the discreet pearl necklace has an important part to play in the construction of this image of a confident, successful and professional woman.

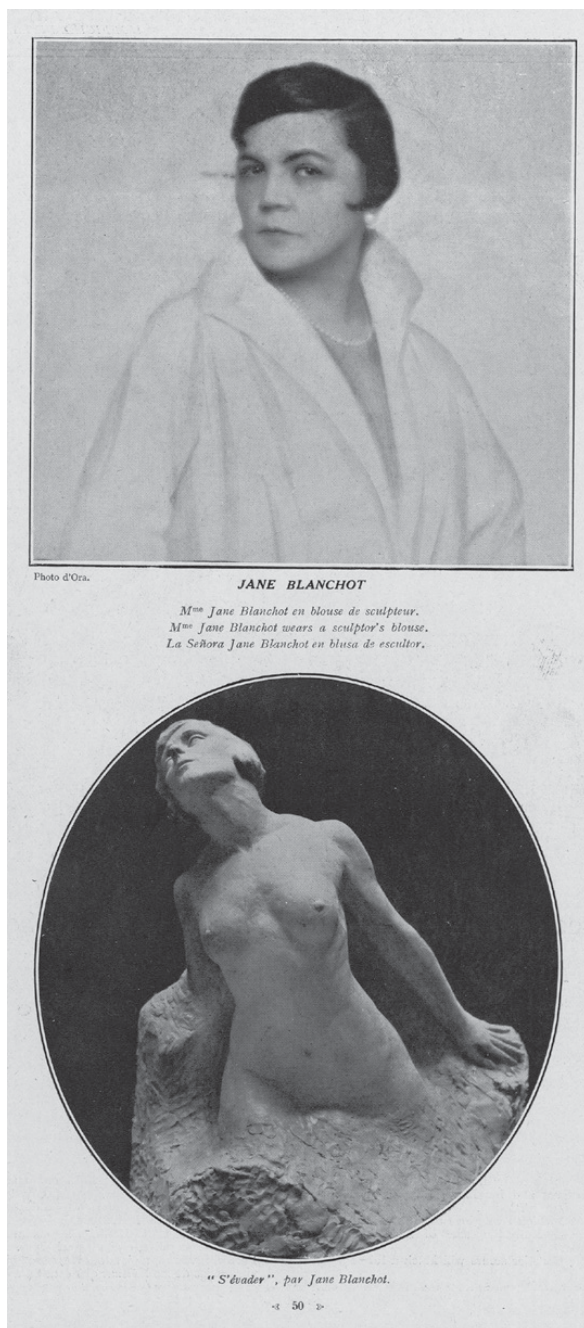


Figure 1.3 Jane Blanchot featured in *L'Officiel de la mode*, no. 82, 1928. © Les Editions Jalou 'L'Officiel 1928'.

As Elisabeth G. Sledziewski has written, jewellery can be regarded as 'a metonymical sign of the female subject' where 'being, appearing and transcendence' converge (2011, 301). This is a useful way of thinking about these images because, although carefully posed, the working context of both women demands signs of femininity to complete the subject as female. Here, adornment in the form of jewellery helps to perform that function.

Psychoanalytical perspectives emerged in the late 1920s concerning the uses of adornment by women. British psychoanalyst Joan Riviere's paper 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' (1929) postulates, among other things, that in the professional sphere the more feminine women appear the more likely they are to 'assuage their male colleagues, who fear their prerogative is imperiled' (Blessing 1997, 10). Riviere's theory was based on an analysis of professional female subjects for whom 'femininity is constituted in dissembling or the masking of women's masculinity by burying it beneath a veil of decoration' (10). This explained how women were able to work alongside men at a time when their 'sphere' was still conventionally determined. As long as their femininity was on display, men would not feel unduly threatened by them. Stephen Heath, in his commentary on Riviere's paper, refers to Nietzsche's view (expressed in the latter's 1886 work 'Beyond Good and Evil') that the 'threat' coming from modern women (that they *want*, and want things of men) is expressed through self-adornment. According to Heath, Nietzsche doubts that women can really *want*, but refers to her own quest for self-enlightenment as a form of self-adornment; 'the intellectual woman, the feminist (the two are synonymous for Nietzsche), is a lie, a self-adorned, but then woman is a lie, adornment is her truth' (Heath 1986, 51). For Nietzsche, the act of adornment through drawing attention to appearance and enhancing 'beauty' was simply that, an act. It is a view that may have influenced the formation of Riviere's Freudian analysis of the masquerade, yet it is one that recalls that particular brand of misogyny peculiar to the culture of the late nineteenth century. Indeed, in the fin-de-siècle, the figure of the femme fatale (usually heavily adorned with jewels) played a major part in visual and literary representations of women.

In the interwar period, it is interesting to see how the modern woman increasingly uses objects other than conventional pieces of jewellery as forms of body adornment. Sophie Rycroft's study of professional woman photographers in Berlin in the late 1920s and early 1930s has shown that being depicted with high-end cameras constituted a particular method of self-presentation for the likes of Lotte Jacobi, Eva Besnyö and Marianne Breslauer, although Rycroft argues that the self-portraits of these photographers 'do not reveal the identity of the photographer,

but in fact point towards how identities are constructed' (2013, 96). Rycroft's study concentrates on how women photographers used images of themselves with professional photographic equipment (rather than cheaper, more widely available cameras) to create a pictorial construction of professional identity. There is a sense in some of these photographs that the 'wearing' of the camera (an increasingly common trope of modernist photography) might rival fashion and jewellery as a means of constructing a modern identity. These machines are worn on straps around the neck, they have moving apertures, circular, standardized metallic components and, above all, they are instruments of precision. Seeing these devices as replacements for jewellery is, I hope, not too far-fetched as it is to recognize that they constitute a different form of adornment. They 'complete' the image of the photographer at work, but in a different way to the image of the sculptor and the aviator who wish to combine their professional identities with more conventional accessorizing. Rycroft argues that in contrast to the way that small portable cameras were increasingly being advertised as modern ways to accessorize (through the image of the 'Kodak Girl', for example) the emphasis on being shown with high-end 'kit' was an important way for women to be taken seriously as professionals who were using exactly the same equipment as men. In some cases the camera as accessory came under the direct scrutiny of the modernist lens.

A photograph of Eva Besnyő by the Hungarian photographer Jozsef Pécsi taken at the turn of the decade shows the subject with her portable camera around her neck, dressed for the beach with swimming cap and costume, but totally absorbed by what she sees through the viewfinder. All the accessories on display here serve to portray Besnyő as a modern woman – the simplicity of her clothing, her belt, ring and rubber swimming cap. She holds the camera with purpose, framing the shot so that her apparatus becomes part of her modern persona. She is accessorized in a way that suppresses traditional notions of femininity and suggests a new relationship between woman and machine where the materials of the portable mechanical device (Bakelite, precision metal components, ground glass) become, in the form of the portable camera, a very clear form of modern adornment.

Literary types

In fashion magazines, less emphasis was placed on depicting women in professional circumstances and yet there were ways in which accessories were

used to identify the modern woman as more liberated than her forebears. Magazines such as *L'Officiel* juxtaposed drawings and photography to this end. Its illustrators consistently employed a kind of visual shorthand of a simple pearl choker as a kind of instantly recognizable sign of the modern fashionable woman, typically with either accompanying bob or cloche hat. For many women, the string of pearls came to represent a practical way of remaining fashionable whatever the activity and this comes across clearly in some of the literature of the period. In a scene set in the late 1920s, the fictional character Nicole Diver wears them on a Riviera beach in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1934 novel *Tender Is the Night*: 'Her bathing suit was pulled off her shoulders and her back, a ruddy, orange brown, set off by a string of creamy pearls, shone in the sun. Her face was hard and lovely and pitiful' (Fitzgerald 1998, 14). The pearls indicate both Nicole's affluence (which is considerable) but also her need to accessorize and maintain her position within a particular social milieu while, importantly, maintaining the body beautiful. This combination of body maintenance and attendant accessorizing is, as Richard Godden writes, a 'curious site of narcissism and self-denigration that encourages tourists to replace their own bodies with commodity selves' (1998, xxv). Here the potency of the pearl has a direct relationship with modern capital, in itself hard and pitiful.

In *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald based the characters of Dick and Nicole Diver on the real life inhabitants of the Villa America on the French Riviera at Cap d'Antibes, Sara and Gerald Murphy. The beach scene with Nicole was probably observed at first hand by Fitzgerald himself, as he and his wife Zelda were regular guests at the villa. A surviving photograph shows Sara Murphy in more or less the same pose as Nicole in the novel. Sara's penchant for wearing her pearls in reverse when on the beach is clearly shown here. The Murphys and their entourage are often credited with inventing the Riviera as a summer destination, or at the very least reversing the trend whereby people wintered there and left in the summer. For Sara Murphy, the wearing of pearls could be as casual or formal as the occasion demanded. Picasso, a regular visitor to the Villa America in the 1920s, produced a number of sketches of nudes in classical poses wearing strings of pearls on the beach. It is likely that these depictions were inspired by Sara Murphy, although by all accounts Gerald was more often to be seen naked at the beach and on his boat (Rothschild 2007).

Gerald and Sara Murphy were close friends of Cole and Linda Porter. Both shared extravagant tastes and spent time together on the Riviera and at Venice. Cole Porter appears in a photograph (taken at Venice) from the early 1920s

wearing Sara Murphy's pearls and Gerald Murphy's skullcap apparently as a way of paying homage to the couple (Figure 1.4). Although a playful image, it does show how transferable, flexible and adaptable a string of pearls can be and how strongly these accessories were identified with the Murphys. Modern dandies like Cole Porter and Gerald Murphy were attracted to fashion and accessories, but were concerned with creating a strong sense of style in a specifically modern context.

French novelist and fashion writer Colette's keen interest in the significance of style in relation to jewellery can be seen in one of her works that appeared at the end of the period covered by this book. In *Gigi* (written in 1944 but set in 1899) a famous exchange between Gilberte ('Gigi') and her aunt Alicia takes place on the subject of which type of jewellery Gigi is likely to receive as gifts from men. When Gigi asks 'what is an artistic jewel?', her aunt replies:

It all depends. A mermaid in gold, with eyes of chrysoprase. An Egyptian scarab. A large engraved amethyst. A not very heavy bracelet said to have been chased by a master-hand. A lyre or star, mounted as a brooch. A studded tortoise. In a word, all of them frightful. Never wear baroque pearls, not even as hat-pins. Beware above all things, of family jewels! (Colette 1953, 36)

Gilberte is being trained for a career as a courtesan and it is clear that knowing how to wear 'gifted' jewellery effectively without staining her

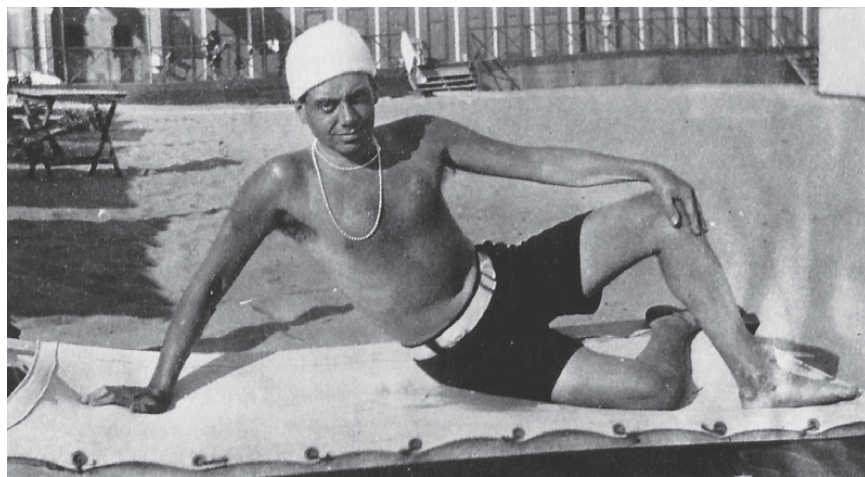


Figure 1.4 Cole Porter in Venice, 1923. Image supplied by the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale. © Cole Porter Trust.

reputation is a key skill. Avoiding the large ostentatious pieces is crucial. For men, giving a 'monster jewel' is a sign of poor taste and it is clear that, to ensure a lengthy and successful career, Gilberte is expected to understand the rules of what and what not to select from the jewel box. Gilberte is fascinated by her aunt's collection of stones, but she cannot understand why the list of 'artistic jewels' is so patently off limits. Colette represents these fin-de-siècle jewels as awkward, garish novelties that may have a high material value, but hardly any artistic merit. The 'family jewels' are the worst kind because they are worn out of a sense of duty rather than any sense of style. Aunt Alicia recommends wearing simple, cheap jewellery instead of these extravagant pieces, emphasizing that this can be explained away by affording them sentimental value.

By contrast, in Colette's story *The Cat*, first published in 1933 but firmly set in the culture of 1920s Paris, the two protagonists (young newly-weds Camille and Alain) have very different ways of dealing with jewellery and accessories. Camille, a modern girl of nineteen portrayed as something of an unwelcome, brash presence in Alain's hitherto peaceful life, wears a spectacular diamond engagement ring. As Colette puts it 'the brand-new diamond on her left hand broke the light into a thousand coloured splinters' (1953, 81). Here the jewel is used as a metaphor for the way that Camille bursts in on Alain's peaceful and comfortable existence at his parents' home. On the other hand, Alain, a reluctant groom in a marriage arrangement designed to be useful for his family's business interests, keeps a small collection of objects in a secret drawer. These include several small items of jewellery which are sentimental keepsakes, including 'a signet ring, an agate charm attached to his father's watch chain . . . a First Communicant's mother-of-pearl rosary and a thin broken bracelet, the souvenir of a tempestuous young mistress who had passed swiftly and noisily out of his life' (69). For Camille, jewellery is all about display and, naturally enough, she is proud to show off her new diamond. Alain's secret hoard, which he cannot decide whether to keep or throw away, has no aesthetic quality but is one of the ways in which he connects himself emotionally to the past at a time when his future looks quite unappealing. Although the couple are ultimately estranged by events surrounding Alain's preference for the company of his beloved cat over that of his new wife, Colette uses objects (and a keen awareness of fashion) to help provide a contrast between Camille's interest in public display (which includes her own body, clothed and unclothed) and Alain's desire for a quieter, more private existence.

For Colette, jewellery can also be a way of exploring generational differences and relationships between the sexes. An expensive string of pearls becomes a contested item in a not entirely playful exchange between the middle-aged courtesan Léa and her much younger male lover Chéri in Colette's novel of the same name, published in 1920. The book opens thus: 'Give it me, Léa, give me your pearl necklace! Do you hear me Léa? Give me your pearls! . . . Why won't you let me have your necklace? It looks every bit as well on me as on you – even better!' (Colette 2001, 1). In the ensuing playful struggle, Chéri briefly claims his prize, before surrendering them up to Léa, who immediately puts them on. They are a gift from one of her older and richer lovers, but the advancing years have not been kind to her and she regrets that, as she checks herself out in a hand mirror, the fine pearls make her look like 'a market gardener's wife in Normandy' (4). By contrast, Chéri is at ease with modern fashions, is lithe and carries himself with effortless style to the extent that he is able to do greater justice to the pearls than the courtesan who is more than twice his age.

This spat is a presentiment of doom for their relationship as it becomes more and more clear that Léa and Chéri cannot successfully live together. The pearls might work as a way of distinguishing the differences between the two lovers, but they also highlight growing ambiguities about relationships between the sexes in the immediate post-war world. This period not only saw the rise of the new woman, but also experiments in cross-dressing on the part of both sexes. Ironically, Chéri's success at wearing the pearls (very different from Cole Porter's exhibitionism) shows him entering a new world where it becomes possible for gender to become subservient to style. For Léa's generation, Colette makes it clear that this world is denied.

Strategies of adornment

Fashion magazines of the 1920s dispensed plenty of advice on choosing jewellery and accessories. A common theme was that it was important to adopt the right tone or, as *L'Officiel* pointed out, good taste and wealth could be combined in jewellery wearing to produce the right 'note', considered particularly important in the era of what some regarded as severe and sober trends in women's clothing. Notwithstanding this supposed new sobriety, *L'Officiel* also felt able to argue that materials such as diamonds are perfectly able to play their part in the more abstract compositions of modern jewellery, because material value is still an

important element (Nalys 1928c, 54). Although costume jewellery was becoming increasingly popular at all levels of the market, it is clear that most of the major modern jewellery houses of Paris were still geared to the production of items that featured precious materials – albeit often in combination with materials of a lesser value.

Addressing the problem of ostentation, *La femme de France* columnist Beauregard wrote that ‘we are a very long way from the years when women covered themselves in jewellery’ and noted that the protocols for wearing jewellery during the day should be ‘Practical restraint in the morning. Elegance for lunching and for the afternoon. Luxury at night’ (1927, 24). This is further reinforced by the *Gazette de bon ton*, which noted that ‘the young sporty androgynes transform themselves in the evening, by the miracle of the pearl, into sirens and fairy tale princesses’ (Bard 1998, 37). So jewellery plays a role in the idea of day to night transformation through dress, here expressed with all the attendant lunar symbolism associated with the pearl. Beauregard also noted, not unusually for the quite conservative *La femme de France*, that the only acceptable fakes in jewellery were imitation pearls. Everything else should be genuine but worn sparingly, avoiding mixing up different stones and colours. Large pieces were acceptable, but should only be worn singly or in combination with simpler items like pearls. The modern woman should carefully match her dress and her jewellery. Expressed by Beauregard as ‘L’intelligence de la parure’ (the intelligence of adornment) this sensibility is key to understanding changing attitudes to jewellery wearing in the 1920s. As *Vogue* was also keen to point out: ‘Never in all the long history of feminine fashions, has jewellery been more important in the mode and never has it been worn more intelligently or with more art than at the present time . . . for the modern woman now wears her jewels as an integral part of her costume’ (‘Fashion: The Wearing of the Jewel’, 1927, 83). Although recommending restraint in jewellery wearing during the day, this article clearly states that evenings are the time when this ensemble approach to adornment, where jewellery and clothing are worn in concert, can come into its own. *Vogue* also insists that cost alone is no justification for the wearing of a piece of jewellery and that the consumer should refrain from buying pieces which cannot easily become part of an ensemble to be worn with ‘the somewhat severe mode of the present time’ (83).

Christine Bard has pointed out that jewellery had an important role to play in the feminization of the Adonis-like silhouette of the *garçonne* and this gave rise to a new form of femininity. Furthermore, ‘The unencumbered neck

and nape serves to emphasize large earrings. On bare arms glisten numerous rigid bracelets fitting tightly like a slave's. Simple dresses are covered with fantastic jewellery, brooches, chains that emphasize the movement of the body' (Bard 1998, 37). Indeed, large (and long) pieces of jewellery could emphasize particular parts of the body and its movement. The 'jazz age' would not be as easily recognizable without its wild dancing and the role of jewellery in this is important. Bard writes that the image of the *garçonne* dancing with her pearls swinging around her is 'probably one of the strongest representations of women's emancipation' (2001, 115).

Two such images appeared in the mid-1920s. In the first, an illustration from *Vogue* from 1 October 1925, shows a Chanel outfit consisting of a tight fitting slip dress with floating chiffon panels demonstrating how the layered look could contribute to the demonstration of movement. A very long string of pearls swings freely from the model's back as she walks away (Evans 2013, 131). Utilizing accessories such as jewellery for the upper arm and back helped in the construction of a 'Look' that was modern in its allowance for freedom of movement but also modern in its ability to combine this freedom with, as Bard might put it, an ultra-feminine display. In the second, an image of a dancing young American flapper (often open to caricature as wild and untamed in popular literature) appears on the front cover of a 1926 edition of the humour magazine *Life* drawn by John Held Jr, her pearls swinging alarmingly around her neck. In a later edition, the artist depicts the same girl (bare armed, heavily banged and collared) as a college student casually lighting a cigarette with her burning graduation certificate.

Held Jr's 1920s covers for this magazine often feature this same flapper girl, caricaturing her as a loose, manipulative, acquisitive and reckless individual. Samuel Hopkins Adams in the foreword to his 1923 bestseller *Flaming Youth* describes the flapper as 'restless and seductive, greedy, discontented, unrestrained, a little morbid, more than a little selfish' (Mackrell 2013, 8). In Held Jr's illustration these character traits are actually accentuated through the depiction of her seemingly casual approach to accessorizing (jewellery, head ornaments, rolled down stockings, cigarette holder) and, in virtually every image, undergoing a variety of wardrobe malfunctions. As Estelle Freedman observed, the fact of women's suffrage did not greatly affect the way that men wrote about women in the 1920s; 'women had by choice, the accounts suggested, rejected political emancipation and found sexual freedom' (1974, 379). Although the subject of parody, Held Jr's flapper girl seems very much to have been conceived in this

spirit. Even though the association of jewellery and accessories with expressions of sexual freedom may not be a straightforward one, the exposing of certain parts of the body created by modern 'flapper' fashions was certainly exploited by new strategies of adornment which were able to contribute to eroticizing parts of the body that had, for some time in Western fashion, been hidden from view. It was just as easy to customize a string of pearls, real or fake, to hang backwards as it was to purchase a set of bracelets that would cover parts of the newly exposed upper and lower arms.

As already indicated, the modern girl of polite society was often taken to task over her choice of fashions. A male correspondent ('Him') writing in *Vogue* for 1 November 1924 describes a fashionable Newport society gathering and observes that contemporary fashions were at odds with the party setting: 'though a beautiful woman always looks beautiful, she is not quite up to the picture of such surroundings in a "chemise dress" of crêpe with a huge string of pearls that may or may not be real'. The correspondent notes the move towards relative simplicity in dress (even noticeable at this lavish Gatsbyesque party) lamenting, rather conservatively, that 'no one was dressed for the part' ('As Seen by Him', 1924, 71).

Advice of the older generation for the jewellery wearing habits of their children appears in *Vogue* for 1 August 1926. Like Gigi's aunt Alicia, the correspondent values good taste above all – advising the choosing of a wristwatch, a 'slave bracelet' and a single ring but cautions against earrings which may make a girl's face look 'bedizened'. Pearls are, once more, the key to elegance 'but if the pearls were large ones in a close choker, they would be in bad taste'. Ironically, this is the ubiquitous look chosen by the fashion illustrators of the day for their models. The dowdy and stay-at-home Lady Ursula, performing a mute role as an antidote to the Bright Young Things in Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies* of 1930, wears 'a tight little collar of pearls around her throat' as if this was the height of ordinariness (Waugh 2000, 108). Perhaps by the end of the decade this had become the case.

For the consumer, Thérèse Bonney and Louise Bonney's *A Shopping Guide to Paris* of 1929 provided advice on the buying of both luxury and more staple effects in the city. The book is dominated by discussions of fashion, but there are nevertheless some useful sections devoted to modern accessories and where to buy them while offering advice on how they might be worn. Reading it now, published as it was in the year of the Wall Street Crash, it is tempting to consider it as a final embodiment of some of the consumerist excesses of *les années folles*. However, in spite of it being quite a conservative book (it is partly a tourist

guide) it does shed some interesting light on the nature of the Parisian jewellery scene in the late 1920s.

The Bonneys' book is aimed firmly at the Anglophone (specifically American) traveller and shopper who had enough time, money and staying power to thoroughly 'do' Paris. It also addresses different generations of consumers and demonstrates a remarkable first-hand knowledge of the latest fashion trends and key events in the decorative arts of the second half of the decade. This was mainly due to the Bonneys' close observation of the Parisian arts scene and Thérèse's fastidious recording of key developments via her burgeoning photographic practice. Crucially, the book shows how the French market in fashion, decorative arts and accessories were having a considerable impact across the Atlantic. As far as jewellery is concerned, the Bonneys cite the triumvirate of Jean Fouquet (son of Georges), Gérard Sandoz and Raymond Templier as true moderns, who were making a decisive contribution to the contemporary scene:

These names will soon be as well known to you as those of Chateau, Dim, Djo-Bourgeois. The first to break through the bars of tradition was the house of Fouquet, a father-son organisation, the father tending to be a conservative, the son to be modern . . . This house startled the visitors to the famous Salon of 1925 with striking innovations, and has consistently developed a modern program since. (Bonney and Bonney 1929, 92)

The Bonneys were convinced that for the modern woman, the relationship between high fashion and jewellery was an essential one. For example, at the fashion house of Lelong, costume jewellery could be created to directly match outfits. Jean Patou and Elsa Schiaparelli are praised for their sensitivity to the ensemble of clothing and jewellery. For the Bonneys, Patou epitomized this tendency: 'The idea of an intrinsically beautiful and individual gown, becoming a mere background for extravagantly gorgeous jewels was offensive to him. Diamonds! Emeralds! Yes, for the woman who prefers display to chorded beauty. But for the sensitively lovely woman, harmonies!' (Bonney and Bonney 1929, 37).

Raymond Templier (already selling in New York via Saks in Fifth Avenue) also offered a bespoke service. According to the Bonneys, 'at any of these places you can take your own jewels and have modern settings designed, or can take the problem of a gown for which you must have fitting jewelry' (1929, 93). The house of Premet offered a range of jewellery in coloured pearls called 'La Garçonne' which, according to the Bonneys, 'became the uniform of America

for that year' (46). As for Schiaparelli, 'she is apt to launch jewelry to go with sweater suits, one of her successful originations being shell jewelry in twisted ropes, with bracelets to match' (87).

One of the most notable attempts to bring jewellery and fashion together (mentioned by the Bonneys and others) was a show put together by modern jeweller Gérard Sandoz in the spring of 1928. At this event, mannequins were displayed wearing outfits by Louise Boulanger, Suzanne Talbot, Redfern and Jeanne Lanvin with specially designed jewels by Sandoz to complement them. Partly due to initiatives such as these, he could confidently declare that 'the stand-off between jewelry and fashion was about to end' (Mouillefarine 2009, 37). Georges Fouquet recalls a similar event from the late 1920s when his firm collaborated with Jean Patou to present clothing combined with jewellery, this time on living models (Fouquet 1942, 96). For Fouquet, this was an important way of propagating French taste abroad and the Bonneys were clearly aware of this strategy. Published in the same year as *A Shopping Guide to Paris*, Josephy and McBride's *Paris Is a Woman's Town* provides further evidence for this, stating that Dorothy Shaver, director of fashion and decoration 'in a large New York department store', 'declares that American buyers and fashion magazines help to control French fashion . . . Miss Shaver instances the craze for costume jewelry which she asserts really began in this country and has been continued by young America's fondness for it', also opining that 'the smart French woman is content to rely for accessories upon her pearls and a good-looking hand bag' (Josephy and Macbride 1929, 7). The book provides advice to visiting Americans on fashion, taste, food, accommodation and the language and culture of Paris, always advocating the French capital as a site of consumption par excellence.

Whether made manifest as assertively modern or more conservatively adopted, the look of the new woman became an international phenomenon. Early influential commentaries on twentieth-century dress, such as Quentin Bell's *On Human Finery*, describe how the new modes (or codes) of the 1920s represented a challenge to the nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century idea of woman as site of consumption: 'I suspect that one reason for this redirection of fashion is the growing emancipation of women . . . The change would become important, so far as the history of dress is concerned, when woman is no longer regarded simply as an agent for vicarious consumption' (Bell 1976, 164).

Jewellery in the 1920s, asserts Gabardi, rapidly went from being a tangible expression of personal fortune to becoming a symbol of the technological age (1987, 45). Further, the case of Coco Chanel clearly demonstrates an attempt to

firmly decouple the practice of jewellery wearing from male influence. This was partly achieved through developing markedly less flamboyant and ostentatious styles of dress that demanded a different approach to the wearing of accessories. As Banta puts it, 'by the 1920s, Chanel achieved fame, fortune and social élan by creating a style . . . that insisted on a woman's independence from moneyed relations with men' (2011, 87). Women were encouraged to contrast genuine precious materials with imitations and, crucially, to take control of their own jewellery wearing: 'only then could the Chanel woman make clear that she was not like the *cocottes* Chanel remembered from her youth – women who flaunted the extravagant gifts given by their lovers in payment for their services' (87). No doubt Colette would also have appreciated this sentiment.

Towards the end of the 1920s, Chanel produced large, tightly fitting metal bracelets which were taken up and celebrated by the avant-garde photographer Man Ray who photographed them being worn by chanteuse Suzy Solidor and the model Jacqueline Goddard in a series of portraits. These objects were defiantly original and distinctively modern, placing considerable distance between themselves and more conventional and discreet jewellery types. They were also large in size and quite heavy, possessing great physical presence through their material qualities and the amount of 'body space' required to wear them. These pieces could only have been worn by women who were confident in their ability to be directed to appear modern or to take it upon themselves to express their sympathies with the modern aesthetic. They were very far from being 'jewels' in the conventional sense, bearing a closer resemblance to manacles or other restrictive items of apparel.

In his 1961 essay *From Gemstones to Jewellery*, Roland Barthes comments that the origins of modern jewellery reside in the gradual separation of the idea of jewellery from connotations of magic, superstition and material value and was assisted by the absorption of jewellery into the discourses of fashion. The latter is crucial because it allowed jewellery to become 'almost like the soul in the general economy of clothing: that is, the detail' (Barthes 2013, 58). Barthes also states that the origins of jewellery (as well as fashion) lie in the husband using his wife to show off his wealth and providing 'poetic proof of the wealth and power of the husband' (56) an argument already established in relation to fashion at the end of the nineteenth century by Thorstein Veblen in his 1899 book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. This transformation in jewellery outlined by Barthes had begun by the end of the belle époque and was to set twentieth-century body adornment off on a very different course where, according to Barthes, the secularization of

jewellery removed it from the realm of the *femme fatale*, allowing women (as he puts it) to rejoin the human race (56). Above all, jewels themselves were beginning to lose their 'infernal aspect' as, more and more, the notion of jewellery began to replace that of the gemstone in strategies of adornment. On a sociological level, Graham Hughes wrote of a late nineteenth-century photograph of a heavily bejewelled Lady Carew that the late nineteenth century was 'the last period in history at which one was not ashamed to show off one's jewels', by which he was almost certainly referring to gemstones rather than jewellery (1963, 64).

Referring specifically to the 1920s, Geneviève Leclerc considers how jewellery became more democratic with 'imitations' making their mark at all levels of society. The use of 'forgotten' stones and techniques that were brought to a wider market made it possible for women to exercise more choice (Leclerc 1979). Significantly, this tendency towards a wider market did not lead to the abandonment of the idea of finery *per se*. This idea began to be reframed, as Barthes says, within the discourses of fashion, but on a more democratic level. So the ability to accessorize for the purposes of individual expression at all levels of the market becomes an increasingly important facet of twentieth-century capitalism.

Popular replacements for traditional fine jewellery (costume jewellery or *articles de Paris*, for example) were often more practical options for the consumer and pieces in precious materials were designed deliberately to reflect a more practical everyday sensibility, such as Paul Brandt's 'bijoux sport' range mentioned earlier. In clothing, the sports theme was a common way of referring to a certain kind of practical day-wear – not necessarily for use as sportswear, but as a way of linking the idea of sports (free movement, lack of restraint, informality, clean functional lines) with a new concept of the feminine. Lipovetsky argues that 'by abandoning the poetics of ornamentation and glittering display, couture fashion worked to desubliminate and deidealize the female figure, in part; it democratized clothing styles in the climate of the new modernist aesthetic values that tended towards the purification of forms and the rejection of the decorative' (2007, 82).

The fashion and jewellery industries were major economic success stories in France, Britain and America in the 1920s, providing increasing choice for consumers at all levels of the market. Within modern femininity, adornment was becoming a means of expression within a construction of fashion that increasingly allowed individual taste and freedom of choice, albeit often within patterns of consumption that exploited this. Although, as will be shown in Chapter 3, modernist style jewellery was available and has its own place in the narratives of

twentieth-century design, it did not represent the bulk of what was being worn and in itself did not always directly contribute to the sartorial appearance of the new woman. Jewellery wearing of the time might, therefore, be understood as part of the 'triumph of ornament over dogma' asserted by James Trilling as the real story of twentieth-century design (Trilling 2001). What is clear is that the role of jewellery, whatever its form, material or aesthetic value, should not be underestimated in discourses of 1920s fashion. It was increasingly deployed to express a different outlook, to articulate a new 'intelligence' in accessorizing.

For women, fashions of the 1920s often involved the exposure of relatively large amounts of flesh. This meant that jewellery as body adornment begins to become significant and the pre-existing repertoire of jewellery forms began to be adapted to include otherwise hidden parts of the body, including the upper arms and the back. Thus jewellery became an important way in which these new body sites could be adorned and drawn attention to. *Les idées nouvelles* for August 1925 shows some good examples of how costume jewellery was used to 'dress' the exposed nape of the neck and the upper parts of the back (referred to as 'colliers amusants pour le soir'). Indeed, some pieces made from large regularly spaced semiprecious stones (intended to hang backwards from the neck) fall in a way which suggests the rhythm of vertebrae connecting the upper exposed part of the body with the covered part mid-way down the model's back (Holzach 2008). Cornelia Holzach suggests that 'in the mid-1920s a woman ready to go out in the evening was viewed as an object to be adorned all over'. This is an interesting way to view the relationship between fashion and jewellery and she points out that this relationship was documented in French *Vogue* for May 1925 as a taste for the integration of gold, silver and semiprecious materials into fabrics for the new fashions (28). In Paris and Berlin there was a brief flourishing of this lavish tendency until fashions changed at the end of the decade.

The potential of jewellery and accessories to be worn for the creation of erotic effects comes across clearly in the work of many artists and photographers of the 1920s. However, some artists, such as the German painter Christian Schad, accessorized his sitters in ways that draw attention to the various roles adornment (or its relative absence) could play in the representation of the modern body and the character of his sitters. In keeping with the contemporary tendency of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new objectivity) his painting style emphasizes both detail and sparseness. Many of his women sitters are shown in overtly erotic poses or various states of undress. Nevertheless, there is a cool stillness to all of these encounters between artist, model and sitter that is slightly disturbing. Often,

the sitter will make direct eye contact with the viewer, carrying on a tradition established in the nineteenth century by Manet's *Olympia*. In the 1930 portrait of Eva von Arnheim, however, the sitter is shown in profile with swept back short hair, no make-up, no jewellery, in a plain low cut shift dress. There is, however, a single accessory: an ermine stole draped over her left shoulder. This is a symbolic reference, argues Waldman, to the sitter's name but its presence as the only accessory in her attire is a key feature of many of Schad's portraits (1993). Waldman considered the dress and absence of adornment in the von Arnheim portrait to be 'calculated affronts to the traditional notions of femininity prevalent in bourgeois society of the day' (276).

Many of Schad's female subjects of the 1920s are shown without jewellery. This must have been a particular wish on the artist's part, because when jewellery and other accessories (such as flowers, bows, furs, and so on) are present they often play a strong symbolic or allegorical role as a single item of adornment. In other works, such as the 1927 *Portrait of Anna Gabbioneta*, jewellery plays a formal role. Two small black spheres hang from the ears to help organize the composition of the sitter's face and make a connection with the architectural details of the background.

In Schad's painting *Halbakt* of 1929, the model's totally frank nakedness is eroticized by the presence of a neckpiece carefully placed between her breasts (Figure 1.5). The title refers to the upper half of the model's body being on display, but the body is not completely naked, because the necklace renders the body half- or semi-naked. The jewellery does not hide the body, but it provides a way of relieving it of its total nakedness by providing a contrast between flesh and, in this case, the carved stones of her neckpiece. Brooks and Giroud have identified the stripping of the body of its accessories as part of the erotic investment that must be made in the undressing of the body (Brooks and Giroud 1993, 32). They make a particular point of this in relation to nineteenth-century dress and it is interesting that, in the erotic culture of Weimar Germany, the need for women's bodies to be adorned in some way persists, particularly in those aspects of visual culture dominated by men. It is important to remember that Schad carefully accessorized his sitters when painting them and he is directing aspects of his own desire through these objects. The choice of what accessories to wear (or not to wear) becomes a matter for the artist in his or her strategy of representation.

Again in the context of Weimar Germany, Gerta Overbeck's half-length portrait of her sister Toni (1926) is an interesting case where the lack of accessorizing makes a statement about the politics of the body. Toni Overbeck was



Figure 1.5 Christian Schad, 'Halbakt', 1929. Medienzentrum, Antje Zeis-Loi / Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal. Oil on canvas. 55.5 × 53.5 cm. © Christian Schad Stiftung Aschaffenburg/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn and DACS, London, 2016.

a dancer whose body was an important element in her identity as a professional woman. Her body is displayed in relaxed pose but it is monumentalized by the half-length pose and is clearly strong and supple. There is no attempt on the part of the artist to depict her sister as a *neue Frau* through the use of fashion or accessories, though her hair is short and her dress is modish. The important elements are the sitter, her unadorned and uneroticized body and the context of her surroundings. Nothing could be further from Schad's attempts to deal with the erotics of jewellery through calculated intervention in the sitters' choices of what to wear. In a later painting of 1929 by Overbeck, *Servant Girl*, the sitter looks confidently out of the picture, wearing a simple top and a large string of pearls, confronting the clichéd image of women in domestic service as passive, naïve and dowdy. Here, as Meskimmon points out, the woman is dressed in a way that suggests she is modern but 'not the media stereotype of the *neue Frau* as a frivolous fashion icon' (1999, 146).

In the 'frivolous' world of 1920s fashion, women who abandoned the wearing of jewellery were either expressing a particular sexual identity through

transgressing accepted modes of dress (i.e. cross-dressing) or were involved in activities where jewellery wearing was impractical such as playing sports. Here, other modern accessories (such as the increasingly popular wristwatch or well-chosen cigarette case or lighter) might suffice. Indeed, mainstream fashion advice from the writers of the various *Vogue* 'chic guides' (e.g. 1 June 1925 and 15 May 1926) persisted with the view that the only activity for women that was not compatible with wearing jewellery was playing tennis.

On the other hand, a significant aspect of changes in attitudes to jewellery wearing saw some manufacturers starting to rethink traditional jewellery forms, adapting them to more contemporary contexts – a move not lost on some contemporary commentators. In a *Vogue* article of 1925, Betty D. Thornley recognized that within conventional modes of adornment such a shift had, indeed, taken place. In particular, this could be seen in the new approach to the wearing of the tiara. Still an ultra-formal jewellery type associated with public display at society gatherings (in this case an evening out at the New York Opera), Thornley notes, nevertheless, that 'the modern tiara is as supple as silk, fitted to the head like the best of Reboux hats' and that it can be worn 'as tightly as Lenglen wore her ribbons on the tennis court' (1925, 37). Here is a clear indication that this form of jewellery was undergoing something of a transformation, distancing itself from associations (as Thornley puts it) with 'the peace offerings of husbands' and taking on the more practical characteristics of an item that was more likely to have been chosen by the wearers themselves. Crucially, too, it is worn in sympathy with modern fashions and not simply as a portable display of wealth or overly ostentatious sign of aristocratic breeding. It would appear that, increasingly, the buyer and the wearer were becoming the same person. Indeed, by the end of the 1920s it was possible for another *Vogue* correspondent to be unequivocal about the new relationship between the modern woman and her jewellery, whatever form it may take: 'We don't wait to cross the thresholds of the big jewellers armed with husbands. If we aren't given jewels in sentiment, we buy them in cold blood' ('Dramatic Modern Jewellery', 1930, 71).

The problem of men

As far as men were concerned, the wearing of jewellery in the 1920s was an altogether different affair. In his 1930 work *The Psychology of Clothes*, J. C. Flügel commented that 'the great masculine renunciation' of flamboyant dress

characterizes the development of masculine dress styles from the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, later commentators on Flügel, such as Ulrich Lehmann, have taken this view to task:

The often-cited observation by J. C. Flügel . . . that it was man's decision to abandon any claim toward being beautiful and henceforth confine himself to being useful, is not accurate. Masculine apparel did not cease being beautiful, it was the concept of beauty, especially modernist beauty, that changed because of the shift of social parameters after the Revolution. Flügel's view was curiously one dimensional in ascribing beauty to woman and rationality or expedience to man. (Lehmann 2000, 412nn)

Thirty years before Flügel, Veblen had observed that the changes in men's dress in the nineteenth century may partly have come about through unwillingness to spend money on 'symbols of leisure which must have been irksome, which may have served a good purpose in their time, but the continuation of which among the upper classes today would be a work of supererogation' (Veblen 1994, 114). If it is to be assumed that Veblen's symbols of leisure include accessories, then it may be tempting to pursue the line that a wholesale rejection of accoutrements on the part of men in the early twentieth century was in order to emphasize their thriftiness, rationality and general usefulness to the family and to society. Further, if the advertisements promoting accessories for men in 1920s fashion magazines are taken into account, most of them feature giftware such as watches, cufflinks, shaving accessories, brushes and belts. Some of these products are of very high quality but remain, essentially, jazzed up utilitarian objects constituting an incitement to men on the part of manufacturers and consumers to continue to be well turned out but, ultimately, useful and productive.

It is clear that accessories for both genders were an important part of the economies of western Europe and America in the 1920s and 1930s. France, in particular, successfully exported the products of its luxury industries throughout the interwar period. This was partly fuelled by the growth of ex-pat communities in Paris. In *Tender Is the Night*, F. Scott Fitzgerald, through the character of Dick Diver, comments on this process. Diver is at the height of his powers when he is depicted by Fitzgerald as walking confidently through Paris on his way to a film studio to meet the starlet Rosemary Hoyt 'dignified in his fine clothes, with their fine accessories, he was yet swayed and driven as an animal' (Fitzgerald 1998, 103). This is the moment in the story when he wants to finally claim Rosemary as his own. On this occasion he is to be disappointed. She has already left and

the fine accessories are deployed in vain. Dick's dandification is thwarted but, as a reminder of how American spending power in Paris fuelled the market for jewellery and accessories of all kinds, he bumps into a US army veteran who shows him a French newspaper cartoon of Americans disembarking from an ocean liner: 'Two hundred thousand – spending ten million a summer' (10). Dick is reminded, therefore, of his status as one of many foreign consumers of the city's luxury goods market in post-war France. In the novel, this represents a further tipping point towards his disillusionment and ultimate dissipation. Diver represents a successful modern man. His modernity is based to some extent on his actions but also on his appearance, which includes buying into contemporary 'city' fashions, accessories, bathing-wear and even indulging in some light cross-dressing, which he carries off in public (albeit at the beach) with confidence and without obvious embarrassment.

In relation to the practice of accessorizing for modern life, Flügel is convinced that the 'sartorial distinctions of wealth', which had hitherto dominated fashion for men and women, had broken down in his own time. This was due to a combination of changes in materials technology and social progress:

(the vast improvements made in recent years with artificial precious stones and pearls is tending to abolish the distinctions even as regards the smaller costly ornaments) . . . Men's clothes have, of course, gone further in this direction than women's, and it would seem that women might profitably copy men at least in one direction, namely in the abolition of that particular form of snobbery which demands an unreasonably large number of different costumes. (Flügel 1971, 185–6)

As women were reducing the number of unnecessary changes of outfit during the day this had implications for jewellery wearing. The increasing popularity of artificial stones was noted as early as 1923 in an article for *Vogue* in which the use of aquamarines in jewellery for men is discussed. The variety of settings in which these stones may be placed remains predictable; 'cuff-links, studs, vest buttons, and sometimes also for a watch fob, chain, and watch-case setting' while also being 'sufficiently conservative to be prized for many years to come' (Wallace 1923, 158). Clearly, men were not expected to take too many risks with their jewellery lest they (or their partners) have to endure the irksome and expensive task of updating it.

According to Flügel, 'It is perhaps no mere chance that a period of unexampled scientific progress should have followed the abandonment of

ornamental clothing on the part of men at the beginning of the last century' (1971, 118). Here, perhaps choosing to ignore the plethora of male scientists and philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (I will not list them) who presided over the Enlightenment in a variety of wigs, ruffs, frills, breeches, stockings, stacked heels and brooches, Flügel betrays his particular dislike of the nineteenth century – a century which, for him, produced a terrifyingly formal, inflexible and impractical set of dress codes for men.

In an article of perhaps dubious sincerity produced for the illustrated magazine *The Quiver* for September 1924 and intriguingly titled 'Why I Would Rather Be a Woman', the author ('A Man') is keen to point out that one of the principal benefits of being female is that women are afforded the liberty to dress 'just as they please'. Men are only allowed very simple but very stark variations in dress (such as a black or a white bow tie) and the cut of their clothes is largely settled for them. Women, on the other hand 'can wear anything and almost nothing. There is no canon which they can offend' ('Man', 1924, 1032). Although the last point gives the writer away as something of a fashion novice, the desire less to envy women 'their feathers and furs, their jewellery and other vanities' and more their 'defiance of uniform' is an interesting take on the subject of the lack of risk taking allowed for men in sartorial matters (1032). The writer glosses over, inevitably, the risks that women themselves take in making their own departures from the norm. The text gives an amusing insight, however unreliable, into the frustration with the restrictions of bourgeois male dress codes.

So was the modern male of the 1920s condemned by adherence to these codes to a relationship with jewellery characterized by conservatism, functionality and thriftiness? This would certainly fit Flügel's thesis. Even if his male renunciation of fashion is overplayed, it is clear that there was a discernible problem as far as men's jewellery was concerned and this was occasionally discussed in magazines of the 1920s and 1930s. Pierre de Trévières, writing in *La Femme de France* at the beginning of the 1930s, acknowledged that:

There is no question more difficult to solve than the problem of jewellery for men ... We are no longer in the days of charms dangling on a replete stomach or romantic eras where sensitive dilettantes locked up a woman's tear in a ring setting. The only jewellery allowed today is a tie-pin, cufflinks, a watch chain and a ring. (de Trévières 1931, 22)

He then describes the advice of modernist jeweller Jean Després on the best way for a modern man to engage successfully with jewellery. The advice is

practical and conventional, based on the idea of wearing signet rings of varying types, with stones set either higher or lower in order to be suitable for different activities (sports, work, evenings out). Other accessories must match the tonal palette of the costume and the chosen jewels and metals such as buttons, cuff-links and plastron (de Trévières 1931, 22).

Roland Barthes argued that the modern man of the twentieth century had to rely on the details in their costume as the only way in which any kind of 'dandyism' could be preserved in everyday life: 'it was the detail (the "next-to-nothing", the "je ne sais quoi", the "manner", etc.) which started to play the distinguishing role in clothing: the knot on a cravat, the material of a shirt, the buttons on a waistcoat, the buckle on a shoe, were from then on enough to highlight the narrowest of social differences' (2006, 61). Certain accessories, like the monocle, remained popular in artistic (and definitely modernist) circles as a foil for the practical formality of the suit. But it was also associated, as Marius Hentea says, with both men and women as well as 'dandies and aristocrats, military officers and con men' (2013, 220). Although not an item of jewellery, it was almost always used as a way of accessorizing a costume, whether in a spirit of parody (Dadaist Tristan Tzara wore one for most of his life), genuine need to improve the eyesight through a functional instrument or, in the case of a number of well-known lesbians of the 1920s and other frequenters of the Paris club *Le Monocle*, to undermine its status as an object traditionally gendered 'male'. In Brassai's 1932 photograph *Young Female Invert at Le Monocle*, the female sitter (in male evening dress) sits before an empty plate and a bottle of champagne wearing a very large signet ring (and wristwatch) on her left hand. This is the unequivocally 'masculine' scale of ring acceptable to the male who wanted to make a feature of his jewellery and would not want it to be perceived as feminine. Its adoption in this case of female cross-dressing asserts the new identity. On stage, the famous 1920s drag artist Barquette often wore numerous bangles on his right arm when performing. However, he removed his wig at the end of his act in order to break the spell of his transformation. Surviving photographs of Barquette out of drag show him dressed impeccably in 1920s male fashion. The accessories worn by the sitter in Brassai's photograph serve to suggest that here there is no act and neither is there a spell to be broken.

Among professional men working as artists and designers (notably those associated with the modern movement) the tendency to accessorize was limited. Although modernist architect Le Corbusier appears not to have worn any jewellery he did accessorize with a watch, pipe and pocket-handkerchief. In spite of this, he was not averse to appearing in flamboyant fancy dress on occasion

and, like Gerald Murphy, was happy to be photographed nude when on holiday in the South of France. Other celebrated modernist architects such as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe wore no jewellery at all. This is not surprising. We would look in vain for any notable examples of jewellery wearing among men directly associated with the propounding of hard-nosed modernist design values. Even though the contrast between the artist Kandinsky (who was able to paint with some abandon in a dress suit) and the photographer Moholy Nagy (who regularly wore a worker's boiler suit) reveals a keen interest in male self-presentation, accessorizing was not a priority.

Examination of photographic portraits of celebrated Paris jewellers of the 1920s shows that even those at the heart of the profession were reluctant to disrupt the conventions of the male dress code. Of the ten photographic portraits of jewellers illustrated in Sylvie Raulet's book on Art Deco jewellery, only those of Georges Fouquet, Louis Cartier, Paul Templier and Georges Mauboussin (pearl tie-pin and lapel badge) and Louis Arpels (large signet ring and elaborate watch chain/bracelet) show the sitter wearing any jewellery at all. Arguably the most 'progressive' of them all (the younger triumvirate of Jean Fouquet, Gérard Sandoz and Raymond Templier) appear to eschew the wearing of the jewel (Raulet 2002). It is important to remember that these designers were also key players in business as well as in the creative direction of their family firms and this will partly explain their formal appearance. Like the architects, these men dressed in a way that enabled them to move easily between the drawing studio, workshop and meeting room. Although tempting to conclude otherwise, in a professional context a single pearl tie-pin would not necessarily have been enough to identify a jeweller with their trade such was the ubiquity of this simple ornament in the 1920s.

The language of clothes for men that demanded the rejection of ornament and accessories as suggested in architect Adolf Loos's infamous 1908 essay *Ornament and Crime* certainly did come about. Further, although Valerie Steele's observation for early twentieth-century men that 'bright colours remained taboo and decoration had already been abolished' seems a little harsh at first reading, the limits of a man's ability to accessorize were in fact very clearly set out and had been culturally determined for some time (1998, 233). If the interwar pages of *Vogue*, for example, are scanned there is no shortage of possibilities for men to avail themselves of 'functional' accessories such as combs, brushes, tweezers, razors, belts, buckles, and other such items. Although very strictly traditional items of jewellery were available, ranges were often limited.



Figure 1.6 Sara and Gerald Murphy at the “Automotive Ball”, Paris, 1924. Sara and Gerald Murphy Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. © Estate of Honoria Murphy Donnelly/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

Nevertheless, transgressing the boundaries of mainstream accessorizing was possible for men of means and there was no better way of doing this than through the fancy dress party and the costume ball – those organized by Etienne de Beaumont in 1920s and 1930s Paris being good examples. Here, men were able to shrug off their strict adherence to dress codes and indulge themselves, perhaps through adopting historical costume or more fanciful creations. Referring to the fancy dress ball, Cynthia Cooper suggests that ‘while it was

generally taboo for a man to dress as a woman on such occasions, considerable evidence suggests that for men, wearing fancy dress bore a marked similarity to cross-dressing' (2004, 45).

This is arguably the case with Gerald Murphy's costume for Etienne de Beaumont's 'automotive ball' held in Paris in the spring of 1924 (Figure 1.6). Murphy had himself welded into a metal tunic that featured, as accessories, a speakerphone worn in place of a brooch, a rear view mirror positioned on the shoulder, a high metal collar fastened with a chain and an extraordinary headpiece recalling the shapes of cylinders and bolt-on motor parts. Below the waist, Murphy wears only a pair of dancer's tights and simple shoes. By contrast, with the exception of her enormous spherical earrings, Sara Murphy's costume is a more straightforward affair – a foil dress with driving goggles and her pearls wrapped three times around her neck.

Beaumont's regular Soirées were typical examples of what Lynn Garafola has termed 'lifestyle modernism', a kind of modernism which may have been inspired by the familiar and everyday but which, in turn, became identified with 'the new consumerist chic of the upper class' (Garafola 1989, 115). At the automotive ball, this particular interpretation of body adornment, jewellery and accessories on the part of Gerald Murphy may use contemporary mechanical forms as a major stylistic theme, but the context and manner of their deployment as part of his costume is surely closer to the spirit of Watteau than Renault.

New Women: The Jewellery of Charlotte Perriand and Nancy Cunard

I had a street urchin's haircut and wore a necklace I made out of cheap chromed copper balls. I called it my ball-bearings necklace, a symbol of my adherence to the twentieth-century machine age. (Perriand 2003, 21)

A variant of the Art game is the Jewel racket (Same system, same result). (Cunard 1931)

Designer Charlotte Perriand (1903–1999) and poet and activist Nancy Cunard (1896–1965) knew the importance of jewellery in making statements about personal and professional identity, the causes they believed in and how they wished to be perceived by contemporary society. Both developed passionate attachments to ideas, philosophies and practices in the arts and the political arena. They often dressed in the fashionable clothes of the day but also adapted their sartorial appearance to suit the contexts in which they were living and working. It is interesting how crucial their choices of adornment were to their professional personas and it is clear that these choices were markedly different. Both Perriand and Cunard married young and experienced early failed marriages with men who seemingly shared few of their cultural or political interests and, in quite different ways, they embraced the modern movement in their respective fields. In the case of Perriand it was modernism in design that provided the outlet for her development as a professional designer and as a person. For Cunard, her attachment to literature and radical politics was a constant driving force, helping her move, in a few short years, from compliant English debutante to militant civil rights campaigner. The contrast between the cool, level headed graduate of the Ecole de l'Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs with the more impulsive, rebellious autodidact and campaigner for social justice is firmly embodied in the manner in which these two highly influential women chose to adorn their

bodies with jewellery. Both, in different ways, were new women. Flappers they were not.

Charlotte Perriand and the ball-bearings necklace

Charlotte Perriand's ball-bearings necklace (known as the *collier roulements à billes*) was exhibited in 2009 at 'Bijoux Art Deco et avant garde' at the Musée des Arts décoratifs in Paris and, in 2011, in the show 'Charlotte Perriand 1903–99: From Photography to Interior Design' at the Petit Palais (Figure 2.1). In the former exhibition, the necklace appeared remarkably different from many other pieces because of its simplicity, bold execution and stark utilitarian beauty, exposing the obvious modishness of its more lustrous cousins. In contrast, at the Petit Palais, the piece was exhibited to help chart the career of Charlotte Perriand, modernist design pioneer, enthusiastic photographer and collector of



Figure 2.1 Charlotte Perriand's *Collier roulements à billes* (ball-bearings necklace), 1927. © Archives Charlotte Perriand. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

art brut (Barsac 2011). Among the many notable achievements reflected upon in her autobiography, Perriand recalls the importance of the habitual wearing of the necklace at a time when her career as a designer and collaborator with Le Corbusier was starting to take shape. It became, for a short period, synonymous with Perriand and her championing of the machine aesthetic in the late 1920s and has subsequently attained the status of a mythical object and symbol of the machine age.

The necklace can be considered as an object and symbol in the context of modernist aesthetics. It also has a key role to play in the formation of Perriand's personal and professional identity in the late 1920s when she was working with Le Corbusier. It also has significance in relation to aspects of gender and politics in the context of the wider modern movement.

In 1927, when the necklace was made and habitually worn, Perriand was at the beginning of her exploration of the objects of the machine age. Her interest in all things metallic and mechanical was at its height. She had begun working at Le Corbusier's atelier in the rue de Sèvres and had forged relationships with many modernists such as Pierre Jeanneret, José Lluís Sert, Alfred Roth, Ernst Weissmann, Kunio Maekawa and others. A number of photographs survive of Perriand wearing the necklace to work at the atelier and in the company of various collaborators and interns. Perriand wore the piece when seated in the LC7 swivel chair and, most famously, when reclining in the LC4 chaise longue (Figure 2.2).

The necklace is made from lightweight chrome steel balls strung together on a chord. Originally, there were sixteen and, according to Pernelle Perriand-Barsac, the missing sphere has recently been added (Perriand-Barsac 2011). A companion piece to the chromed necklace, a gilded version dating from the same time, has fourteen spheres. A version dating from 1930, in blue glass, has twenty-four spheres. Perriand also made a chain mail belt around the same time.

The chromed necklace obviously required little skill in making, just straightforward assembly, but its potency as an object remains undimmed. It is not a luxury object, but it is clearly designed to embody meaning, to work as modern adornment and to be worn for effect. The principal visual characteristic is, of course, the influence of the machine. The use of machine parts as inspiration for modern jewellery in the interwar years was a significant feature of modern design by the late 1920s in the work of Parisian jewellers Jean Després, Raymond Templier and Jean Fouquet (see Chapter 3). The influence of Perriand's necklace on the latter has been recognized: 'It is not possible to leave out the designer



Figure 2.2 Charlotte Perriand, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret. LC4 chaise longue, 1929. Le Corbusier: © FLC/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016. Jeanneret: © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

Charlotte Perriand whose ball bearings necklace, we recall, resembles the bracelet of the same name in chromed steel by Jean Fouquet' (Gabardi 1986, 64).

This vogue for utilizing the language of mechanical parts to create contemporary forms in jewellery was usually expressed through the use of precious and semiprecious materials and aimed at a bourgeois market. However, the bracelet by Fouquet (Figure 2.3) would, when worn, exploit the movement of the ball bearings as the piece moves around the wrist, creating a relationship with the original function of the moving parts. The mode began in the late 1920s and most of the important examples by the Parisian jewellery houses in today's museum collections post-date Perriand's necklace.

Her use of the chrome balls exploits the ball bearings as image (or signifier) of modernity, since the use of real ball bearings in this context would have been impractical. There is also another crucial difference. From the time of her association with Le Corbusier, Perriand became interested in found objects and *art brut*. Raw, ready-made forms which she photographed and kept records



Figure 2.3 Bracelet in chromed metal and ebonite by Jean Fouquet, c. 1931. Diameter 6.5 cm. Private Collection. Photo © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

of, somewhat in the spirit of Duchamp and the surrealists. This is a very clear preoccupation in her work from the early 1930s, but the origins of her using existing objects as inspiration is interesting. Perriand famously used a chromed car headlamp to illuminate the dining area of her apartment in the Place Saint-Sulpice in 1927–1928. In the 1930s, Perriand would extend this practice through scavenging industrial sites and photographing the detritus to be found there (Barsac 2011).

At the 1925 Paris exhibition it was possible to see the works of the pioneer modernists, such as Le Corbusier, alongside exhibits of manufacturers' industrial components. Interestingly, the French ball-bearings industry was aware of the significance of their products as inspiration for modern designers when it took out a single-page advertisement in a special issue of *L'illustration* in June 1925: 'Thus the ball bearing, this organ of high mechanical perfection, could find its place in events such as those of the modern decorative arts, due

to the prodigious contribution that it makes to all the mechanized industries working with iron, wood, stone, leather, etc' (Possémé 2009, 16). In modernist visual culture, there was a notable interest in the aesthetics and dynamism of ball bearings that was to reach its apogee at the 'Machine Art' exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1934. Here, actual machine parts were displayed in the galleries as significant objects in their own right with the display strategy and selection policy of the institution being the only contribution on the part of artists. Josef Albers's design for the cover of the catalogue canonizes the Swedish company S.K.F.'s self-aligning ball bearings as an example of the machine aesthetic par excellence. These bearings have been in production since 1907 and the similarity with Fouquet's bracelet is striking. A small number of pieces of jewellery made in the Bauhaus metal workshops between 1925 and 1931 also show the influence of ball bearings (Joppien 1995).

In the wider cultural sphere, ball bearings provided inspiration for American expat Gerald Murphy both in terms of his paintings and his taste in interior decoration. His interest in things mechanical has already been noted in the previous chapter. According to William Rubin, 'Walking down the Champs-Élysées, Murphy happened on a display of "S.K.F." Swedish ball bearings. He was so struck by them that he purchased the largest one and mounted it as a revolving sculpture' (1974, 36). In a similar vein, Deborah Rothschild notes that 'Gerald quipped that he would rather have a real ball bearing than a Rodin that might turn out to be a fake. Like many moderns in the 1920s . . . Murphy responded to the ball bearing as one of the great beauties of the mechanical age' (2007, 37). It is known that Murphy planned a painting called 'ball bearings' around 1926 but this is now lost. Murphy's paintings were characterized by a precisionism which lies somewhere between Léger's cubism and Ozenfant's purism, perhaps best exemplified by his painting *Watch* of 1924–1925. In photography, the American Paul Strand had carefully photographed a collection of S.K.F. ball bearings for the arts magazine *Broom* in the early 1920s (November 1922). The Italian futurists also praised these vital objects of the machine age, even including them in a recipe for a chicken dish ('chicken-Fiat') in which 'a boiled and then roasted chicken has a handful of mild steel ball bearings inserted to add flavour', although this description lends more of a baroque than a modernist touch to it (Marinetti 2014, 97).

The 'Machine Art' exhibition catalogue sought, via references to the ideas of Plato and St. Thomas Aquinas, to identify the essential qualities of precisionism, the latter identifying 'integrity or perfection', 'proportion or harmony' and

'clarity' as the three essential requirements of beauty (Museum of Modern Art 1994). Shiny surfaces are also a key ingredient as is the absence of surface ornament. The significance of this for an understanding of Perriand's necklace will be discussed later.

Following the 1925 exhibition, some jewellers and silversmiths quickly picked up on the potential of machine forms for the production of famous essays in design inspired by the machine aesthetic. Some of these were daringly original but others were predictable and more modish. Referring to this practice, modernist silversmith Jean Puiforcat was characteristically critical: 'Gold and silversmithing has, in common with the machine, beautiful polished metal. But it would be crazy to make a teapot like a piston' (Herbst 1951, 26). Jewellery directly inspired by machine parts also had its detractors. Referring to work in this vein by Fouquet and Templier in *Art et industrie* in 1932, critic Marcel Zahar opined 'Yes, machines are wonderfully powerful things . . . but I am not keen on seeing their insides displayed at inopportune moments. Pieces of jewellery that look like spare parts make for very crude symbols. We don't need fetishism! We are not commemorating the victory of the machine: we don't have to sport miniature engines' (Possémé 2009, 15).

One senses that Perriand, too, would have disliked the 'fetishism' referred to by Zahar. As she was beginning to become politically active on the fringes of the French left in the late 1920s, the liaison between high fashion, expensive materials and bourgeois taste would not have appealed to her. The slavish incorporation of machine forms as decorative elements held no interest. She must also have been sensitive to the possible negative impact that the necklace might have when worn in the wrong context, perhaps realizing that the gesture would be misunderstood as dilettantism. At the end of the decade, Perriand enrolled in the 'Scientific Organisation of Work' class at the independent Marxist workers' university in the nineteenth arrondissement 'leaving my ball-bearings necklace at Montparnasse' and 'dressed in a stone-gray oilskin' (Perriand 2003, 72–3).

The wearing of the necklace was clearly important on other occasions, particularly when meeting people professionally. Such a strong visual statement was bound to provoke conversation and remain in the memory as Perriand continued to cultivate a strong image of herself as a *femme moderne* in the late 1920s. This effort on her part was given further impetus by her very public efforts to promote metal as a superior alternative to wood. None of the members of Le Corbusier's atelier expressed any interest in precious materials, of course. All were disciples of concrete and metal and were preoccupied with ideas of

mass production rather than craft. So the choice of chromed metal by Perriand for her jewellery is entirely consistent with this. For her, mass manufactured metal was supreme.

In a famous exchange of 1929 between Perriand and the English critic John Gloag in the pages of *The Studio*, she reacted to the latter's criticism of the 'robot modernist school' by identifying the principal advantages of metal over wood. According to Perriand, metal is superior 'Because by means of the different methods of manufacture [metal] opens out new vistas; new opportunities of design' and 'Because the protective coatings against toxic agencies not only lower the cost of upkeep, but have a considerable *Aesthetic* value' (1929, 279). Further on, she refers to 'a new lyric beauty, regenerated by mathematical science' which brings to mind the simplicity and satisfying repetition of the form of the necklace (279). In one of his lectures delivered in Brazil in 1929, Le Corbusier wrote that 'life is full of opportunities to collect things that are subjects for thought' and cites, for example, 'this polished steel part taken from a machine' (1991, 121). He may not have been thinking directly of Perriand's piece, but he is citing the spirit of its creation.

One of Perriand's vital professional and personal relationships was with the painter Fernand Léger. They met in 1930 at a reception organized by the German Embassy in Paris to coincide with the opening of an exhibition of Bauhaus work (Perriand 2003, 35). They became close friends and collaborators for many years, sharing similar preoccupations and contacts within the Parisian modernist milieu and working together on extensive projects promoting the political plans of the Popular Front government. Léger's painting *Nature morte* (*Le mouvement à billes*) (*Still-Life [Movement of Ball Bearings]*) of 1926 is an obvious source of visual reference for Perriand's necklace and was painted around the same time as her wearing of the piece became habitual, though the pair had not actually met at this point. There is, however, a more intriguing connection between Perriand's necklace and Léger's film *Ballet mécanique* that abounds with *objet types* in motion, bringing to life the static monumental forms of his easel paintings. The film (a collaboration between Léger, Dudley Murphy and George Antheil) was completed in 1924 and premiered in Vienna, but it was not screened in Paris until 1926 when it was shown with René Clair's *Entr'acte* at the Studio des Ursulines (Lanchner 2010, 270). Perriand could have seen the film that year as she regularly attended screenings (2003, 19).

There are a number of key sequences in the film and an ironic reference that may reveal a direct source of inspiration for the necklace and Perriand's interest

in the spherical reflective surface. Shiny, metallic swinging spheres appear a number of times (both singularly and montaged together) at two points – 2:27 to 2:45 and 5:06 to 5:44 – creating dynamic movement and allowing the surrounding environment to be reflected (Murphy and Léger 2005). In the first sequence, the sphere reflects the camera operator, the director and the studio interior. We see the same effect in the photograph of the necklace from the Charlotte Perriand archives where the photographer and his equipment are clearly visible (see Figure 2.1). This produces an effect not only of dynamic movement, but also of strangeness and, to some extent, disorientation. At many points in the film, the exploitation of actual movement through an ostentatious display of kinetic effects is juxtaposed with montaged images of shiny surfaces such as kitchen implements creating ‘an inventory of purist motifs’ (Christie 2006, 304). However, it is the way in which the surfaces of these objects are interrogated by the camera that is most useful for this discussion.

Léger’s use of the close-up in relation to the spherical balls is significant for the way space is conceived. Walter Benjamin explains this clearly in his essay ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ of 1936: ‘With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject’ (1999a, 229–30). The close-up on the spherical balls allows us to glimpse the other reality of the interior of the studio where the film is being shot. We can see the reflection of the interior setting, the director and the camera operator in a ‘new structural formation’. The effect of seeing the world via the reflections in the necklace is similar in that the reflections set up an exterior and interior dialogue. The perfection of its reflective surfaces creates a rhythm of reflection that is reminiscent of a montage film sequence. The effect when worn is that of a transformation of the visible world into something resembling a filmic moment.

In a 1924 piece for *Bulletin de l’Effort Moderne*, Léger wrote: ‘Every machine object possesses two qualities of material: one, often painted and light-absorbent, that remains static (an architectural value), and another (most often bare metal) that reflects light and fills the role of unlimited fantasy (pictorial value). So it is light that determines the degree of variety in the machine object’ (1973, 54). The reflective surfaces of Perriand’s necklace provide a constantly shifting sense of pictorial value as it reflects the world around it. It is relentlessly anti-decorative; or rather any decorative value it may possess is related to one’s interpretation of the subject that is reflected in its live surface.

All jewellery moves with the body to a greater or lesser extent. If made of reflective materials, it also captures images of what surrounds it – although the maker or, indeed, the wearer does not always exploit this deliberately. Perriand's piece has clear transformatory qualities in the way that, on or off the body (and even in the museum display case) it changes the perception of the world and the surfaces process a constantly shifting pattern of images. In *Ballet mécanique* the intertitle 'on a volé un collier de perles de 5 millions' (pearl necklace worth five million stolen) appears towards the end of the film, from 15:10 to 16:45, in full and fragmented form (Murphy and Léger 2005). As James Donald points out, it is drawn from the headline 'A 5 million necklace. Naturally, it was stolen' in *Lintransigeant* for 10 September 1924 (2009, 42). Perriand may have enjoyed the reference to the stolen strings of pearls at this time and the reflective swinging spheres in *Ballet mécanique* may have been a direct source of inspiration for the necklace. Her taste in jewellery was never conventional. In 1926, she was photographed wearing what appears to be large piece of costume jewellery – a clear precursor to the famous signature piece.

Some of Bauhaus designer Marianne Brandt's self-portraits use jewellery and objects (like the rotating spheres in *Ballet mécanique*) as a way of using reflections to 'make strange' the image of the surrounding environment. The theory (and practice) of 'making strange' (*ostranenie*) derived from Russian formalism as expounded by the poet and theorist Victor Shklovsky and was practiced regularly in Bauhaus photography. The 'defamiliarization' evident in Brandt's photograph of her reflection is a direct response to this approach. In Perriand's necklace, we see something similar. The repeated reflections are clearly a way of defamiliarizing the external world so that the artistic nature of the assemblage of reflective spheres can be fully appreciated as creating lasting aesthetic value. In Shklovsky's 1917 essay 'Art as Technique' he states:

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important. (Harrison and Wood 2003, 279)

For Perriand, the chrome balls were not only strikingly modern, but were materially different from other examples of modern jewellery. She incorporated the piece into her identity as a modern woman: 'I am conscious of and in synch

with my times. They are mechanical: in the streets the beautiful cars wink at me, they are clean, shining. I adorn my neck with chromed-steel beads, my waist with a coat of mail, my studio with chromed steel – I wear my hair à la Josephine Baker' (Perriand 2003, 12).

In combination with the wearing of the necklace Perriand's adoption of a form of the fashionable 'bob' haircut was indicative of how she wished to be identified with contemporary style and, perhaps more significantly, modern dress. The photograph of Perriand with the Croatian architect Ernst Weissmann illustrates this very well (Figure 2.4).

As has been shown in Chapter 1, it should not be underestimated how clearly provocative an act it was for women of the time to cut their hair short and to adopt the new clothing styles (Roberts 1993). In a wider sense, the appearance of the *femme moderne* was linked to the changing circumstances of post-war France. Perriand's adoption of a restrained and rational dress sense is clear from



Figure 2.4 Charlotte Perriand with architect Ernst Weissmann, 1927. © Archives Charlotte Perriand. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

photographs of her in the 1920s, although she rarely adopted the full-blown 'new fashion' look promoted by the likes of Chanel. Her dress sense remained simple with the emphasis on comfort, allowing great freedom of movement and, arguably, aided her ability to adapt to professional life in Corbusier's studio at the rue de Sèvres. Of course, detractors of this look were keen to point out a lack of femininity and a dangerous trend towards androgyny. However, as we have seen in Chapter 1, others contended that the new fashions were in tune with women's concern for greater freedoms. In a 1927 article in *de la Mode* André de Fouquières stated, 'Women want to walk, run, do sports . . . Nothing can prevent them from doing so, nature is regaining its rights . . . Suddenly, the noise of a motor! C'est la réalité présente! Life! Movement! Vertigo!' (Roberts 1993, 676).

Le Corbusier also had specific views on the development of modern dress: 'The courage, the liveliness, the spirit of invention with which women have operated the revolution in clothing are a miracle of modern times. Thank you!' (1991, 107). Although Le Corbusier's relationships with women were complex, the emergence of the new woman and his celebration of the new clothing trends were directly influenced by his familiarity with contemporary fashion magazines and his polemics on the subjects of clothing and physical culture (Samuel 2004). Apart from his wife, Yvonne, a former model who also adopted modern dress, Perriand (the only female intern at the studio) would have provided day-to-day evidence of the emergence of the trend towards functional, practical clothing.

A conventional reading of Perriand's position in the photographs of the chaise longue (the shoot was set up by Perriand herself) might suggest that it could be demonstrated how, for example, modern clothing styles allowed women the freedom of movement to operate and inhabit modern furniture efficiently and effectively. Alternatively, as Mary McLeod has suggested, the chaise longue and its photographic representation with Charlotte Perriand is a twentieth-century equivalent of the erotic associations with the body that can be seen in eighteenth-century furniture (McLeod 1987, 5). We are, however, a long way away here from the fantasy worlds of Boucher and Fragonard. A better comparison can be made with Erich Consemüller's famous photograph of Bauhaus designer Marcel Breuer's B3 club chair of c. 1926. The female inhabitant of the chair wears a metal mask by Oscar Schlemmer rendering her anonymous, uncompromisingly modern and assertively unerotic. Her gaze is a direct challenge to the viewer. In both photographs, the necklace and the mask play a role in identifying the sitters as modern and in both cases the faces are hidden, rendering the sitters anonymous. In the photograph of Perriand in

the LC7 chair she, again, turns her head away. The necklace remains, however, conspicuous. It is too simple to assume that Perriand's role as model was simply to demonstrate how the furniture works. Her presence was also to demonstrate that the new furniture existed outside of the conventions of femininity and masculinity and that it was in some way 'neutral' in terms of gender. That said, it should also be remembered that the binary approach to gender was still prevalent when, in 1932, Le Corbusier placed Perriand in sole charge of furniture, interior fittings and 'domestic equipment' at the atelier and handed Perriand a certificate to confirm this (McLeod 2003, 46).

Nevertheless, following this appointment, Charlotte Perriand was able to take her place as a key player in the modernist design milieu from the late 1920s. Her work was always more important to her than the way she presented herself, but her adoption of modern dress, an association with the most uncompromising of modernist architects and the deliberate choice of an unusual piece of signature jewellery, Perriand's sense of self-presentation was a significant factor in the development of her career. Her formal attachment to the atelier of Le Corbusier lasted from 1927 to 1937. She was the only female collaborator. In later interviews, Perriand was not keen to engage with questions about her position as a woman working in a male dominated profession, though she was clear on one point: 'There is one thing I never did, and that was flirt. That is, I didn't "dabble", I created and produced, and my job was important. There was mutual respect, mutual recognition' (Teicher 1999, 129).

From 1930, Charlotte Perriand seems to have abandoned the habitual wearing of the necklace during the period when she was moving away from her preoccupation with metal and beginning to consider the value of organic materials as a direct source of inspiration for her work. As Golan puts it, 'Organic retrenchment deeply affected all of the major modernists working in France. By the late 1920s, even hardliners like Fernand Léger, Le Corbusier, and Amédée Ozenfant would shift towards organicism, distancing themselves from the unconditional embrace of the machine aesthetic' (1995, ix-x). In the period after her closest association with the atelier of Le Corbusier and her frequent travels abroad, Perriand's efforts to 'humanize' the modernist aesthetic in design are well known. This is ironic, of course, given her earlier praise for the virtues of metal over wood a little over a decade earlier. The abandoning of the necklace was clearly down to more than just changes in fashion. As Tim Benton has pointed out, Le Corbusier's atelier had left behind the signature 'purist' style by the mid-1930s, when steel and concrete began to be replaced by the use of stone

and brick and that 'Charlotte Perriand a substitué à son célèbre collier . . . un collier de coquillages' (2005, 15).

Indeed, no images of Perriand exist after 1930 which show her wearing her ball-bearings necklace and she began to assemble a series of necklaces made from materials such as sand roses and shells. At the same time she began to add found objects as details in her exhibition stands (notably from 1929) and to use them as a form of visual research, carefully and artfully photographing these objects under the influence of surrealism. During the 1930s, Perriand began to spend more and more time away from the city, finding an ever greater affinity with the natural world. Several photographs by Pierre Jeanneret and others exist in which Perriand, confident in her nakedness, is captured wearing necklaces made from natural materials at various locations such as the beach at Dieppe and in the Savoy Alps (Figure 2.5).

The dramatic photograph of Perriand in the mountains conveys a completely different image of the designer from that of the disciple of machine art of the



Figure 2.5 Charlotte Perriand in the Savoy Alps, c. 1935. © Archives Charlotte Perriand. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

1920s. With an expansive gesture of her whole body, she offers herself up to nature as she exercises. She is no less a modern woman but, if we look closely, we can see that she wears what appears to be a simple white coral or pearl necklace. The necklace, with which Perriand had become synonymous, was put away as her return to nature became increasingly important and her career moved in a different direction. Nevertheless, this straightforward collection of objects worn as a symbol of the machine age had an important part to play in the formation of Perriand's identity as a modern woman and her determination to succeed as a designer in her own right. As Jacques Barsac has written, 'Charlotte Perriand was a free woman. Free in her body, in her thoughts, in her creativity. A woman of her time while most were lagging behind . . . she confronted the body of the woman trapped in the straightjacket of the decorum and etiquette of the era' (2007, 21).

Though not openly espousing any feminist cause, it is clear that Perriand's identity was formed directly by her desire to be a woman of her times. Indeed, the abandonment of the wearing of the necklace can be seen as a sign of growing maturity and confidence in herself and her abilities. The uncompromising machine aesthetic had been abandoned in much of her design work by the mid-1930s as Perriand sought to work in a political arena where she could make a direct contribution to society. This was a *détournement* inspired by a commitment to political change and, one suspects, a conscious rejection of the outright adherence to the machine culture of the 1920s.

In 2007, a project by the British artist Sadie Murdoch attempted a feminist reading of the iconic photograph of Perriand in the chaise longue through a process of restaging (Figure 2.6). Her impersonation of Charlotte Perriand, her clothes and the studio background drew attention to the fact that Perriand herself directed the various photographic sessions that led to the image becoming ubiquitous in the canon of modernist design. It also addresses the issues of authorship in relation to the chaise itself that have been, belatedly, settled in recent times (Sparke 2009, 480). In the image, Murdoch does not wear a replica of Perriand's necklace, but the floor is littered with ball bearings, some of them describing part of a circle as a direct reference to it. As the artist says, 'The chrome necklace as a decorative adornment made with objects used for engineering was both feminine accoutrement and a signifier of the masculine world of technology and machinery. It is an assertive embrace of pleasure and modernity; like Perriand's "Bar in the Attic" (1927), it is a gesture of self-affirmation' (Warburton 2007)



Figure 2.6 Sadie Murdoch, 'Mirrored Photomontage 2', 2007. Courtesy of the artist, the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, UK and the Roberto Polo Gallery, Brussels, Belgium.

Through her research and restaging of the photograph, Murdoch manages to convey something of the essence of the necklace's significance in Perriand's formation of her own identity. There is, though, an additional element which does not complete the conventional narrative. As Eva Diaz notes, 'Murdoch subtly disrupted Perriand's previously impeccable deportment – she has broken Perriand's signature "ball-bearing" choker, its silver beads joining the fractured shadow to form a mysterious constellation across the floor' (2007). This is where Murdoch's restaging moves from historical recreation to the physical representation of the necklace's place in the mythology of modernist Paris in the late 1920s.

It is noteworthy that Charlotte Perriand does not seem to have been photographed wearing either the gilded or blue glass versions of the necklace in public or private. Examination of surviving photographs from the period 1927–1930 at the Charlotte Perriand archives bears this out. Clearly, Perriand preferred to be photographed wearing the version that made the strongest impact when in front of the camera. Like all jewellery of substance, it was intended to

communicate ideas about adornment and to be worn for effect, its symbolic role being of additional importance. However, Charlotte Perriand's ball-bearings necklace was intended as more than just a decorative accoutrement of machine modernism and it had a clear role, albeit for a short time, in the formation of the designer's identity as a modern woman and as a portable working demonstration of modernist aesthetics. Perriand's situation in the late 1920s was a period of personal and professional growth. Ultimately, this was to lead to her reaching the peak of her profession. In these early days, when the necklace was such a significant symbol of her own transformation into a modern woman, it is worth recalling part of Marshal Berman's definition of modernity: 'to be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world' (1991, 15).

In his text *Publicité = Poésie*, French modernist poet Blaise Cendrars lists his 'seven wonders of the modern world'. These include 'ball bearings by S.K.F.' and 'the naked nape of a woman's neck who has just had her hair cut' (1931, 212–13). The text was written on 26 February 1927 and it is at the very least a fine coincidence that Charlotte Perriand's necklace should have been conceived at pretty much the same time as Cendrars was musing on the objects and situations that increasingly defined the modern world. Both clearly believed that the ball bearing (real or imitation) in some way signified the highest state of modernity. Cendrars's observation that short hair for women also represented the spirit of modern times is apposite. After all, Charlotte Perriand's necklace could not be worn effectively with long hair. That would lessen its impact both in terms of how it was worn, how it would be seen and how it would reflect the movement and dynamism of the modern world around it.

Nancy Cunard and the performance of African jewellery

In her 1931 pamphlet *Black Man and White Ladyship*, Nancy Cunard, heiress to the vast shipping fortune of the Cunard family, condemns her mother (Maud Alice Burke, Lady Cunard) and her social circle for their intolerant attitudes to race. The reason for this was that Cunard had developed a strong and intimate friendship with the black jazz musician Henry Crowder, whom she had first met in the late 1920s in Venice and subsequently lived with in Paris and Normandy. She describes the reaction to her relationship with Crowder and the warnings from her mother's circle (in the highest echelons of London society) that the

match was entirely inappropriate and could only end badly. This is how Nancy Cunard describes the scene in Grosvenor Square:

At a large lunch party in Her Ladyship's house, things are set rocking by one of those bombs that throughout her 'career' Margot Asquith, Lady Oxford, has been wont to hurl. No-one could fail to wish he had been at that lunch to see the effect of Lady Oxford's entry: 'Hello Maud, what is it now – drink, drugs or niggers?' (1931)

Cunard also describes the opprobrium of composer Thomas Beecham, an intimate of Lady Cunard and mainstay of her social circle, who says that she should be 'tarred and feathered' for her relationship with Crowder. The pamphlet is in two sections. The first deals with the reaction to her friendship with Crowder and the often highly personal attacks on her mother and her mother's friends. The second is concerned with Cunard's views on the lamentable state of civil rights (in America and elsewhere) for black men and women since the abolition of slavery. These two themes formed the backbone of Cunard's personal and political struggles in the interwar years. Her life is well documented, and an assessment of her contribution to poetry, publishing, radical politics and black civil rights makes her one of the most fascinating of new women. Here, however, it is her collection of jewellery and accessories that is of principal interest and I hope to show that this was an important aspect of both her public and personal life. Indeed an understanding of the jewellery collection itself sheds light on her considerable achievements.

Needless to say, the publication of the aforementioned privately printed and strategically distributed pamphlet, unmistakable in its red cardboard cover and bold black lettering, led to a final and irrevocable estrangement between mother and daughter resulting in the latter being, effectively, disinherited. The copy of the pamphlet consulted at the British Library contains a handwritten note (with a signature I have been unable to decipher) part of which reads: 'My dear John. Many thanks for this regrettable work. Edith says she can detect the hand of Wyndham Lewis throughout' (Cunard 1931). That these readers found it hard to believe that Cunard was capable of such invective unaided is symptomatic of the way that members of her mother's social circle often felt moved to undermine her attempts to escape from that particular milieu. But from an early age, Cunard had felt herself to be at odds with the culture and values of her social group and she successfully cultivated an image of herself as a non-conformist, rebellious type, actively seeking to challenge and overturn social mores and the norms of behaviour meant to be adhered to by her particular generation of debutantes.

Her poetry, considered by some to be uneven in its quality and a medium that was 'uncongenial' to her (Lucas 2005), nevertheless exhibits the passion she held for the modern world and for the social and political causes that she embraced. Cunard's assault on her own class began in the mid-1920s and was fuelled by her associations with numerous avant-garde writers and artists such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Man Ray, Louis Aragon and Tristan Tzara. By the middle of the next decade she was fully engaged in her struggles against poverty, racism and European fascism. Her 1934 poem *Tell It, Glen* was written in response to the fifth National Hunger March from Glasgow to London. The poem ends thus: 'Glen is my name, Northumberland – out of work / I did the Hunger March in thirty-four. / Now sit and think: no job. / The dole drips pence. / Do I conclude: "Life's this" or "Is there more?"' (Cunard 2005, 42). But the contrast between Cunard's own background and those she supported could not have been more stark. Her position was on the fringes of the communist party, but she never formally joined. As with other interwar literary figures (W. H. Auden, George Orwell, Stephen Spender) the reaction against her own class was partly inspired by contempt for its taste in art as much as by its disdain for the dispossessed or marginalized. When Cunard refers to her mother's 'jewel racket', she makes a point about the commodification of objects as well as the aesthetic choices made in the name of good taste. This taste was predictably that which would not look out of place in a Western upper-class social milieu. To Nancy's distaste, every artefact that came into Lady Cunard's possession had to be assessed for its potential as an investment as well as for its artistic qualities.

The well-known images of Nancy Cunard produced during the interwar years by the photographers Man Ray, Cecil Beaton and others, show Cunard wearing large pieces of jewellery in the form of large wooden or African ivory bracelets, beaded necklaces and earrings (Figure 2.7). In this period, she divided her time between London and Paris, with occasional forays across the Atlantic in the pursuit of political causes. From the mid-1920s until the outbreak of war, Cunard's accessories defined her image – along with her particularly individual take on contemporary fashion.

By the end of the 1930s she had amassed a huge collection of African jewellery and artefacts that she kept at her house at Réanville, Normandy, first home of her 'Hours' printing press. As we have seen with the case of Charlotte Perriand, jewellery and accessories can allow us to form an allegiance with a cause or, indeed, a whole cultural movement. Cunard's collection of jewellery clearly expresses her solidarity with the black civil rights movement and a particular



Figure 2.7 Nancy Cunard photographed by Cecil Beaton for *The Book of Beauty*, 1930.
© The Cecil Beaton Studio Archive at Sotheby's.

kind of pan-Africanism, but it is also bound up with some deeper personal issues and anxieties.

Cunard left no complete autobiography, but in her books and articles about other people she often included autobiographical sketches. In her *Grand Man: Memories of Norman Douglas*, Cunard recalls how her interest in all things African came about as a young girl in the form of 'extraordinary dreams about black Africa – "The Dark Continent" – with Africans dancing and drumming around me, and I one of them, though still white, knowing, mysteriously enough, how to dance in their own manner' (1954, 140). Surviving portraits suggest that Cunard began to wear African bracelets from the early 1920s. A portrait of a cross-dressing Nancy Cunard by Eugene MacCown of 1923 shows her wearing a top hat, a waistcoat and trousers (minus jacket) and a large (probably ivory) bracelet on her left hand. In her friend Oskar Kokoschka's portrait dated 1924, Nancy is shown wearing a number of African bracelets on her left arm. It would

seem that from this point on until the later part of the 1930s Cunard and her bracelets were almost inseparable. In the portrait by John Banting of 1932, her lower arms are completely covered in ivory bracelets. She wears black gloves and her head is tightly bound in a black turban.

Cunard's close friendships with Parisian avant-garde artists and writers Tristan Tzara and Louis Aragon (both of whom had large collections of African art) developed her interest in this further. According to Daphne Fielding, 'Her passion for collecting ivories – not only bracelets but also carved gods, masks, ornaments and fetishes – sometimes took her to Southampton and once, in a shop in the suburbs, she came upon a large and unique collection of Africana which she promptly bought, identifying and classifying them in due course with the help of the British Museum' (1968, 89). This is also pointed out by Hugh Ford, who mentions in his introduction to the 1970 edition of Cunard's *Negro* anthology that she and Aragon 'haunted' shops in English and French seaside towns looking for 'sailor's stuff' – that is, African artefacts (Ford 1970, xv).

Interest in the 'primitive' arts of Africa became an important preoccupation of a number of avant-garde artists in the 1920s, following on from the earlier interests of the expressionists and the cubists. All early twentieth-century artists who were interested in the 'savage' art of the African colonies had a strong interest in its formal qualities. However, in surrealist circles interest in these artefacts was used to define a critical position with which to question the values of Western society. As Winkiel writes, 'For surrealists, African and Oceanic artifacts . . . represented the farthest limits of human sensibility. Through encounters with the primitive, surrealism sought freedom from oppressive social constraints and freedom to imagine and enact the future differently. The juxtaposition between civilized and savage contested European taxonomies and hierarchies of value' (2006, 512–13). It was precisely this juxtaposition that Nancy Cunard embodies in her choosing to wear her 'armfuls' of African ivories. In doing so she was engaging in a demonstration of a dialectical position, using personal adornment to draw out the historical tension between 'civilization' and 'savagery' and, as will be shown later, this took on a performative aspect.

Cunard used her knowledge of African artefacts to open up another attack on her mother's *modus operandi*:

Her ladyship's own snobbery is quite simple. If a thing is *done* she will, with a few negligible exceptions, do it too. And the last person she has talked to is generally right, providing he is *someone*. The British Museum seems to guarantee that

African art is art? Some dealers, too, are taking it up, so the thick old Congo ivories that she thinks are slave bangles are perhaps not so hideous after all though still very *strange*; one little diamond one would be better. (1931)

This encounter with African jewellery is like Picasso's first encounters with African art at the Trocadéro in Paris. He was at first disconcerted and, as Anne Anlin Cheng contends, 'the effect of the "primitive" object on the modern subject is not only one of stylistic influence but also one of onto-visual realignment' (2011: 21). In accessorizing her body in such a dramatic fashion, Cunard was creating and projecting a new understanding of herself and outwardly expressing her world view. Further, in indicating that her mother's taste in (and understanding of) jewellery is limited, she also makes an important point about scale. At this point in her life, the large African bracelets would be deployed in direct opposition to the values espoused by her mother and her circle.

Many of those who have been moved to write reminiscences of Nancy Cunard have drawn attention to the impact of her jewellery wearing on those in her company. The African bracelets were employed to gain attention and, whether intentionally or inadvertently, made lasting impressions on friends, acquaintances and lovers. One of Cunard's admirers, Anthony Hobson, recalled that conversations with her were 'punctuated by the rhythmic clash of the rise and fall of her African ivory bracelets . . . worn seven or eight on each arm' (Gordon 2007, 292). William Plomer gives us a vivid image of Nancy on the eve of her departure to support the Republican cause in Spain: 'And when she moved to put a cigarette or cup or glass to her lips, attention was inevitably attracted to her thin, fine boned arms, both encased in such a concatenation of wide, weighty armlets of rigid African ivory that the least movement produced a clacking sound, as of billiard balls or the casual cakewalk of a skeleton' (Fielding 1968, 121).

There is a similar scene in F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1926 novel *The Great Gatsby* where Catherine (Myrtle's sister, here at Tom and Myrtle's party) is described thus: 'When she moved about, there was an incessant clicking as innumerable pottery bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms' (Fitzgerald 2000, 32). The sound of jewellery can be an important aspect of wearing and, during the late 1920s when heavier statement jewellery was becoming popular, the impact of sound on those in the vicinity should not be underestimated. Fitzgerald's fictional portrait of Catherine is of a woman who has pushed the bounds of artificiality a little too far so that her appearance is odd and she has not quite captured the 'look' of the day. Her movements are accompanied by the clicking of her bracelets as if she were a giant insect.

Society author Daphne Fielding met Cunard at a party in 1926 at Keats's cottage in Hampstead. Nancy was 'made up in the manner of a Van Dongen model, swathed in tobacco-coloured silks, wearing what she called "armfuls of ivories" – African bracelets that clacked and clattered together like castanets with each of her graceful gestures' (Fielding 1968, xiii). Cunard had a passionate, argumentative nature that was often on public display, here in Parisian café society: 'Late night discussions concerning any infringement of justice were dangerous and sometimes, in full spate of argument, she would emphasize a point with a bombardment of bracelets' (79). The bracelets had other uses too. According to Louis Aragon, 'Nancy drank and became drunk often. Then she would become unpleasant, slapping her companion's face with the ivory or metal which clasped her from wrist to elbow' (Gordon 2007, 113). In the Epilogue to Henry Crowder's memoir of Nancy *As Wonderful As All That*, Robert L. Allen writes that Cunard 'could be physically abusive when drinking. A mutual friend, Janet Flanner, recalled seeing Crowder one day with a set of bruise marks. She asked him what happened: "Just bracelet work, Miss Janet", he replied sardonically' (Crowder, Speck and Robert 1987, 196). To extend the theme of jewellery and violence, the Marchesa Casati is said to have worn her lover Gabriele D'Annunzio's bruises on her neck and arms in place of her usual heavily extravagant jewels after a particularly torrid ride in a Venetian gondola (Ryersson and Yaccarino 2009, 120). All jewellery marks the body in some way, usually temporarily. That the effects of jewellery and jewellery wearing can evoke a sense of violence, coercion and enslavement is a theme that will be returned to later.

Cunard's propensity to violence may or may not have been exaggerated and we should not discount the fact that both Crowder and Aragon may have had their own reasons for attempting to diminish the reputation of their former lover. Nevertheless, her jewellery wearing was about performance and, in particular, the physical performance of her personality. For example, Cunard had upset Virginia Woolf (in all fairness probably not a very difficult task) with the combination of her forceful personality and physical appearance. Describing a party in the autumn of 1924 which did not seem to go well, Woolf writes, 'Nancy Cunard shouldn't have come – the anxious flibberti-gibbet with the startled honest eyes, and all the green stones hung about her', referring also to the fact that Cunard 'had no shadows, no secret places' and 'lived like a lizard in the sun' (Gordon 2007, 45). It is a vivid image and one that is all the more effective for the way that Cunard's accessories become part of the overriding

force of her personality. She refused to conform and the way she dressed was an expression of an independent spirit. Cunard certainly followed fashion, but was invariably photographed wearing something that was unusual or out of scale or, sometimes, out of context. Studio photographers, including Cecil Beaton, responded to this by choosing appropriate backgrounds against which she could be photographed. In Beaton's *The Book of Beauty* (1930), the accompanying text to the photograph of Nancy Cunard (Figure 2.7) refers to her as being 'like a robot woman in a German film' no doubt inspired by Brigitte Helm's performance in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (63). The assorted paraphernalia of Beaton's studio (mirror globes, shiny fabrics, geometric patterned backcloths) serve to strike up a relationship with the modern accessories being worn by some of the sitters. Before its appearance in *The Book of Beauty* the same photograph appeared on the cover of *The Sketch* for 25 September 1929 accompanied by the legend 'The Lady of the Brobdingnagian bangles', a Swiftian reference to their colossal size.

Beaton also includes a drawing of Cunard sitting on the floor surrounded by an assortment of bangles as a child sits surrounded by toys. Nevertheless, Cunard employed her image to maximum effect in the projection of her personal identity. When this photograph was taken, Cunard was on the verge of the great rupture with her family and London society. It was in her interests to make a statement to this social group that she was on the move and about to repudiate their values. In being portrayed as someone with a unique visual appearance (a modern but not conventional beauty) Cunard was making the most of her opportunities. As Graham Hughes puts it, 'Showing off may sometimes be an unlovable characteristic, and many people use jewels to advertise neither their wealth, nor their taste, but simply their character' (1963, 61). That character was, at this time, forming itself into something that would propel Cunard into confronting some of the most pressing issues of the 1930s – poverty, inequality, the rise of fascism and the persistence of colonialism. While both Lady Cunard and her daughter were photographed for *The Book of Beauty*, Nancy reports that when the book appeared, Lady Cunard consigned her own copy to the flames (Cunard 1931).

In the context of Cunard's support for the civil rights movement it hardly needs pointing out that this was a reaction on her part to the mixture of ignorance, exploitation, cynicism and sensationalism that haunted the whole colonial enterprise and formed popular western attitudes to so-called primitive cultures in the 1930s. Celebrity features in contemporary magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* reinforced these attitudes. In October 1935 the magazine published a

series of photographs of Cole Porter's well-publicized southern hemisphere cruise. Departing from New York on the *Franconia* he took in Singapore, New Zealand and South Africa among other destinations. Many of the photographs show Porter and his entourage posing with 'natives' from the countries visited. One of Porter's companions appears completely blacked up at a fancy dress party on board ship. He sports a feathered headdress and very long beads as a way of appearing to have 'gone native'. Ironically, the *Franconia* was operated by the Cunard Line which was no stranger to producing stereotypical images of black people. Integral to the advertisement for the *Franconia*'s Caribbean cruise published in *Harper's Bazaar* for January 1927 are two stereotypical wide eyed black cherubs climbing palm trees.

In her angry pamphlet, Cunard's praise for 'the African' is made clear:

He made music and unparalleled rhythm and some of the finest sculpture in the world. Nature gave him the best body amongst all the races. Yet he is a 'miserable savage' because there are no written records, no super-cities, no machines – but to prove the lack of these an insuperable loss, a sign of racial inferiority, you must attack the root of all things and see where – if anywhere – lies truth. There are many truths. (1931)

As early as 1920 Bloomsbury artist and critic Roger Fry, having visited the exhibition of 'Negro Sculpture' at the Chelsea Book Club, felt moved to write in the pages of the *Athenaeum* that the African representations of the human form that he saw there were 'great sculpture – greater, I think, than anything we produced even in the Middle Ages' (Fry 1981, 71). For Fry, the greatness of these works lay in their 'complete freedom' and their formal qualities derived from the interplay of cylinders, planes and masses (71). In these pieces, Fry saw formal greatness but not a great culture. To achieve this, he argues, requires 'the power of conscious critical appreciation and comparison' something that, for him, was lacking in black African societies (72–3). In contrast, Nancy Cunard's view was that African art required no cadre of critics, commentators or institutions to validate its cultural achievements. Her sensibilities towards the culture were brought about through close personal contact with the objects produced by African culture – through wearing African jewellery and collecting African sculpture she was attempting to feel its life and its power as intimately as possible in an almost visceral way.

Cunard was close to the surrealists and their anti-colonialism sought to emphasize that African objects should not be collected in the manner of

trophies but as aids to exploring the unconscious. Some of this was to be explored in exhibits shown by Louis Aragon at the *Exposition Anti-impérialiste* held at the same time, but in opposition to the official *Exposition Coloniale* in Paris in 1931. Palermo notes that Aragon's exhibit, which included 'art nègre, océanien et peau-rouge' (negro, oceanic and red skin art) were intended to draw attention to the destruction of these objects by colonialist missionaries, while using the general labels 'fétiches' and 'art sauvage' to describe them (Palermo 2009). Although the exhibits chosen by Aragon constituted a political act, they also had other resonances central to the ideas of surrealism. For Cunard, the collecting of such objects probably also had a deeper personal meaning. According to David Bate, 'for Freud, "The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it". This object in psychoanalysis is the (love) object of desire' (2004, 194). This may have some profound implications for Cunard's attraction to the African bracelets because, if a Freudian account is contemplated, they can serve either as 'props' (standing in for someone or something held dear in childhood) or as a way of developing the subject's ego through identification with other people or, indeed, an 'other'.

1934 saw the publication of Cunard's anthology *Negro* on which she worked with the assistance of Raymond Michelet from 1931 to 1933. Its 854 pages contain a plethora of writings about the black experience from the point of view of politics, society and culture. The contributions (from black and white authors) are drawn from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds (America, Africa and Europe) and constitute a mixture of testament, polemic, analysis, history and poetics. Cunard contributed seven major pieces of writing, including the Foreword, in which she describes Africa as 'a continent in the iron grip of its several imperialist oppressors' (1934, iv). This sets the tone for the rest of the book, which was clearly intended to be a call to arms as much as a literary survey. The reception of this still controversial anthology of literary and political works has been thoroughly researched by Tory Young (2000) and Laura Winkiel (2006). Of most significance to the study of Nancy Cunard's jewellery, however, is the anthology's section devoted to *Negro Sculpture and Ethnology*.

Masks, figures and jewellery from museums of ethnography (notably the Trocadéro in Paris and the Tervueren Museum in Brussels) are illustrated alongside examples from a number of private collections, including Cunard's own, photographed by 'Rolf Ubach' (actually the surrealist photographer Raoul Ubac). Published objects from her collection included an Ashanti doll, Zulu beaded anklets and a beaded girdle as well as a selection of ivory bracelets



Figure 2.8 A selection of Nancy Cunard's African bracelets from her *Negro* anthology, 1934. Photograph by Raoul Ubac. © The British Library Board (shelfmark L.R.41.b.12). © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016. Image used with kind permission of the Literary Estate of Nancy Cunard.

(Figure 2.8). Ubac's images, no doubt produced under the direction of Cunard herself, are redolent of order and they are arranged in a way that suggests that some kind of taxonomic activity is taking place. At Cunard's home in Réanville, the bracelets were arranged systematically on a bespoke wooden frame where different sizes and weights were loosely grouped together, perhaps for ease of access or preference in wearing. Jacques-André Boiffard photographed this arrangement in the 1930s (Frioux-Salgas 2014, 25). The size, weight and sheer

number of the assorted bracelets meant that Cunard would have had no use for a conventional jewellery box.

In *Negro* Cunard's familiarity with colonial ethnographic texts is made clear. Underneath the photograph of her collection of ivory bracelets is a short section of text from George Basden's 1921 work *Among the Ibos of Nigeria* in which he observes:

Amongst the Ibo [Igbo] people in Nigeria the most valuable and the most prized of all adornments are the anklets and bracelets of ivory. These can only be worn by rich women or by such as are high rank . . . Young women during their course in *nkpu* (ceremonies that take place after puberty during the pre-marriage period) sometimes wear ivory bracelets right up the arm, but this is quite a temporary arrangement. (Cunard 1934, 730)

The author goes on to say that the ivory bracelets are so precious that nothing can induce older women to part with them. It is possible that Cunard may have been inspired by Basden's text and by some of the photographs of anklets and the Igbo women themselves. One particular image, uncomfortable to look at in postcolonial times, nevertheless shows how the ivory bracelets and other items of jewellery were worn on the arms, around the neck and the legs of the women (Figure 2.9).

Given Cunard's praise for African culture and her recognition that it cannot be understood in terms of a single truth about societies or civilizations, she would no doubt have been appalled by Basden's preface, in which he asserts that 'the black man himself does not know his own mind. He does the most extraordinary things, and cannot explain why he does them. He is not controlled by logic: he is the victim of circumstance, and his policy is very largely one of drift' adding that 'men constantly act contrary to their better judgment, and, at times, even wrongly, because they firmly believe they have no alternative' (Basden 1921, 9–10). In the aftermath of the First World War, Cunard would no doubt have recognized the absurd irony of Basden's latter claim.

Here it is worth considering the nature of the bracelets that Cunard so avidly collected and wore so brilliantly. In her account of African bracelets, Anne van Cutsem notes that 'Bracelets are an important document about people who do not have a written history' and in relation to their form 'the unifying circle maintains the cohesion between body and soul' (2002, 7). This underlines the fact that the unknown but highly skilled makers were, of course, entirely capable of expressing themselves through symbolic forms. Cunard wore them, to some

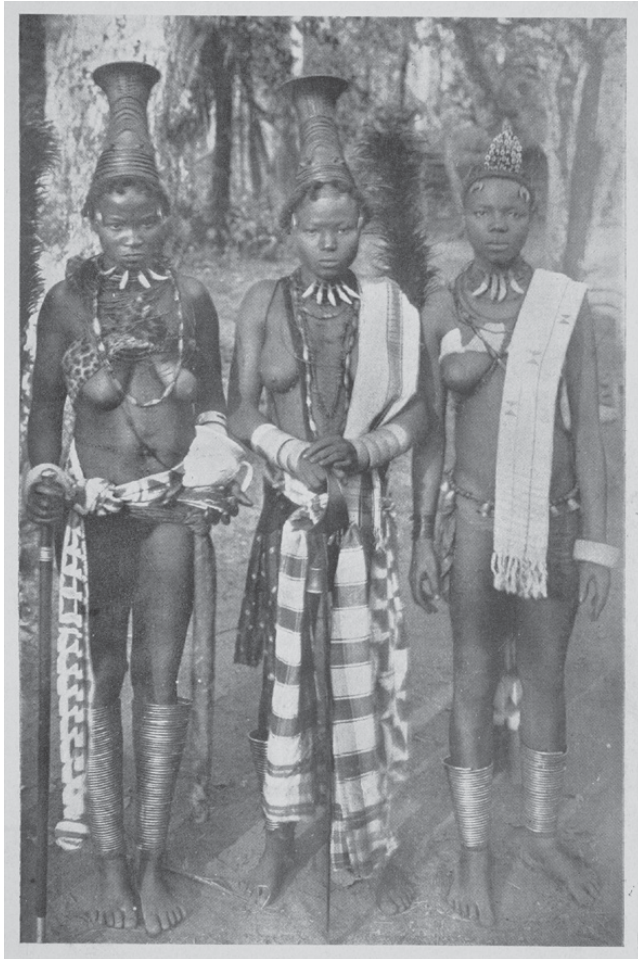


Figure 2.9 Plate from George Basden's 1921 work *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*.

extent, as 'fashion', but as a form of adornment that drew attention to the skill, craftsmanship and form-giving capabilities of their makers. Cunard's collection contained examples of many different types of bracelet. Some of them were plain bands and others were decorated with incised lines, geometric patterns or dots.

The African bracelets so admired by Cunard were, ironically, the products of an exploitative trade well before this was recognized as such in more recent times. The relationship between 'the African' and the elephant, the pursuance and exploitation of which was an important aspect of African culture was, as David H. Shayt notes, one of the incentives for the European colonization of Africa (Shayt 1992, 371). The transformation of ivory into (among other things)

fans, shoe horns, cutlery handles, billiard balls and piano keys meant that ivory reached a strange level of ubiquity in western society by the end of the nineteenth century. Nancy Cunard wore ivories that had a direct connection to the elephant itself, since the tapered shape of the tusk lent itself to the production of bracelets of different diameters. The material is noted for its whiteness, but in contact with the oils of the skin and with repeated application of palm oil, its colouring develops, eventually, towards a deep amber and sometimes red colour. Cunard's bracelets were probably already in an advanced state of colouration when she acquired them, since to keep ivory white requires assiduous attention. She did, however, comment on their colouring when noting the 'generously rich scale of tones in African wood and ivory, so vibrant when seen at close range' (Cunard 1969, 151–2).

Cunard knew of the symbolic power that these objects held (as ivory) and was also aware of how they were used in relationships. Many were worn by men and women. Some were revered rather than worn. Others were deliberately meant to be too heavy to allow the wearer to perform manual tasks, thus indicating an elevated status. Most ivory bracelets were, however, used to indicate if not an aristocratic position then at the very least an important one. Some bracelets were worn to indicate ownership – that is, that someone was 'owned' in marriage – or of favoured status. Cunard was not, of course, ignorant of these meanings, but used the objects to reinforce her statements about colonialism and pan-Africanism and, consciously or not, employed the bracelets as a form of demonstrating belonging. According to van Cutsem, the Igbo in Onitsha, where the ivory bracelets are used to indicate social rank, 'knock their bracelets together' as a form of greeting (2002, 17). Phillip L. Ravenhill says that among the Baule (Côte d'Ivoire) the tradition is to wear a number of bracelets on each arm even during work so that: 'Worn constantly, the bracelets would rub and bang together until the connecting surfaces fit perfectly against each other; each downward stroke of the pestle pounding the yams in the mortar would be accompanied by the rhythmic clack of the bracelets' (1992, 118). This clearly recalls Cunard's exploitation of the sound of the ivory bracelets herself. She used this to indicate *opposition* to conventional modes of western adornment where concentration is on the ocular rather than the haptic or aural.

The wearing of ivories in Africa is also reported as causing a considerable amount of discomfort. Herbert M. Cole observed that among the Igbo 'these ornaments, being heavy and cumbersome, cause considerable discomfort; yet it has long been recognized that the degree of physical discomfort is sometimes

inverse to the level of status in African personal decoration' (1992, 214). This raises an intriguing question about Cunard. Did she wear these bracelets as a way of identifying herself with an African, rather than an English, aristocracy?

Cunard's own adoption of the African jewellery is not without its points of controversy. Unlike other Western women, Cunard chose to wear actual African jewellery, not jewellery that had been made in the West to an African design or under African influence. In doing this she was seeking authenticity as well as solidarity with the African cause. As pointed out already, she was militantly anticolonial (as were her surrealist friends) and regarded African culture as having equal status. Yet she was happy to wear these bracelets out of context and in ways that contrasted with her Western style of dress. Their provenance (and also their materiality, much less of an issue in the 1930s) was seemingly not problematic to Cunard who avidly collected these pieces. Either a spirit of irony was at work here or she wanted (as is most likely) to amplify the shock that her contemporaries felt about her allegiances. In a letter to Clyde Robinson in 1961, Cunard refers to her relationship with Africa in the following way: 'As for wishing for some of it [blood] to be Coloured, no; that's beyond me. That, somehow, I have NOT got in me – not the American part of it. But the AFRICAN part, ah, that is my ego, my soul' (Ford 1970, xii). This is an interesting take on the idea of her 'Africanness' because, for a brief time in the early 1930s, Cunard's self-identification with black Africa took a strange turn – and one in which her jewellery collection played a major part.

As she embarked on the preliminary work for her *Negro* anthology, it would seem that Cunard wanted to perform her jewellery in a way that expressed the themes of slavery and bondage. In the photographic sessions undertaken with the British photographer Barbara Ker-Seymer, Cunard wears quite different jewellery. The signature heavy bracelets are gone and are replaced by tightly coiled strings of coloured beads around her arm and neck. These adornments are not meant to move and signify restriction, constriction and perhaps bondage and slavery. The same effect would not have been achieved with the larger pieces. Here they are tightly wound around and are in stark contrast to her 'performance' of the African ivory bangles where, in conversation and disputation with friends and adversaries, they slide up and down the arm and create their own audible presence. Is Cunard empathizing with the fate of African slaves or lynched Southern blacks or is she, a white woman, trivializing their experience? Why did she want to have herself photographed in this way? In some of the images Cunard appears black due to the reversal of the tones in some of Ker-Seymer's

solarized images. In others she appears lost, detached, vulnerable and afraid or perhaps, as Jane Marcus has suggested, on the edge of orgasm (Marcus 2004, 134; see also Figure 2.10). Indeed, in her recollections of her youthful dreams of Africa, Cunard says that ‘everything was full of movement in these dreams; it was that which enabled me to escape in the end, going further, even further! And all of it was a mixture of apprehension that sometimes turned into joy, and even rapture’ (1954, 140). This is what makes Cunard’s desire to show herself as if she were suffering pain so interesting. In using her beaded jewellery to increase the impact of her impersonation of the black African (such as attempting to create the impression of an elongated neck or shackled arm) she also makes an uncomfortable encounter between Western BDSM practices and practices of the slave trade. Her beads appear to be choking her and this self-abnegation can either be read as an expression of solidarity with those who suffered because



Figure 2.10 Nancy Cunard photographed by Barbara Ker-Seymer, 1930. Image used with kind permission of the Literary Estate of Nancy Cunard. © Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

of their race or as an inappropriate dalliance. Either way, they are disturbingly haunting images.

Marcus also refers to Cunard using fashion to express ideas of bondage: 'even her leg warmers – this is the early 30s – are a form of chic shackles. She almost always kept her head bound – in hats and scarves, veils and close bands or ribbons' (2004, 133). These photographs were private and taken by an avowedly experimental photographer, so the nature of the photo session must be considered in that light. The fact that Cunard felt at ease enough to perform or be directed in these poses is worth noting. Nevertheless, Marcus says that although these photographs were made for Cunard's own pleasure, they still represent 'her unshakable commitment to the politics of protest against racism' (2004, 134).

In an effort to publicize some of the notated musical compositions of her lover Henry Crowder (some of them musical settings of poems by Cunard, Ezra Pound and others) Cunard collected them together in the volume *Henry-Music*, published by the Hours Press in 1930. The front and reverse covers were designed by Man Ray and contain images of her collection of African jewellery and artefacts (more idiosyncratically arranged than in Ubac's later photograph for *Negro*) as well as a picture of Crowder himself (Figure 2.11). Nancy is in attendance, but only in the form of her fully laden braceleted arms. Cunard confirms that the African artefacts were from her own collection, or from 'a famous private collection' as she puts it in her Hours Press booklet (1930, 7). She is full of praise for Man Ray's front and back covers for the volume: 'His vision in taking and placing and, as it were, in "mating" various objects, was often supreme. I think the many African ivory bracelets of considerable age, and the other pieces so beautifully set together by him on the two covers of Henry-Music are another proof of this' (Cunard 1969, 151). She was later to describe the image in the following way: 'At the back of Henry's fine full face on the front cover is what looks like a sort of high collar – in reality my arms laden entirely with dozens of thin, disc-like old ivory bracelets from West Africa' (151).

Marcus's interpretation of this act focuses on the element of control exerted through Cunard's absence: 'She stands behind her man in a form of simultaneous effacement and exhibitionism, saying: He is mine – but I'm not there' (1995, 49). Cunard is represented solely by her jewellery. These pieces were such a strong part of her identity that they could stand in for her. They could also suggest a form of control through representing a weight on Crowder's shoulders. In surviving accounts, there are strong suggestions that Cunard tried to exert too

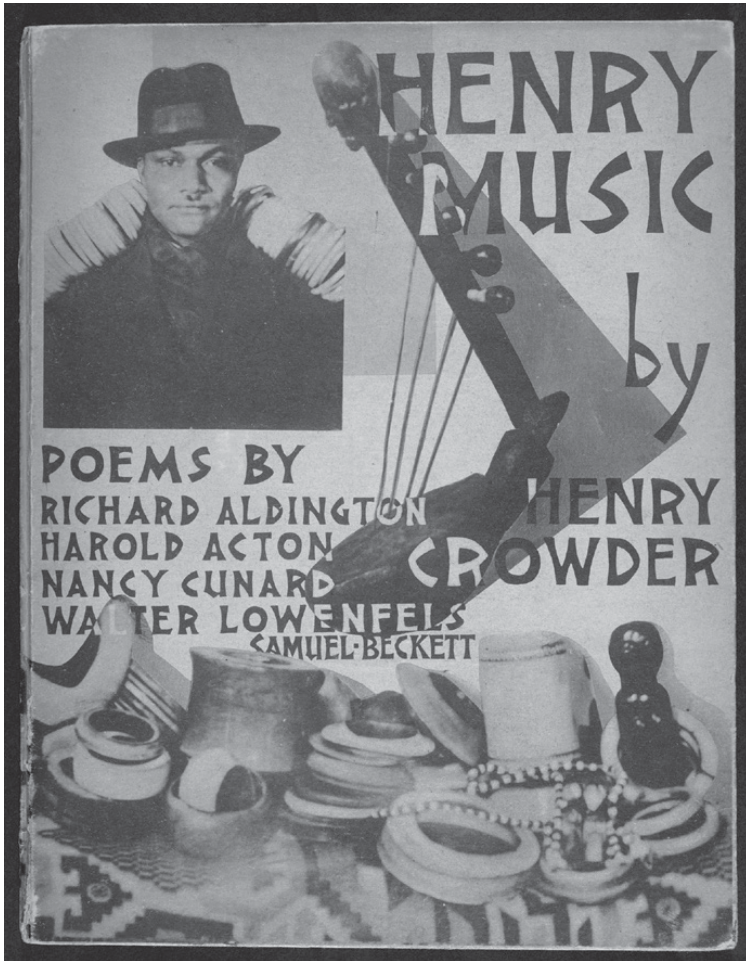


Figure 2.11 Front cover of Henry Crowder's *Henry Music*, 1930. Design and photography by Man Ray. © The British Library Board (shelfmark H.2012). © Man Ray Trust/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016. Image used with kind permission of the Literary Estate of Nancy Cunard.

much control over Crowder. Jane Stevenson reports that author and aesthete Harold Acton, a contributor to *Henry-Music*, 'once overheard Nancy Cunard . . . exhorting her lover Henry Crowder to "be more African". "But I ain't African", he protested, with remarkable restraint. "I'm American"' (2008, 116). The cover of *Henry-Music* seems to be trying very hard to form in the mind an image of Africa (rather than the American South) as the crucible in which Crowder's jazz sensibilities were formed. Cunard's poem *Equatorial Way*, set to music by

Crowder in the book, is an indication of this. In her memoir *These Were the Hours*, Cunard readily admits that this piece was ‘merely dictated by the romantic thought of the black man’s return to the “Dark Continent”’ (1969, 150).

Leininger-Miller writes of the experience of African-American painter Palmer Hayden, who worked in Paris in the 1920s and early 1930s. Like Crowder, he felt substantially more American than African. He is quoted as saying ‘I never had any desire to paint anything about Africa. I painted what Negroes, colored people, us Americans do . . . we’re a brand new race, raised and manufactured in the U.S’ (Leininger-Miller 2001, 102). Hayden produced a number of watercolours of African dancers (whom he had seen performing at the 1931 *Exposition coloniale*) which appropriate stereotypical images of Africans and their costume – including jewellery and masks. For Leininger-Miller, although these images ‘are not excessively offensive, but rather have a sense of naïveté about them’ they point to the problem of to what extent African American culture had ‘internalized white perceptions’ (2001, 100). The situation whereby Nancy Cunard appropriated the real objects of African culture and displayed and performed them publicly points to a yearning on her part for something that she had never directly experienced (Cunard only ever visited the northern part of Africa) and a melancholy desire, ultimately futile, to approach a state of Africanness that can bring her closer to the oppression experienced by the captive. This spirit lingers in the photographs of Cunard by Ker-Seymer.

For the onlooker, this process of appropriation would have set up other resonances. As has been pointed out in relation to Josephine Baker’s performance in the 1927 film *La Sirène des tropiques*, ‘Baker performs the same dance in the tropics and in Paris: however, the change in locale affords it a different meaning, one specific to each context. In the tropics, the dance connotes the savage, while in Paris it is understood to be “modern”’ (Murphy, Ezra and Fursdick 2014, 272). Thus the change of physical context of these objects changes the meaning of Cunard’s African jewellery from that of an authentic cultural object to one that expresses a modern(ist) sensibility. The objects of adornment are, therefore, made new by their contact with modern culture. Cunard specifically deploys her African bracelets in this new context in order to draw attention to them as critical jewellery objects.

Although photographed wearing a large ivory bracelet in Madrid in 1936 (Ford 1970), Nancy had left her bracelets behind when she left France to support the Republican cause in Spain. Nevertheless, Sylvia Warner mentions them as being worn during the Second World War in 1942 or 1943 (Gordon 2007, 264).

But the vast majority of Cunard's African bracelets did not survive the second war. Her house at Réanville was ransacked by locals and used as a billet by the occupying German forces. On her first visit back to the house in March 1945, Cunard discovered:

Of the entire collection of African and other primitive sculpture not one single piece remained, and most of the African ivory bracelets had vanished along with the trunk they were in. Georgette [the local innkeeper's wife and friend of Cunard] had picked up some of them in the fields, mostly those thin, dislike ones that Man Ray had photographed for *Henry-Music*. (1969, 203)

Cunard continued to wear African jewellery after the war, but not as often and certainly not in the same extravagant manner. An exception is the photograph taken by Hugh Ford of Cunard flamboyantly 'performing' some of her bracelets at her second French house for possibly the last time in 1963 (Ford 1970). Two years later she was dead. A small collection of pieces were exhibited alongside some of Cunard's African sculptures at the exhibition '*L'Atlantique noir*' de Nancy Cunard, held at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, in 2014. This exhibition was dedicated to her struggle for black civil rights and to the development of the *Negro* anthology. The impact of placing some of Cunard's personal effects in close proximity to the examples of her literary output and political activism served to show that the ivories were, in fact, to be considered as much more than memorializing objects. With this display it became possible to consider her jewellery in a completely new light – as objects about which we remain ambivalent, yet real objects of great significance that helped to define Cunard's personality and career while embodying the political struggles and clashes of cultures and ideologies of the first half of the twentieth century. This may seem an exaggerated claim for a collection of jewellery, but the vitality with which these objects were worn and the regularity with which they literally clashed together in the cause of passionate argument render them important accessories to a remarkable period of political and cultural activity.

Modernism and Modernity

It is as if one were having one of those dreams provoked by an empty stomach: a tiny ball rolls toward you from very far away, expands into a close-up and finally roars right over you. You can neither stop it or escape it, but lie there chained, a helpless little doll swept away by the giant colossus in whose ambit it expires. Flight is impossible. (Kracauer 1995, 332)

Writing in 1924, and with this vivid image, German sociologist and critic Siegfried Kracauer was attempting to portray the unstoppable momentum of change that increasingly characterized the mass culture of the modern world. Here, unsurprisingly for a critic of the medium, he is indebted to images from film (the helpless victim tied to the railway line, the inevitability of the on-rushing colossus, the close-up shot) to help him make his point. Ultimately, Kracauer's critique of mass culture set out to expose the reliance for culture on the 'distraction industries' (film, advertising, popular shows) on the part of the working populace, expressed powerfully in his analysis of The Tiller Girls in his essay 'The Mass Ornament' of 1927. But in this extract he is writing of 'Boredom' which has become 'the only proper occupation, since it provides a kind of guarantee that one is, so to speak, still in control of one's existence' (Kracauer 1995, 334).

For a cultural critic like Kracauer, the forces of modernity were shackled to those of capitalism, leading to an inexorable, almost inescapable sense of obligation to engage in the products and processes of consumption. In the case of The Tiller Girls, the choreographed and carefully recorded synchronous movements destroy any individuality they may possess. They become 'indissoluble girl clusters whose movements are demonstrations of mathematics' (Kracauer 1995, 76). The forces of modernity, Kracauer seems to be arguing, are producing a different kind of visual culture – one in which the technology of production is playing a crucial role in forming a new aesthetic of modern

life. This is characterized, among other things, by the rapidity with which new ideas are produced, absorbed, rejected and surpassed. Fashion and jewellery can be seen as clear exponents of this tendency, but only part of this involves consideration of new stylistic approaches to adornment. Kracauer's idea that the 'Mass Ornament' (on film and on stage) was somehow a new way of thinking about ornament for the mechanical age is interesting, because his contention was that, 'The ornament, detached from its bearers, must be understood *rationally*. It consists of lines and circles like those found in textbooks on Euclidean geometry, and also incorporates the elementary components of physics, such as waves and spirals. Both the proliferations of organic forms and the emanations of spiritual life remain excluded' (Kracauer 1995, 77–8). So the mechanical age produces a 'rational' ornament in accord with the mass culture of the day. Unlike the lavish abstractions of late nineteenth-century ornament, which often sought to embody a spiritual or pseudomystical view of nature, mass ornament is produced by mechanical means for widespread consumption. Whether interpreted through image or object, this is a clear attempt to identify a cultural shift in thinking about ornament and decoration under the influence of the forces of modernity.

For fashion historian Elizabeth Wilson, modernity 'refers to things both intangible and undeniably material: the atmosphere and culture of a whole epoch, its smell, its sounds, its rhythm, while also pointing out that it is 'not defined by Reason, but by speed, mobility and mutability' (2005, 9). The combined forces of change and novelty brought about a good part of that mutability. We can see this very clearly in the variety of costume jewellery that became popular in the 1920s and 1930s as well as in the ranges of 'high jewellery' produced by the major houses for a smaller, more exclusive market. However, any discussion of the relationship between modernity and modernism in jewellery must also be considered against the backdrop of attitudes to adornment, ornament and decoration within the wider modern movement.

Ornament and modern design

Due to its nature as adornment, jewellery was largely excluded from the emerging narratives of modernism because for many modernists it had no purpose beyond the embellishment of a surface or a distraction from the pure form of the body. It could not, by default, play any major role in the development of the modern aesthetic because this had its origins in the new architecture and

design responding to new conditions of material science, sociology, culture and politics. Viennese architect Adolf Loos's infamous but highly influential essay of 1908 'Ornament and Crime', in which ornament was denounced as a primitive urge and the domain solely of the criminal or the 'degenerate', was a plea for the banishment of ornament from modern life on aesthetic, cultural and economic grounds (Loos 1971). His call for the abandonment of ornament created some of the cultural conditions for the growth of the modern movement in central Europe and beyond after the First World War and fuelled the debate about the place of decoration in modern design. This culminated in the publication of numerous polemics against ornament in the interwar period typified by Le Corbusier's *The Decorative Art of Today*, his response to the 1925 Paris *Exposition des art décoratifs* first published in the same year. Not only does he name-check Loos and paraphrase the latter by asserting that 'the more cultivated a people becomes, the more decoration disappears', Corbusier roundly attacks decoration as 'baubles, charming entertainment for a savage' (1987, 85).

Ideas about the new architecture were at the forefront of attempts to fundamentally question adornment and ornament. For example, in his 1924 essay 'Towards a Plastic Architecture', De Stijl painter and architect Theo van Doesburg described the new architecture variously as 'elemental', 'economic', 'functional' and 'anti-decorative' (van Doesburg 1971). Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Phillip Johnson's Museum of Modern Art exhibition (and book) *The International Style* (1932) contained a similar section that called directly for 'the avoidance of applied decoration'. In short, we would most likely be searching in vain for any endorsement of the impulse to adorn, so central to the practice of making and wearing jewellery, among the architects of the heroic period of modern architecture. The polemics relating to the primacy of function, rationality, purity of form and standardization of production dominated the discourse of architectural modernism in the interwar years and it must not be forgotten that this discourse often formed the basis for discussions in other areas of the visual arts.

In his seminal book *Towards a New Architecture*, first published in 1923, Le Corbusier writes uncompromisingly, 'Decoration is of a sensorial and elementary order, as is color, and is suited to simple races, peasants and savages . . . The peasant loves ornament and decorates his walls. The civilized man wears a well-cut suit and is the owner of easel pictures and books' (1989, 143). Nevertheless, Flora Samuel has commented how Le Corbusier later lamented the lack of colour and ornament in men's dress after Second World War, indicating a significant

shift in his thinking (Samuel 2004). But here in 1923, at the heart of his text lies the kind of statement that was intended to identify culture and progress with the rejection of ornamentation in the tradition of Loos: 'Decoration is the essential overplus, the quantum of the peasant; and proportion is the essential overplus, the quantum of the cultivated man' (Le Corbusier 1989, 143).

Mark Wigley identifies in the writings of Le Corbusier, Siegfried Giedion and other modernists a strong desire to strip away the surfaces of architecture, to remove ornament and to purify it of decorative elements. For Giedion, the very idea of 'fashion' represented a 'shield' of surface appearances, sometimes consisting (in an architectural sense) not only of old clothes covering new structures, but also new clothes covering old structures (Wigley 1995). For Giedion, both tendencies were equally regrettable. Wigley also contends that for modernist architects like Marcel Breuer 'the modern movement is the architectural equivalent of the masculine resistance to fashion' (1995, 119). Writing in the *Architectural Review* for April 1935, Breuer stressed that the clarity of modern architecture was the result of the 'renunciation of all irrational forms' and that we have no use for beauty in the form of a foreign body, or ornament' (1935, 135–6). These comments were not aimed at jewellery per se but they set the tone for considerations of adornment in general and a strong echo of Flügel's 'great masculine renunciation' can be heard here (see Chapter 1).

Arguments for and against ornament and decoration were to be regularly played out in the arts and design magazines across Europe in the interwar period. For example, monthly Parisian magazine *Art et décoration* devoted considerable space from April to November 1933 to a survey entitled 'Evolution ou mort de l'ornement?' ('Evolution or Death of Ornament?'). This survey, which included responses from prominent designers, aesthetes, critics and industrialists, was intended to assess the state of ornament in modern design, whether it was necessary economically, aesthetically or, indeed, psychologically. A further discussion took place on whether there would ever be a return to ornament and what role this might play in the formation of a French national identity. Writer and critic Fabien Sollar summarized the views submitted to the journal during the course of the survey. In his summary, he cites a number of well-known French artists, designers and art commentators who had either predicted the death or rebirth of ornament. Most of the commentary addresses architecture and furniture and the contribution of jeweller Raymond Templier was to emphasize that 'even goldsmithing and jewellery are governed by the new architectural aesthetic' (Sollar 1933, ii). It was a common argument advanced

by those jewellers influenced by the modern movement in design that in the composition of modern jewellery, it was best to be guided by architectural or mathematical principles and that this approach helped not only to render pieces modern but also placed them on the same intellectual footing as architecture. In a similar way, silversmith Jean Puiforcat was clearly able to demonstrate, and promote, his use of the golden section and other mathematical techniques in the design and manufacturing of his modern silverware (Bliss 2003). Naturally, not all those who submitted responses to the *Art et décoration* survey were keen to follow this line, as the views of Waldemar George reported by Sollar show: 'art has not evolved towards simplicity; it has evolved towards a form of machine expression . . . it is the brutal and spontaneous expression of a culture of which the factory is the centre of attraction' (Sollar 1933, i). Nevertheless, courting the influence of architecture was one way in which those involved in the 'minor arts' could gain respect for their craft within modernism. As Nancy Troy has pointed out: 'modernist discourse has consistently maintained a distinction between high art and the decorative arts, embracing the former while keeping the latter at a distance . . . One of the reasons for this is the idea of constraint within a practice – whether commercial, technical or, indeed, artistic' (1991, 1).

Parisian jewellery houses of the 1920s and 1930s gained a relatively large amount of attention in the art and design periodicals of the day because of their conscious attempts to have their work taken seriously outside of the traditional confines of the jewellery trade. This is particularly the case with those firms who were sympathetic to the modernist cause. Alliances with critics, editors, organizers of exhibitions and the employment of photographers, interior designers, artists and even poets in the service of promoting, displaying and eulogizing their products served to put jewellery in an unlikely position at the forefront of contemporary design in Paris. For a short time, the products of these studios and workshops produced a revolution in jewellery design that was to spread internationally. By 1930 it became possible to buy a piece from a modern jeweller that had attained a status beyond that of an objet d'art, towards a piece of design that was capable of being compared aesthetically, technically and philosophically with modern paintings, buildings or furniture. Furthermore, these pieces were able to take their place alongside the contingent aspects of contemporary fashion, holding their own as accessories alongside the products of the fashion houses.

Although the world of jewellery and jewellers perpetuated itself (then as now) on the basis of its connection with 'eternal' values (both cultural and material),

these values – allied to current trends in modern design – were played upon to create a situation where jewellery could be seen to almost divorce itself from fashion. Being allied with an ‘architectural’ aesthetic no doubt helped this idea to be perpetuated. Yet, writing of interwar fashion, Valerie Steele notes that ‘the new fashions in dress were not based on functionalism or common sense any more than avant-garde art was “functional”’ and this is key to understanding the relationship between fashion and modernism. Steele also writes that ‘like the new painting, the new music, and the new literature, fashion was undergoing an internal stylistic revolution. The so-called cross-fertilization between fashion and art, however, has mostly been one-way’ (1998: 234). Jewellery’s relationship with fashion is crucial, but it is interesting to consider whether the one-way traffic described by Steele also applies to jewellery. There are countless examples of jewellery that often slavishly adapt a modernist language of form in order to appeal to a fashionable sense of being modern. But, as we have seen with the case of Nancy Cunard, to be modern also means to be able to express an individuality that is at odds with contemporary mores. In her case, recontextualizing African jewellery as a language of adornment as critique also created a modernist language of accessorizing much closer to the avant-gardist spirit of cubism than that of ‘modernistic’ fashion. The choice of what to wear and how and when to wear it is a strategy that can bring to the fore both the individual’s personality and their *raison d’être*. If it is difficult to see any meaningful two-way traffic between the worlds of fashion and art, what follows here aims to suggest that in the case of jewellery the aesthetic, material and conceptual interests of jewellery artists and designers were often of equal cultural significance and, in the case of certain pieces of jewellery, sometimes at the forefront of avant-garde practice.

Modernism and French jewellery

In France, jewellers of the modern generation became increasingly confident in the direction of their work as the 1920s advanced. The 1925 exhibition gave a significant impetus to the development of new trends in jewellery through its strong displays of contemporary work (see Chapter 5). Furthermore, the markets for jewellery of all kinds were becoming very successful for both the major and minor firms. Although this boom was to end badly for many companies and their workers after 1929 and into the early 1930s, the economic strength of the jewellery trade in 1920s France and elsewhere should not be underestimated in

relation to the development of new ideas. Here, we are concerned with the avant-garde and concepts associated with modernism, but it must not be forgotten that the so-called democratization of fashion in the 1920s had an impact on the demand for both middle and luxury market items. As has been noted elsewhere in this book, at its height in the mid-1920s, the French jewellery industry was making a considerable contribution to the French economy, particularly in export markets. A study published in 1929 provides statistical evidence for this, along with the assertion that:

With the progress and improvement of social conditions . . . goldsmithing and jewellery have become more and more prevalent in all classes of society. To satisfy an increasing consumption, extremely varied in its needs, the jewellers and goldsmiths were able to create styles appropriate to the demand of the clientele, increasingly moving towards specialization in each genre, a condition which was, moreover, indispensable to an important production. (Lanllier 1929, 21)

The 'specialization' referred to by Lanllier meant that from the top to the bottom of the trade, firms were trying to reach consumers not just through pricing, but through considerations of materials and, often, new design languages. Pioneer modernist jewellers such as Gérard Sandoz had very clear ideas about how luxury items such as jewellery should be considered in relation to modern design. Writing provocatively in *La Renaissance de l'Art Français et des Industries de Luxe* in August 1929, Sandoz declares: 'Today, a piece of jewelry, inspired directly by our contemporary aesthetic, must be simple, severe and constructed without superfluous ornament. Provided its technique and manufacture are beyond reproach, a well-designed piece of jewelry costing two hundred francs is as beautiful as an equally well-designed one costing two millions' (Raulet 1985, 173). Furthermore, he is keen to question the use of precious materials for their own sake: 'There are very fine pieces of jewelry made simply of gold, and horrors that are smothered in diamonds. Similarly, there are exquisite pieces in which brilliants are cleverly distributed, and rubbish that looks like gold vermicelli. Let us have no preconceptions as to materials' (173). So for Sandoz design becomes the pre-eminent aspect of contemporary jewellery. As major contributors to the luxury industries, jewellers were keen to reserve their right to use all the weapons in their armoury when designing and making – so long as materials were used appropriately and in sympathy with the contemporary spirit.

Jean Fouquet was the compiler of an important visual record of French interwar jewellery design which formed part of a series of nineteen volumes

on *L'art internationale d'aujourd'hui* (International Art of Today) published by Parisian art editor Charles Moreau. Each volume was published as a primer on a subject of interest in modern art and design by a different author and included a short introductory essay followed by around fifty pages of carefully selected illustrations. Authors included French designers who were devoted to the cause of modernism, including Robert Mallet-Stevens, André Lurçat, Pierre Chareau, René Herbst and Sonia Delaunay. Indeed, the collected volumes have been dubbed a manifesto of interwar modernism covering such subjects as modern tendencies in architecture, interiors, furniture, garden design, objets d'art, metalwork, sculpture, the design of shops, advertising, carpets and textiles (Les arts décoratifs 2014). The jewellers Jean Fouquet and Gérard Sandoz prepared two of the volumes. Interestingly, the latter's volume (number 14) was on the subject of *objets usuel* (everyday objects). An intriguingly titled volume 18 *La forme sans ornement* (plain objects) is listed as being prepared by jeweller Raymond Templier. The title alone suggests that the contents would be so arranged as to promote the modernist (or indeed Purist) doctrine of functional forms similar to the Corbusian notion of the *objet type*.

Produced in 1931, Fouquet's volume *Bijoux et Orfèvrerie* (number 16 in the series) contains a collection of high quality photographs of works by a small number of well-established modern jewellers and their protégés from the 1920s and, most especially, since 1925. It is clear that the volume is intended to demonstrate the substantial progress made in modern French jewellery since the First World War (all of the examples included are French). Indeed a specially printed issue signed by Fouquet himself was presented to Guillaume Janneau, designer, writer and then administrator of the *Mobilier National*, France's national furniture depository and state-run art restoration service. This clearly confirms the status of Moreau's series as being very important in the attempt to ally contemporary design with the French state.

The volume canonizes the work of Gérard Sandoz, Jean Fouquet (the majority of works illustrated are from his family firm), Raymond Templier and Paul Brandt. It also introduces works by students from the École de l'union centrale des arts décoratifs and the École Boulle. In presenting his selection, Fouquet makes his intentions clear: 'This publication brings together models or actual pieces that I hold only present the achievements of the modern spirit . . . The work of the artist is a historic monument, I therefore eliminated that which seemed to me not to be an expression of the current time' (1931). In his introduction, Fouquet reiterates the commitment of the jeweller to producing

work that adorns the costume and, just as importantly, points out that ‘to fulfil this role, I will repeat endlessly, the piece of jewellery must be composed of elements that can be read at a distance. The miniature is detestable’ (1931). To be ‘read at a distance’, a design must have a significant presence as an object and designed accordingly. Scale may play a part in this, but so does composition, use of materials, boldness of execution and the exploiting of different ways in which jewellery catches the light. Examination of Fouquet’s work will bear this out.

We have already seen in Chapter 2 how Fouquet’s ball-bearings bracelet exploited movement combined with a clear reference to an industrial component, bringing together precious and nonprecious materials. In a brooch of c. 1937, Fouquet produces a piece that will clearly work both close up and at a distance (Figure 3.1).

In form, the three gold discs are linked together by an overlaid sliver of rock crystal, which creates an opaque band that binds the three shapes together. Smaller pearls whose edges slightly overlap the central disc flank the large tourmaline. Unlike some other jewellery in the modernist vein, this piece eschews asymmetry and makes a bold statement through its geometric harmony – this was a preoccupation of a number of modernist jewellers and silversmiths in the 1930s, notably the influential Jean Puiforcat. Close up, the precision of the piece can be fully appreciated. From a distance, the bold, clear execution gives the jewel another life as a composition augmenting an outfit. Nevertheless, the tourmaline still expresses the social significance of jewellery. Georg Simmel described this as being ‘located in the gleam of the precious stone

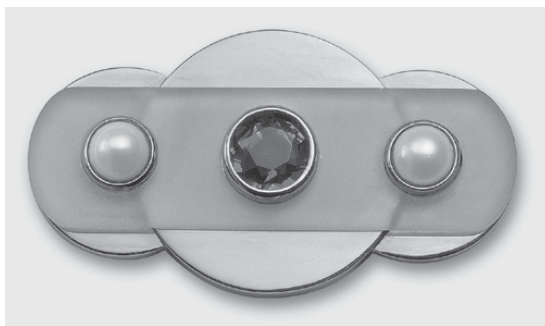


Figure 3.1 Brooch in gold, rock crystal, tourmaline and pearls by Jean Fouquet, c. 1937. Width 5.5 cm. © Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim. Photo: Günther Meyer. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

which seems to go out to others like the flash of eyes that is directed towards it' (Pointon 2009, 4). Here Fouquet's brooch almost literally expresses this idea.

An earlier design by Fouquet uses a language of form and materials that demonstrates the increasingly assertive approach to defining the qualities of modern jewellery which had become a feature of his work in the late 1920s (Figure 3.2). The materials are gold with malachite (green) and black lacquer. In each of the linked squares there are subtle shifts of level indicating a relationship with abstract art of the period. One thinks of the constructed reliefs of the artists Bart van der Leek and Ben Nicholson, for example, in which planar surfaces are subtly distinguished by changes of colour, level and texture. The malachite is set slightly proud from the surface of the gold but the black lacquer, though ostensibly flat, introduces a change in texture and slight disturbance to the smooth surface of the polished gold. It is easy to imagine how the fingers of the wearer would seek out and explore these slight but intriguing changes in the surface and temperature of the object. The square sections are identical but alternately rotated a half turn creating a pattern reminiscent of the Dadaist Hans Richter's 1921 film *Rhythm 21* in which a series of rhythmic movements are played out by animated geometric forms. Chapter 2 has shown how Charlotte Perriand's jewellery was influenced by avant-garde film and there is something about the regular sequences of elements that recalls the frames of a strip of celluloid film.

Other influences on these forms, which can be seen in many examples of French modernist bracelets (such as the one by Paul Brandt illustrated at the bottom of Figure 1.2) come in the form of typographic vignettes, such as those produced for the Parisian printing company Fonderies Deberney et Peignot. The graphic artist and jeweller known as 'Cassandre' (actually the Ukrainian-born



Figure 3.2 Bracelet in gold with malachite and black lacquer by Jean Fouquet, 1929. Height 2.5 cm, width 19 cm. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

Adolphe Mouron) worked for the Fouquet firm in the mid-1920s, later developing typographic designs for Peignot. This culminated in the creation of the 'Bifur' and 'Le Peignot' typefaces which were used for the lettering of the pavilions at the 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* in Paris. Deberney et Peignot were a hugely successful company in the interwar years, offering a vast range of typographic solutions to both traditional and more progressive clients. The catalogues of Deberney et Peignot from the mid-1930s show a collection of vignettes commissioned from designer Alfred Latour (1888–1964), later to become a member of the Union des artistes modernes alongside Charles Peignot.

Latour's vignettes (ornaments for the page) were designed for Peignot in 1929 (Figure 3.3). They could be printed from metal plates or woodblocks. He designed them in such a way that, like in Fouquet's bracelet above, sequences of the same simple forms are repeated and/or rotated to form bands of modern geometric ornaments for the page as alternatives to the usual vegetal motifs beloved of more mainstream printing houses.

There is something about both the scale and appearance of these abstract designs that makes them highly suitable for use by the jeweller seeking to produce pieces that flatter and adorn the body while avoiding the traditional symbolic motifs usually associated with jewellery. The same could be said of the typographer seeking to adorn the page in a way that complements the use of a modern typeface. In addition, an accord can be seen here between the way a jeweller such as Fouquet would draw up a final design at 1:1 scale and the work of the typographer – both worked precisely and in a measured way to convey their ideas. Latour's vignettes are little abstractions of linked elements that form elegant modern patterns across the page. In the form of jewellery, the links of the bracelet define the volume and limits of the human limb it is intended to adorn. It is quite clear that a synthesis of the arts is at work here, perhaps promoted by the contemporary desire to clear the ground for a new approach to form and ornament in which disciplines were encouraged to learn from one another and seek common solutions.

As pointed out already, references to the forms of the new architecture by modernist jewellers were part of the effort to ally themselves with the forces of progress in modern design. These forces included a celebration of the very physical manifestations of the virtues of speed, dynamism and mechanical motion. The image of the car was an important one for the modernist sensibility and the pride of car ownership and the potential of speed was something

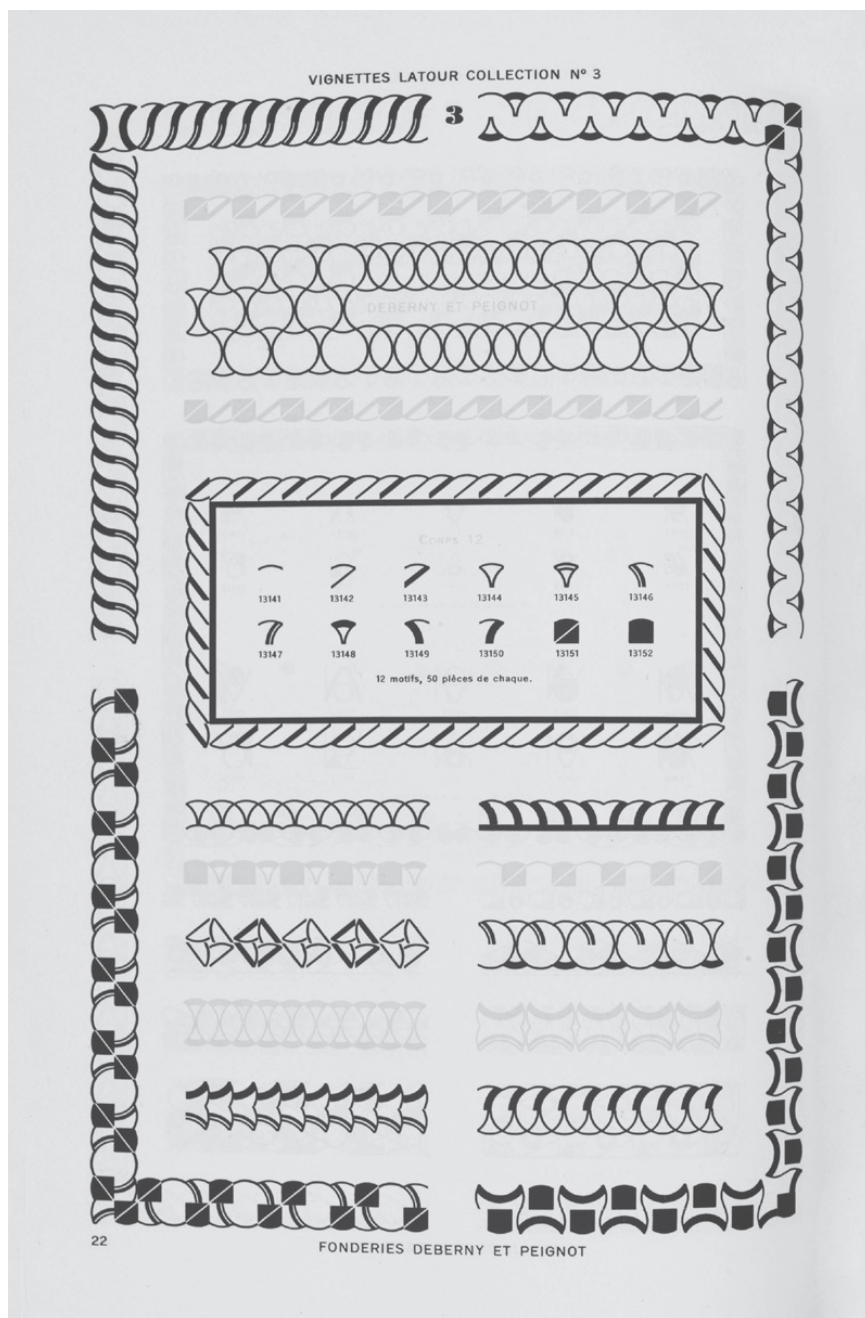


Figure 3.3 Designs for graphic vignettes by Alfred Latour, 1929. From Volume 1 of the *Spécimen général des Fonderies Deberny et Peignot*, Paris, c. 1935. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Image used with kind permission of Claude Latour.

increasingly recorded and commented upon in the press, in literary sources and on film. In this respect, it is worth considering two accessories that celebrate the image of the car as modern icon.

The brooch representing Captain George Eyston's car *Thunderbolt* was made in 1937 and presented to the driver's wife after her husband had broken the world land speed record in the same vehicle (Figure 3.4). It reached a speed of over 500 km/h on the Bonneville salt-flats on 19 November (Phillips 2008).

The details of the air intakes, wheels and cockpit are very carefully delineated. The proportions of the car, when judged against contemporary photographs of *Thunderbolt* reveal that the maker has rendered the overall form of the vehicle with great accuracy and with considerable skill. Nevertheless, as a commemorative brooch, it is conceived as a miniature. The streamlined body of the car, so impressively evocative of raw power in surviving photographs, is rendered somewhat static by the profusion of diamonds scattered over its surface. The clouds and the salt flats are given the same treatment, resulting in an overall image that is less an evocation of speed than the canonization of the object itself as an icon of one specific aspect of the history of human audacity. In this sense, it is a very traditional way to commemorate the event through

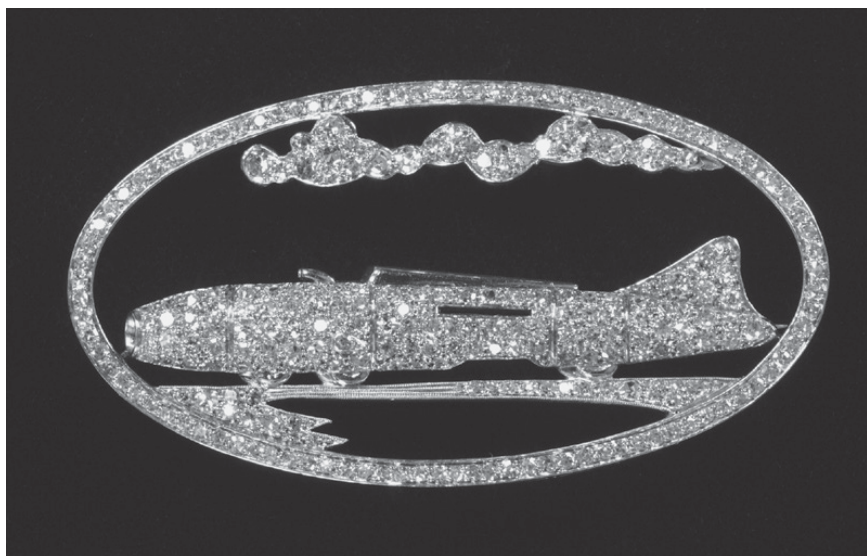


Figure 3.4 Brooch in platinum set with diamonds commemorating the breaking of the world land speed record by Captain George Eyston in 1937. Designer and maker unknown. Length 5.9 cm, width 3.1 cm. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the association of human endeavour with the timeless qualities of precious materials. The vehicle and all its potential for a barely controllable, violent and noisy trajectory is held captive within the frame of a traditional brooch. It is perhaps unfair to judge the piece in such terms, but the representation of the vehicle suggests that something has happened and that everything associated with this epochal event is now instant history.

By contrast, a design for a cigarette case by Gérard Sandoz, illustrated in Fouquet's *Bijoux et Orfèvrerie*, provides a different interpretation of a car built for speed, this time introducing a strong element of style and a unique approach to the depiction of the automobile and its occupants (Figure 3.5). When applied to this more utilitarian object, it becomes possible for the theme to be absorbed instantly into contemporary fashion. The work of the French interwar jewellers is often characterized as being purely concerned with abstraction but figuration was actually a strongly persistent theme.

In the cigarette case, Sandoz manages to produce a rare depiction of a speeding automobile *from the front*. Typically, modernist representations of

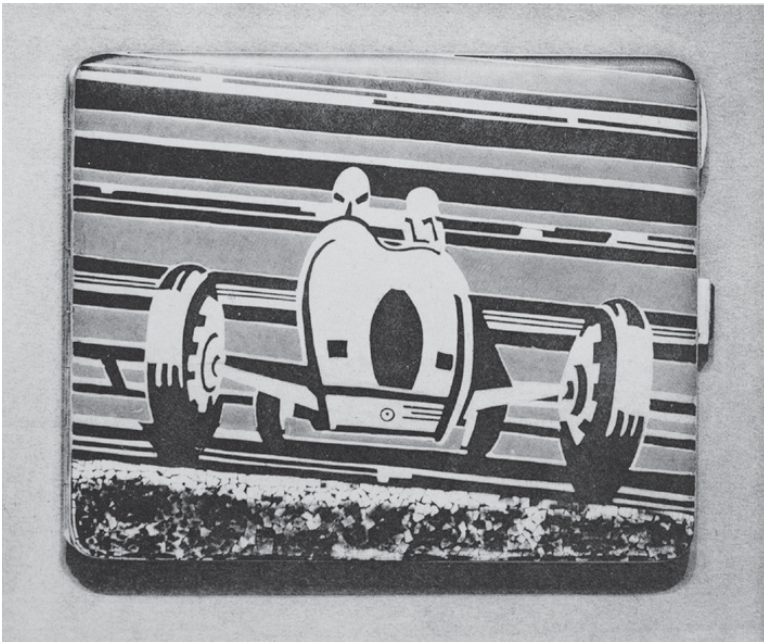


Figure 3.5 Cigarette case by Gérard Sandoz, illustrated in Jean Fouquet's *Bijoux et Orfèvrerie* (*Jewellery and Metalwork*), 1930. Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

speeding machines tend to concentrate on the image (or even after-image) of the vehicle as it passes by, leaving either a series of fragmented images suggesting the eye's inability to fully capture the dynamism of modern motion, or an impression of mechanical bluster and disturbed air. This was certainly the case for Italian Futurist painters such as Giacomo Balla and Umberto Boccioni. Sandoz gives us an image of the car as an elastic form whose wheels appear to be forced outwards as it enters a corner. The terrain is rough, the background angled to suggest the torque of the cornering manoeuvre. The inhabitants of the cockpit appear more as racers, anonymous and of indeterminate gender due to the driving cap and goggles. As an expression of the car culture of the 1920s this small accessory is very significant, managing to convey the sense of excitement and danger with the fashion sensibilities at work in the decade. This design could have appealed equally to both men and women, given the latter's growing interest in both smoking and car ownership. Even though its avant-garde credentials may be somewhat eclipsed by some of the abstract imagery used on the contemporary cigarette cases by Raymond Templier and Jean Dunand, Sandoz's case still manages to combine a modernist sensibility with the expression of contemporary fashion. This is emphasized by the nonprecious materials used; enamel, lacquer and egg shell. Here the materials are subservient to the qualities of the image.

The text of Fouquet's *Bijoux et Orfèvrerie*, though short, makes some crucial points about the role of jewellery in relation to fashion. As has been shown in Chapter 1, the goal of producing a parure that harmonized with contemporary fashion trends was an important one for commentators and designers. Fouquet goes further and states that 'jewellery is to our clothing what silverware is to our dwelling' (1931). This suggests a much wider concern for the integration of modern forms with contemporary culture. In choosing to illustrate Paul Brandt's jewellery for hats (see Chapter 1) and Raymond Templier's parure designed for the film actress Brigitte Helm (see Chapter 4), Fouquet was attempting to demonstrate the variety of new contexts in which modern jewellery could be seen and worn. Throughout the volume, the viewer is left in no doubt that the new approach to jewellery is indebted to both a reductive approach to form, resulting in most instances in the use of a rigorously geometric visual language and demonstrating a familiarity with contemporary abstract painting. The drawings sheet by Paul Brandt displays both of these tendencies, producing a design language strongly related to the compositions of the Orphic cubist paintings of Frantisek Kupka and Sonia and Robert Delaunay (Figure 3.6).

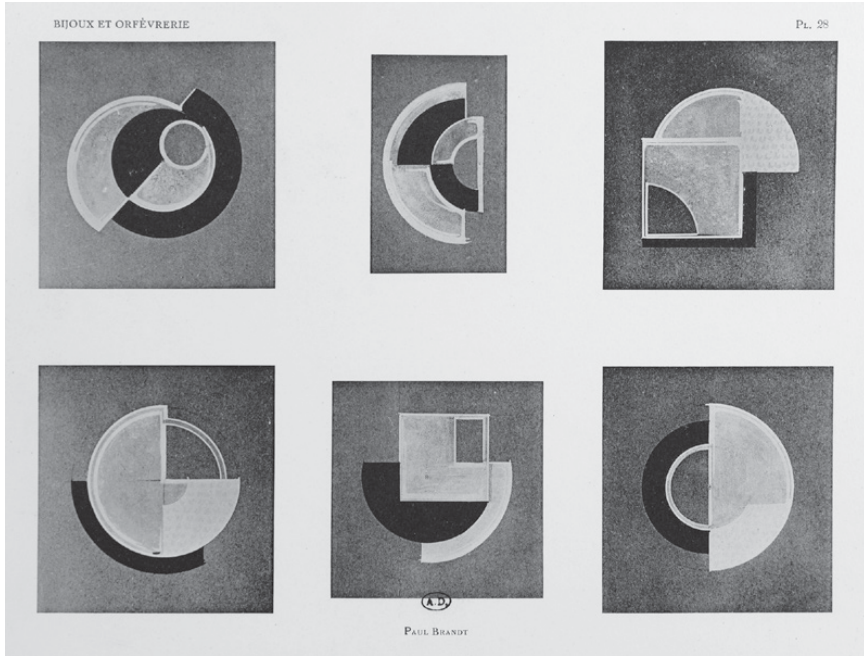


Figure 3.6 Designs for jewellery by Paul Brandt, illustrated in Jean Fouquet's *Bijoux et Orfèvrerie* (Jewellery and Metalwork), 1930. Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

Brandt's drawings are presented without any suggestions of scale, materials or construction method. As such, they do not constitute design drawings that could be handed over to a manufacturer. Rather, they must be read as a plea for the adoption of a contemporary language of form on the part of both jeweller and consumer. Behind Fouquet's talk of the new epoch, the new spirit and the promotion of the stripped down, geometric (if not utilitarian) forms that he hoped would change the course of modern jewellery design, there remained for him the frustration that the jewellery industry still continued to employ archaic making processes. In order to progress further, 'jewellery and pieces of silversmithing must constitute works of art, while responding to the same needs as industrial objects' (Fouquet 1931). Understandably, there follows no manifesto for the full mechanization of the jewellery trade, but it is clear that the tension between traditional hand crafted approaches and forays into the arena of mass production may not have been far from Fouquet's mind.

In 1929, Fouquet, along with Paul and Raymond Templier, Louis and Jean Puiforcat and Gérard Sandoz were founder members of the Union des Artistes

Modernes (UAM) which grew out of dissatisfaction with the Société des Artistes Décorateurs (SAD). Raymond Templier was appointed secretary and among the active members were listed Eileen Grey, Charlotte Perriand, Pierre Chareau, Man Ray and Gerrit Rietveld. Benefactors and donors were Louis Puiforcat, Paul Templier, Le Vicomte de Noailles, André Levy and the publisher Charles Moreau – all important patrons and allies in the modernist cause. The first notable manifestation of the UAM was an undated press release (probably from late 1929) that explained the mission of the newly formed group as a reaction against the widely differing trends and qualities to be found at the annual Parisian salons. Further, the statement emphasizes that the group is not to be understood as a ‘chapel’ or ‘cénacle’ (distancing itself from the quasimystical tone of, for example, the original Bauhaus proclamation of 1919) but of strong minded individuals, ‘the best of their time’, who are also team players (Barré-Despond 1986, 46). Membership was not limited to French nationals and a number of foreigners were admitted. Nevertheless, in order to gain membership as an active participant of the UAM it had to be granted by a unanimous decision of the General Assembly. Those wishing to join had to demonstrate that they were ‘artists particularly sensitive to the beauty of our time, completely free from ornamental formulas, repudiating ornament for ornament’s sake and practising new techniques, generating new means of expression and beauty’ (46). It is interesting to note the direct emphasis placed on ornament. We have already seen how topical a subject this was among architects, but how would a jeweller be able to fare in an organization that repudiated ornament for the sake of ornament? Certainly, most nineteenth-century jewellers would have been perplexed by this such was the alliance of ‘art’ with ornament and decoration. But the UAM was concerned with generating new ways of finding and expressing beauty in the contemporary world and that meant a rejection of the traditional vocabulary of ornamental forms. Further, there were attempts to create a specifically social context for art as a reaction against the perceived conservative mindset of the SAD. However, as Kerssenbrock-Krosigk puts it, ‘the endeavours to socialize art were paradoxically accompanied by a boom in an artistic production prodigious for its luxury and élite appeal. Probably only in France could a personality such as the jeweller Jean Fouquet, combine his predilection for communism with such ruthless exclusiveness as a designer’ (2001, 371).

But it was not only in France that this was the case. The 1930s, a decade characterized by deep political, social and economic divisions, provoked an interest in Communism as a way of embracing freedom of expression, social

solidarity and anticolonialism. So in the era before disillusionment with Stalin set in, the communist cause was, for many, a noble one. In France, as in England, the cultural élite were attracted to the Left as it became clear that the rise of European fascism was a threat to both cultural freedom and the peace and stability of Europe itself. The arts in their modern form could express a new sense of usefulness and political purpose that embodied the possibility of social change. In furniture design, the commitment to metal over wood on the part of Charlotte Perriand (see Chapter 2) was a clear statement of this, questioning the usual relationship between material and form. We have seen how Sandoz and Fouquet fundamentally questioned the use of precious materials in jewellery, critiquing this as an unthinking reflex on the part of both the maker and the consumer. In place of the exclusive use of precious materials, they favoured a plurality of approaches, led by design intelligence rather than hidebound practices and prejudices.

Clearly, we would search in vain for ‘communist jewellery’ issuing from the workshops of Paris in the 1930s. But it would also be wrong to assume that those on the political left eschewed all interest in decoration, ornamentation or, indeed, jewellery and accessories. There was, however, a predilection for approaches to jewellery that could affirm an allegiance to a particular cause or way of life through an affiliation with mechanical forms. The case of Jean Després will bear this out and his silver ‘connecting rod’ brooch of 1930 is a good example of this tendency (Figure 3.7).

Després’s experiences of aviation mechanics in the First World War led to a collection of pieces (including his *bijoux moteurs*) being produced from the late 1920s. As the name suggests, these were directly modelled on machine parts. Their names were unambiguous (‘Cam’ bracelet, ‘Cam’ ring) and were shown at the exhibition *L’Aéronautique et l’art* at the Pavillon de Marsan in 1930. We have seen in Chapter 2 that reactions to this kind of work were mixed. Gabardi mentions that a whole collection of modernist work by Després was refused by the Salon d’Automne in 1928, but by 1929 his startlingly modern work had begun to receive critical recognition (Gabardi 2009, 32). Stark as some of Després’s pieces are from this time, they are a unique expression of modern machine culture in jewellery by a designer who had direct experience of mechanical engineering. In an engine, the connecting rod connects the piston to the crankshaft and is, therefore, the mechanical element through which the energy from the combustion cycle is transferred to create motion in a vehicle. As an element encountered in isolation, as in this brooch, it becomes a symbolic device only as it is stripped of its original

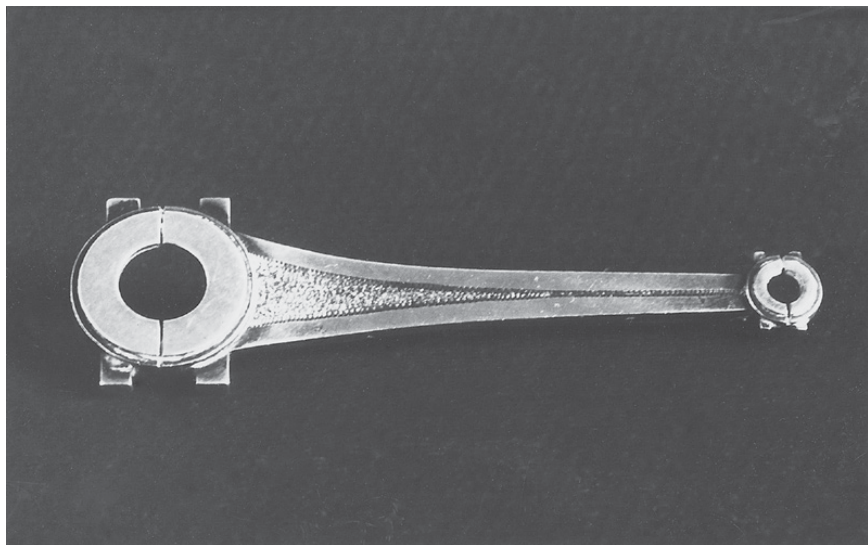


Figure 3.7 Brooch in silver by Jean Després, c. 1929. Length 8 cm, width 2 cm. Image used with kind permission of the Musée de l'Avallonnais, Avallon, France.

purpose as a form. Although this piece in its vertical position bears more than a passing resemblance to the Eiffel tower (an icon of modernism for artists since the beginning of the twentieth century) its shape is closely modelled on the original engine part. In certain contexts this would have been a striking piece to wear (perhaps by men as well as women) and worn, as was Charlotte Perriand's ball-bearings necklace, as a sign of allegiance to machine culture, the factory and the contribution of the engineer to technological and social progress. As part of a parure it could also conceivably be the starting point for the creation of an outfit, rather than an embellishment to an existing costume. In any event, pieces like this would certainly have asked questions of the wearer's choice of outfit and would have had to be worn carefully.

The major French jewellers discussed thus far were all members of the UAM and rallied around their manifesto. Strangely, in the era of art manifestoes, the UAM's contribution to this quintessential interwar art and design practice did not finally appear until 1934, some five years after the organization's foundation. The text 'Pour l'Art Moderne, cadre de la vie contemporaine' (for modern art, framework of contemporary life) was written in collaboration with the author Louis Cheronnet. A version of the text appeared in full in *Art et décoration* for January 1934. This defiant polemic calls on artists and designers from all disciplines to consider how they may produce work in the contemporary

spirit, respecting tradition where it has shown itself to be capable of adapting to technical and social progress. Above all, the manifesto states, 'Nous aimons l'équilibre, la logique et la pureté' ('We love balance, logic and purity') (Union des Artistes Modernes 1934, 83).

The UAM had already held its first exhibition in 1930 and the founding of the organization put the ideas and energies of several influential jewellers and silversmiths at the heart of the international debates about *formes utiles* (useful form) and the general direction of modernism in design. Like all secessionist artistic groups, the UAM was launched with great fervour, but members were keen not to completely alienate their artistic parents. To this end, the exhibition was held in June and July 1930 at the Pavillon de Marsan, the wing of the Louvre that since 1905 had hosted the Musée des arts décoratifs. The catalogue, published by Charles Moreau, lists the contributors by name and type of work. The jewellers Després, Fouquet, Sandoz and Templier have their works listed merely as 'bijoux' (Union des Artistes Modernes 1930). It contains advertisements for some of the enterprises owned by members, including Raymond Templier whose company is described as 'Bijoux Modernes de Raymond Templier exécutés par P. & R. Templier Joailliers-Fabricants' ('modern jewellery by Raymond Templier made by P & R Templier, jewellers and manufacturers') (Union des artistes modernes 1930). That the Templier firm was describing itself in this way – as producing specifically modern jewellery – is significant because two years earlier the company had employed a unique method of publicizing their collections of uncompromisingly modern work.

Modern poetry, modern jewellery

French modernist poet Blaise Cendrars was acutely aware of the fact that to understand the modern world and how it was changing, it was necessary to embrace the fleeting and the accidental, the commercial and the ephemeral, the new modes of production and consumption that were increasingly defining modern metropolitan experiences for all classes of society. He was particularly interested in the role of jewellery in this process and he turned his attention to this in the late 1920s. In his text *Publicité = Poésie*, included in his collection *Aujourd'hui* of 1931, Cendrars asks the fundamental question 'qu'est-ce qu'un bijou moderne?' (what is a modern jewel?) and immediately starts to answer the question by stating what it is not: 'A modern jewel is not a bolt that one mounts

on a pin . . . It is not a ball bearing that one puts under glass in a living room . . . It is not a longitudinal section of an aircraft engine . . . It is not a luminous fountain, neither the Eiffel Tower nor incandescent pearls of advertising' (Cendrars 1931, 217). The text, in two parts, was originally written in 1928 for 'Mr. R. T', the jeweller Raymond Templier whose modern work had come to the fore at the 1925 exhibition and was regularly being featured in widely read monthly magazines such as *Art et décoration*. True to the spirit of the title, Cendrars's words served as advertising copy for the firm of Paul Templier and Sons of 3, Place de la Victoire, Paris (Mouillefarine and Ristelheuber 2005, 49–50).

The text is a fascinating one for those looking to find a wider cultural interpretation of the relationship between modernism, modernity and jewellery because, as others had done, he forcefully rejects the idea that modern jewellery should be characterized by mimicking objects produced by the machine age. He is clearly trying to distance himself from those who wish to see modernism in jewellery and accessories as a primarily aesthetic project driven only by formal invention. In doing so, he recognizes the fact that the modern designer must come to terms with the themes of the modern world as experienced in contemporary life in order to produce work that reflects a state of mind rather than a particular 'look'. We have already seen that Cendrars had chosen S.K.F. ball bearings as one of his seven wonders of the modern world (see Chapter 2). Equally importantly, he had obviously seen Gerald Murphy's S.K.F. ball bearings 'under glass' in the latter's Paris apartment. For Cendrars, these objects seem to lose their potency out of context and merely fetishized the products of the machine age. In addition, his reference to the 'luminous fountain' in 'qu'est-ce qu'un bijou moderne?' could well be a reference to Lalique's water feature of the same name made for the 1925 exhibition or, indeed, the 'Fountain Dress' made of long strings of pearls and wire by Paul Poiret modelled by the Marchesa Casati in 1920. Such excesses held no interest for Cendrars. But in contrast to others, he did not reject the fetishization of machine parts in jewellery in order to produce a reactionary critique. On the contrary, his view of the relationship between modern jewellery and the forces of modernity comes across clearly in his choice of words in the poetic section of the text for Raymond Templier where he describes the requisite qualities of contemporary jewellery. The list includes allusions to objects associated with precision engineering ('a set square', 'a line of sight', 'a propeller', 'a helix'); words and phrases that suggest feelings ('a look', 'a thrill', 'joy', 'a whisper') and references to mechanical devices and materials ('start-up and click', 'chromium', 'platinum') (Cendrars 1931, 217–18).

Cendrars's use of imagery is very important here. He mentions objects, materials and devices of the machine age, but he interweaves this with the eternal human qualities associated with jewellery: love, emotion, the erotic, joy of living. The shiver of pleasure that a modern jewel might produce may also be related to its cool, uncompromising engineered geometry and the peculiarly modern sensation of the touch of chrome or platinum on flesh. Equally the 'start-up and click' of the modern machine becomes like the finely engineered clasp of a necklace, brooch or bracelet.

Here, Cendrars conveys the spirit of Baudelairean modernity where the eternal and the fleeting come together. His literary style helps to reinforce this through the montaging of human characteristics and emotions with the material and physical properties of jewellery objects. Significantly, chromium and platinum take the place of silver, gold and precious stones.

What use would these poetic texts have had for the firm of Templier and Sons? Clearly, Cendrars was trying to convey the message that the jewellery of the Templier firm was absolutely contemporary in order to evoke a sense of their uniqueness. He was also trying to convey something of the timeless character of jewellery. Like the poet Apollinaire before him, Cendrars was looking to identify the eternal characteristics in the fleeting and transitory experiences of modern life with which he was surrounded. However, he does not do this through evoking a sense of alienation as Apollinaire does, for example, in his 1913 poem *Zone*. Rather, Cendrars applies his modernist literary style (with all its fragmentary images and seemingly bizarre juxtapositions) to contemporary commerce in producing the crucial alliance that he was to describe in the title of his essay: *Publicité = Poésie*. The association with Cendrars, though seemingly brief, would have established the Templier firm's credentials among those of the cultural élite who had a vested interest in the promotion of avant-garde culture. If ornament and modernism were strange bedfellows in jewellery, then perhaps jewellery and avant-garde poetry can be seen at this moment to have had a happy and mutually beneficial arrangement.

The poetry of Raymond Templier's work from the mid-1920s and into the 1930s lies firmly in the conscious attempt to ally elements of traditional techniques and use of materials with innovations suited to the taste of both the modern consumer and the follower of avant-garde tendencies. A study of some key examples will bear this out. The brooch of c. 1930 uses a variety of materials typical of the kind of combinations favoured by the Templier firm in the interwar period (Figure 3.8). Here, white gold, brilliant-cut diamonds, onyx and



Figure 3.8 Brooch by Raymond Templier in white gold, brilliant-cut diamonds, onyx and coral, c. 1930. Height 6.4 cm, width 2.3 cm. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

coral combine to create a design that is uncompromisingly modern. The various elements are carefully distributed across the surface of the brooch to create a dynamic, off centre composition in which the three coral domes are the main visual attraction. But the composition is still a synthesis of nature and culture that represents the eternal qualities of all jewellery. All the materials are carefully manipulated but the natural origins of the material are not romanticized or given a traditional symbolic treatment.

The reverse of the brooch is also of great interest (Figure 3.9). Most brooches are not meant to be seen in reverse and, normally, must be fixed to the clothing and face resolutely forward. Some necklaces and pendants can be appreciated whichever way they happen to fall or swing about. Indeed this can be a fundamental part of their effect. Looking at the brooch by Templier from behind, we see not only the workings of the clasp (which clicks into place with the spring mechanism à la Cendrars's poetic evocation) but also the supporting 'architecture' of the structure of the brooch. We can see how the onyx bands are kept in place, the settings of the brilliants and the coral. It would perhaps have been easy to seal the back of this brooch, but something about the exposure of the methods of construction tells us this is an object which has been *assembled*. It is not 'magic', neither is it metaphysical poetry or dream, or invitation to contemplate the mysterious forces of nature. In leaving the structure exposed, Templier invites the wearer to consider the manufacturing process and to recognize the various origins of its components in a similar way that a functionalist architect might choose not to hide and, indeed, make a feature of structural components.

Gaston Varenne carefully explained the sober approach of Templier in a feature on some of the jeweller's recent works in a 1930 edition of *Art et*

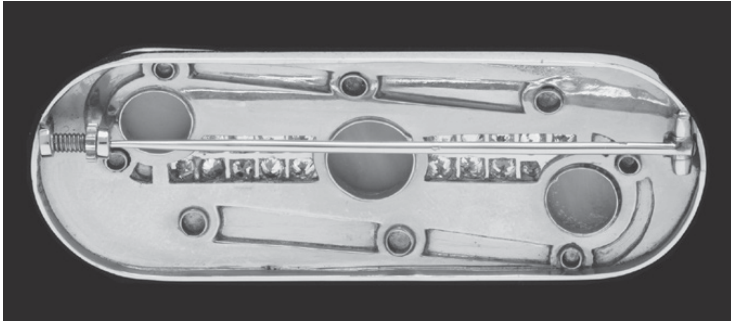


Figure 3.9 Brooch by Raymond Templier in white gold, brilliant-cut diamonds, onyx and coral, c. 1930 (reverse). Height 6.4 cm, width 2.3 cm. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

décoration. He sees Templier's jewellery as a rejection of sentimentality in favour of a 'spiritual' approach based not on mysticism, but on 'a harmonious suite of plans and volumes offering themselves to play in the light', where the jewellery should be understood not as the superficial flickering of shiny materials but as 'wisely calculated light and shadow' (Varenne 1930, 57). Indeed one of Templier's trademark treatments at this time (seen in the firm's cuff links and bracelets in particular) was to contrast silver or grey gold with black enamel, creating a strong contrast of light and shade reminiscent of cubist and, most especially, contemporary abstract painting (Figure 3.10).

In the bracelet from c. 1930 at Köln, Templier exploits the implied movement of mechanical forms in order to put a dynamic twist on the idea of the moving bangle as it rotates around the wrist with wearing. Further, the clasps and hinges are left exposed and allowed to express themselves as an important element in the function of the piece. For Templier, it was clearly not the intention to create the illusion that a piece of jewellery had been born 'pure', without seams or joints or even that the thinking of the designer should not, in some way, be visible.

The introduction of moving parts into modern jewellery, in a self-consciously contemporary way as in Després's rings with rotating bezels, was an important moment and proved influential for later generations of modern jewellers. Much of Després's work of the 1920s and early 1930s shows a very keen awareness of contemporary art movements, from cubism to geometric abstraction. His remarkable repertoire of forms also included some figurative pieces made in collaboration with ceramicist Jean Mayadon, a regular contributor to the modern jewellery and metalworking scene in Paris. Although abstract painting had a



Figure 3.10 Bracelet in silver and black lacquer by Raymond Templier, c. 1930. Height 3.6 cm, diameter 6 cm. © Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

great influence on jewellery and accessories, it is far from the case that the figure disappeared from interwar work with the impact of modernism. Indeed, the figurative tradition takes on a new set of characteristics under this influence. In this example from c. 1935 the contrasting materials of silver, pearls, lacquer and faience tell a story of the often vast differences in value that individual materials may represent when combined in a single piece (Figure 3.11).

It can be argued that each material used here has both symbolic and material value that exists in a dialectical relation. Silver and pearls are precious materials and possess a clear (if ever fluctuating) market value. Lacquer work is not necessarily expensive materially but it can be in terms of time-consuming labour. Faience (tin-glazed ceramic) is a fine material, but only becomes so in the hands of a competent craftsman. Here, Mayadon's artistic contribution, the reclining nude figure painted on to the ceramic, is characteristically indistinct but it recalls the themes present in neoclassical tendencies in the art of this period. The theme of the return to nature in interwar modernism has already been mentioned in Chapter 2, but the stark simplicity produced here by Després, working as



Figure 3.11 Brooch in gold, silver, pearls, lacquer and faience by Jean Després, c. 1935. Faience plaque by Jean Mayadon. Width 6.7 cm. © Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim. Photo: Günther Meyer.

a frame for Mayadon's figure also provides the opportunity to contemplate, in modern form, some of the lasting qualities of jewellery expressed in an updated classical idiom. Unlike some of the figurative pieces by artist-jewellers of the time, these collaborative pieces by Després and Mayadon do not suffer through comparison with work on a larger scale or in a different medium by the same makers because these forms were created specifically on a small scale for more intimate contemplation.

Works such as these give rise to questions about whether there is a symbolic language of form and materials to be found in modernist jewellery. Does a pearl perform the same symbolic role in a piece by Després or Fouquet as it might do in a piece of renaissance jewellery? The ubiquity of pearls during the interwar years has already been noted (see Chapter 1) and they certainly represented a continuity of tradition in jewellery wearing. But the moderns tended to use the pearl as a strategic element in design, as a formal spherical element that was able to be used as a way of visually organizing a composition as in the examples by Fouquet and Després discussed earlier. Only a perfect pearl can do this. There is

no denying its association as a symbolic (and materially valuable) thing, but the sparing way in which they were often used is an important element in modern jewellery where, as we have seen, design was as important an element in judging a piece as cost.

Modernism and the market: Affordable jewellery

Jewellery houses that moved with the times, like their equivalents in the fashion world, did so partly to keep up with market trends. The very expensive materials that were used, albeit sometimes in different combinations, by modern as well as more traditional jewellers, maintained the idea of luxury. Some of them did adapt their forms and materials to appeal to different segments of the market. A case in point is the English manufacturer H. G. Murphy. Most of the company's more traditional interwar work – designed by Harry Murphy himself – has its origins in the arts and crafts movement and responded to Scandinavian influences, to the Egyptomania of the 1920s and some modern French and German influences. But Murphy's work in gold was often more traditional than that produced in silver. A ring from the 1930s features a bezel which is an entirely plain tablet and strikingly modern (Figure 3.12).

As Atterbury and Benjamin pointed out, Murphy may have 'allowed himself the luxury of using silver only for inexpensive experimental jewellery whilst gold was retained for more formal and commercially acceptable pieces appropriate for his retail market' (2005, 71). Certainly, the highly reflective 'silver' surface (whether actually silver or not) was much more emblematic of modernism than gold. In addition, some makers of costume jewellery, if not always experimental, responded to modernist forms in surprisingly daring ways.

In general histories of jewellery produced before the advent of postmodernism (and certainly before the New Jewellery movement of the 1970s and 1980s started to fundamentally question the whole idea of what actually constituted jewellery and body adornment) costume jewellery is rarely taken seriously. The reasons for this are obvious. What might be called the 'institutional' view of jewellery has been used to set up a material (and class) divide in relation to the wearer. Here, body adornment through jewellery is subject to the assumption that the aspiration to own and wear precious materials, allied to a sense of 'good' design sets the wearer apart. Unlike fashion, however, fine jewellery feeds off values represented by the myths associated with materials – stones in particular.

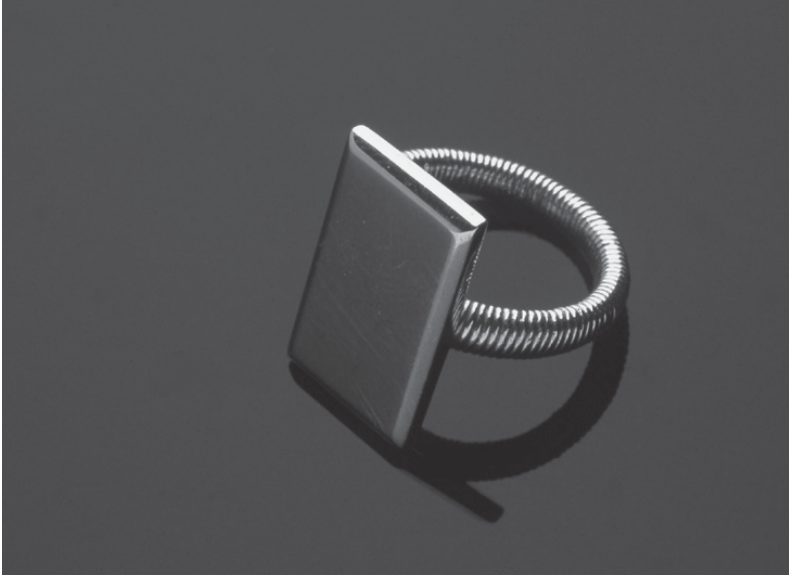


Figure 3.12 Tablet ring in silver by H. G. Murphy, 1930s. Image from Paul Atterbury and John Benjamin's *The Jewellery and Silver of H. G. Murphy*. Image kindly supplied by John Benjamin.

Longevity is a key characteristic and lends much precious jewellery its meaning as well as providing opportunities for marketing slogans that trade on the elemental and indestructible nature of some precious materials. Even in relation to design, authors have been suspicious of costume jewellery. Here is jewellery historian Joan Evans writing in 1970:

Design, to be worth anything, must be portentously serious. Even rocaille was designed with the whole heart and mind: it is light as comedy, but it is neither flippant or cynical. Yet there is something in the ephemeral and meretricious quality of modern 'costume' jewellery which seems to invoke both these qualities in the designer. What the modern world needs in its jewels – as in all else – is the serious pursuit of beauty. Without it all is lost. (184)

Evans laments the fact that jewellery could only have a future as an ephemeral art whereby a piece may only have a very short life span – perhaps only that of the costume that it adorns – an intriguing notion now, perhaps less so for Evans.

Her views are far from the 'democratic' conception of modern jewellery identified by Barthes that, as has already been pointed out in Chapter 1, provides us with a way of identifying and discussing changing attitudes to

the materiality and fashion-related functions of twentieth-century jewellery. Evans's pessimism aside, her views on design are worth considering when exploring the relationship between costume jewellery and modernism in the interwar years. We have seen that the designers working for the great jewellery houses were very serious about their designs (even 'portentously' so) and that they saw them as representing a way of bringing together the eternal and the modern – basing some of their collections on modern themes, geometric configurations and hitherto unexplored combinations of materials. But their markets were still the rich, wealthy and powerful élites of the day. Costume jewellery sought to serve markets in different ways and it would be wrong to suggest that the costume jewellery produced in Europe and America in the 1920s and 1930s was produced entirely without quality, serious intent or design sensibility. It is as easy to find examples of absurdist design produced without irony by the purveyors of 'high jewellery' as it is to encounter examples of 'meretricious' costume jewellery. However, some of the major interwar European manufacturers of costume jewellery, such as the Pforzheim-based company Fahrner Schmuck were able to combine a modern design sensibility with mass production techniques to produce what the company proudly proclaimed on one of their 1920s posters as 'der schmuck unserer zeit' (jewellery of our time) (Buxbaum 1992, 102).

Cornelie Holzach has written that 'thanks to the emancipation of costume jewellery, many women were able to afford to "wear a fortune that is worth nothing"' (2008, 16). She also points out that the ranges of jewellery produced by the larger companies in Germany were both affordable and modern. Some of the materials used (such as 'galalith' made from casein and formaldehyde) were hard plastics which could be cut, drilled and coloured to imitate gem stones or simply stand for itself. Across Europe and America materials such as bakelite and celluloid, originally developed as substitutes for other more expensive materials (such as ebony, ivory and shellac), quickly became suitable for use in new languages of design. For example, German jeweller Jacob Bengel, based in Idar-Oberstein, produced ranges of cheap, flexible, industrial-standard products in which 'substitute' materials were used to great effect. These were large pieces of jewellery which brought together the visual syntax of the metalworker's shop, the precision of the engineer, the aesthetic of the standardized product and the experimentation of the chemist's laboratory. As Holzach suggests, materially these pieces were worth relatively little, yet in their own way are as modern as anything produced by Parisian interwar jewellers. Indeed, the large neckpieces

produced by Bengel provide for a flexibility of wearing that few fine jewellery producers could match.

In contrast to Evans, Deanna Farneti Cera's later definition of costume jewellery is less damning, referring to the use of nonprecious materials, mass production and affordability, yet she still refers to the fact that 'their only value was as decoration, and they were designed for short-term use as they were rapidly rendered obsolete by shifts in fashion' (Cera 1992, 11). She also asks the question whether it was possible that costume jewellery could break new ground stylistically. Although referring to American work, it is clear that in Europe the designs of Fahrner and Bengel would prove that this could be the case. Her assertion that costume jewellery was 'a symbolic expression of modern life' remains a telling one (12). In material terms, those innovations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that made jewellery more accessible across a range of markets is a vital development in the creation of new types of both commercial and experimental jewellery. For many, however, metal remained the best material to express ideas about the modern world in material form.

The Bauhaus: Jewellery and adornment

At the Bauhaus the metal workshops were noted for their attempts (successful or otherwise) to produce utilitarian items for mass production by German industry. But students and staff also produced jewellery, even though this was never considered to be a formal part of the curriculum or constitute a substantial mission of the workshops. When László Moholy-Nagy was appointed to take over the running of the metal workshop at the Weimar Bauhaus in 1923 (as Master of Form) he was tasked with changing its direction towards that of industrial design. Writing in 1938, Moholy-Nagy states:

Until my arrival the Metal Workshop had been a gold and silver Workshop where wine jugs, samovars, elaborate jewellery, coffee services, etc., were made. Changing the policy of this workshop involved a revolution, for in their pride the gold- and silversmiths avoided the use of ferrous metals, nickel and chromium plating and abhorred the idea of making models for electrical household appliances or lighting fixtures. (Whitford 1992, 170)

In fact, it is not clear how much 'elaborate jewellery' was ever manufactured in the early years of the metal workshop. Former Bauhaus student Howard

Dearstyne states that due to lack of money, the Weimar metalworkers tended to use the cheap alloys 'German silver' and tombac along with copper (1986, 190). So if the jewellery was elaborate, it may not necessarily have been executed in precious materials. But two things are interesting about this statement. First, that Moholy-Nagy's disdain for traditional making practices and forms is made patently clear and, second, that the (stubborn) 'pride' associated with working in precious materials was perceived to be holding back progress in design. For Moholy-Nagy, breaking with the use of precious materials was the best way to advance, even if his narrative may have overemphasized how radical the shift from precious to nonprecious materials may have been. Either way, jewellery for Moholy-Nagy would not have constituted an important aspect of work for either the metal workshop or the Bauhaus as a whole. The need to engage with an ideology of machine production (or hand working that resembled machine production) meant, for some modernists, the rejection of individualism and the promotion of the cult of the collective. Arguably this reached its peak at the Bauhaus under the leadership of Hannes Meyer, whose disdain for the decorative arts also carried overtones of misogyny, when he referred to decorative rugs produced by students of the weaving workshops as embodying 'young girls' emotional complexes' (Siebenbrodt and Schöbe 2015, 139).

But jewellery *was* made at the Bauhaus, particularly in the early years. On 13 March 1923, Walter Gropius admonished jeweller and metalworker Naum Slutzky for accepting 'a sizable commission for 12 brooches without informing the Bauhaus and involving the administration in the commission' (Whitford 1992, 103). At Weimar, metalworkers were allowed to accept commissioned work using the Bauhaus's facilities in return for accepting a journeyman's wage on top of their normal guaranteed income. This incident does suggest that even if jewellery was not a major part of the curriculum, students and staff were producing pieces for commission on a semi-private basis. The pieces produced by Slutzky at this time were made of different combinations of materials such as rosewood, ivory, silver and combinations of semiprecious stones. Some of these pieces were produced in line with the early Bauhaus philosophy of the unity of craft and art and have a distinct expressionist character. One of Slutzky's pendants reproduced in Weber's catalogue of Bauhaus metalwork features concentric circles of wood and ivory bounding a 'burst' of silver which, in turn, surrounds a large citrine (Weber 1992, 265). It is a sun motif, a symbolic statement of a shining future that recalls Feininger's expressionist woodcut for the cover of the original 1919 Bauhaus proclamation as well as some of the star and sunburst

motifs and colour wheels made popular by Weimar Bauhaus teachers such as Johannes Itten. It has the appearance of a talismanic, cult object evoking connotations of folkloric rituals rather than modernistic experimentation.

Slutzky produced a piece of jewelry much more in the spirit of Moholy-Nagy's metal workshops when, in 1924, he produced a ring with a setting that was designed so as to permit the changing of stones (Weber 1992, 267). This is an interesting essay on both the potential for customization of a piece of jewellery as well as introducing a modern notion of the jewel as a series of component parts that, perhaps like other accessories, can be adapted by the individual wearer. Although jewellery is often melted down to provide the material for new pieces, here, the wearer is able to change the stone for personal, seasonal or aesthetic reasons. Something of the spirit of this idea can be seen in a British Pathé newsreel from 1936 in which Birmingham-made platinum jewellery features stones that can be unscrewed from each 'trinket' and reassembled in another (Pathé 1936). These pieces are quite conventional in form but the idea of customization is the same.

One of the features of life as student or teacher at the Bauhaus was participation in the regular series of themed parties. These were held at the Bauhaus in all three of its locations. Each occasion gave students, staff and their invited guests the opportunity to demonstrate various aspects of their visual acuity. Perhaps the most celebrated of these events was the Metal Party of 9 February 1929. Originally, the party was to have been themed around the idea of a festival of bells (and this remained on the invitation card) but this idea was dropped because, according to Oskar Schlemmer, 'the very thought of cacophony made it impossible to hear one's own thoughts' (1972, 238). Instead, a more general theme of metal was stressed which, ultimately, allowed all attendees to express themselves in a more unrestricted way, allowing for an exploration of metal in terms of body adornment, since all the Bauhaus parties required guests to arrive in some form of fancy dress. A further challenge was added by guests having to negotiate a series of puns on metals and metallic subjects presented on the invite (probably written by Bauhaus student Xanti Schawinsky) exhorting them to arrive dressed as (or not dressed as) characters or themes related to all things metallic or metallurgical. Many of these puns are difficult (if not impossible) to translate, but they clearly indicate that the event was conceived with considerable humorous intent and a spirit of irony. One of the printed flyers for the party proudly proclaimed that it would feature 'alles blech' or 'everything cheap and trashy'. So the emphasis was not on a glorification of the precious metals associated with fine workmanship,

it was industrial metals in use at all levels of society that were being celebrated. Peter Nisbet points out that although metal was 'the hard, sharp emblem of modernity' it was also 'the reflective stuff of the fun house'. He added, 'Metal not only made objects, it also made immaterial experiences: sounds (of bells, chimes, and jingles, or church bells, doorbells, and other bells) and, more importantly, the ephemera of reflected images' (Nisbet 2002, 15).

There are a number of aspects of the Metal Party that are interesting for the study of jewellery and modernism at the Bauhaus. First, the inventiveness of some of the costumes are worthy of note. Schlemmer's memoirs paint a vivid picture of the Bauhaus on the evening of the Metal Party. We meet some interesting characters, their costumes and accessories. According to Schlemmer, the best costumes were

a death's head Hussar in black, with an aluminum pot and scoop as a helmet, his breast garnished with two crossed tin spoons; a woman in flat metal disks who coquettishly wore a screwdriver on a bracelet and asked each new escort to tighten her loose screws; a pair of brothers wearing beards and hair made out of bronzed wood shavings and metal funnels on their heads, in the point of which each had a cigar which he puffed on through a metal hose leading to his mouth! (1972, 239)

These are typically inventive costumes for Bauhaus students and have more than whiff of Dada about them, as surviving photographs of the Party ascribed to Walter Funkat and others demonstrate (Valdivieso 2005, 118–19). Amusing as the costumes are, they also show a strong concern for the relationship between objects and the body which are either based on extending existing preconceptions of things (the bracelet as a 'home' for a screwdriver), repurposing commonplace objects (tin spoons as a decorative coat of arms) or representing one material as another (bronzed wood shavings for hair). Only at the Bauhaus, perhaps, could a screwdriver take on associations of coquetry.

Second, we also see how the Bauhaus building itself becomes the object of adornment. In order to enter the party it was necessary for guests to negotiate

a children's slide covered in white sheet metal past innumerable gleaming silver balls, lined up and sparkling under spotlights . . . but then on to the realms of true metallic pleasure. Bent sheets of foil glittered and reflected the dancers in distortion, walls of silvered masks and their grotesque shadows, ceilings studded with gleaming brass fruit bowls, everywhere colored metallic paper and the ever-beautiful Christmas-tree balls, some of enormous size. (Schlemmer 1972, 239)

Strangely for a building so often characterized as an object of functionalism in its own right, it would seem that the urge to decorate it on the part of the students was overwhelming. Contemporary photographs give some idea of the way the building was transformed or, indeed, accessorized, for that February evening in 1929 (Figure 3.13). The use of the large spherical metal or glass balls with their capacity to reflect light and create an ever-shifting pattern of distorted reflections produces an effect that must have been quite startling. Obviously, these forms were carefully chosen to provide a form of decoration that complemented the space and provided a spectacular repetitious ensemble of gently moving parts that was part machine-inspired and part decorative treatment. In fact, the accessorizing of the Bauhaus for the Metal Party provided an opportunity to demonstrate another kind of mass ornament.

Writing longingly of the Bauhaus as if it were an *amorata* from times past, Schlemmer says, 'the Bauhaus looked lovely from the outside, radiating into the winter night' (1972, 239). Seemingly, for one night only, this reputedly uncompromising entity was allowed to yield to the effects of the many

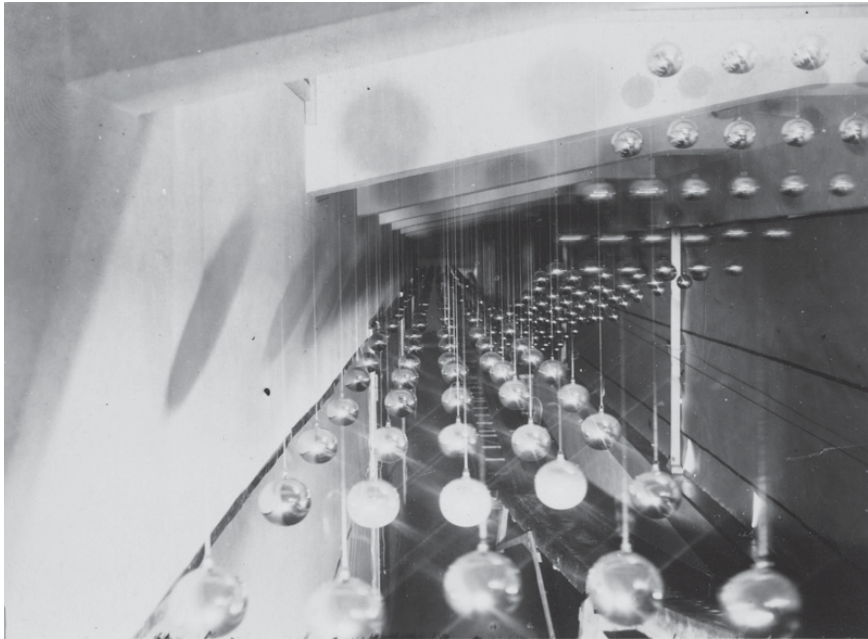


Figure 3.13 Decorations for the Metal Party at the Bauhaus, Dessau, 9 February 1929. Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of Howard Dearstyne, BR50.32.B. Photo: Imaging Department. © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

adornments temporarily applied to its structure and surface, allowing itself to be carefree and abandoning itself to the night. The baubles hung from the ceiling represent an age-old tradition of covering institutional buildings with temporary ornament to create a festival atmosphere. The body of the Bauhaus was, like any other body, not immune to being embellished for the purpose of being the centre of attention. This adornment of the building is also a demonstration of the Wagnerian concept of the *gesamkunstwerk* (total work of art). This idea was of crucial importance to the development of early modernism's cultural programme and is an appropriate way of thinking about the manner in which the 'University of United Form' (Schlemmer's description of the Bauhaus) was often striving for a unified vision.

Third, the Metal Party produced one of the most striking examples of modernist jewellery and body adornment in the form of a collection of pieces made especially for the occasion by the then acting head of the metal workshops Marianne Brandt. Oskar Schlemmer, as head of the Bauhaus stage department, was keenly aware of the relationship between objects and the body. The costumes for his ballets and Bauhaus dances show how both the use of objects and the specially designed costumes might be used to affect the movements and physical capabilities of the performers (Birringer 2013). Something of the spirit of these ideas can be seen in Brandt's pieces. Her photographic self-portrait wearing these objects is discussed in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.5) but the qualities of the objects themselves are what concerns us here as well as understanding the effect that wearing them would have had on the body. The pieces themselves are an aluminium hat with an adjustable silvered paper chin strap, a neck ring of light chromed brass onto which a simple catch has been soldered and a light metal ball. The latter piece is now missing, but appears to have been attached to Brandt's dress by a piece of black ribbon. The pieces are obviously meant to fit with the theme of the party and, like most fancy dress, also designed to be worn for a particular effect, albeit for a short duration of time. Nevertheless, they can be read as a hybrid form somewhere between jewellery and accessory. Their scale means that they would have had an effect on the wearer, perhaps changing both posture and gesture, though the individual pieces are light in weight. In this respect, they are close to Schlemmer's experiments.

It is conceivable that all of the pieces were assembled quickly from fragments of materials Brandt found in the workshop. The hastily improvised soldered catch on the neck ring would seem to bear this out. They are made to a very high standard with few hammer marks visible on the surface and are typical representations

of the surface finish preferred by the leaders of the metal workshops at the Bauhaus under the influence of Moholy-Nagy and, latterly, Brandt herself. As George H. Marcus has pointed out, the effort to present objects made by hand in the Weimar Bauhaus metal workshops as if they were made by machine was carried out both in the making and the photographic recording of the pieces for the purpose of promotion and publicity (Marcus 2008). In her party costume, the surfaces of both Brandt's neckpiece and hanging ball are finished in the manner of machine production. If they were assembled rather than specially made, these pieces may have been selected for adaptation based on their highly polished surfaces and resemblance to machine forms. French silversmith Jean Puiforcat, in an article in *L'Art Vivant* for the same year as Brandt's pieces, pointed out that although his own uncompromisingly modern silverware was all handmade, 'one should never leave visible the marks of the hammer' (Bliss 2003, 143). Brandt's headpiece (or metal halo?) is clearly an ad hoc affair, although consideration has been made for weight in the choice of aluminium. The piece may have had its origins as part of an unfinished bowl or proto-industrial object produced by Brandt (or someone else) in the metal workshop. Whatever the case, it is clear from surviving photographs of the party that metal headgear was worn by other revellers and, perhaps, they may have been aware of a precedent set by German-born Dadaist Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. In 1917 the baroness famously attended a New York concert reception wearing 'the top of a coal scuttle for a hat, strapped on under her chin like a helmet' (Anderson 1930, 194).

In Brandt's self-portrait of 1929 it is just possible to see part of an earring, made especially for the occasion, hanging from her left ear and protruding from below her chin. A close examination of the object reveals a fascinating set of influences and intentions behind this often overlooked piece by Brandt. Chief among these is the influence of photomontage. As Elizabeth Otto has shown, Brandt was constantly experimenting with photomontage during the 1920s and although these pieces were largely private works, it is clear that they had a large influence on the way Brandt was developing her formal language as a designer as well as expressing personal feelings about her own life and times (Otto 2005). Of all modernist innovations in the visual arts of the interwar period montage was perhaps the most radical and had the most profound impact on all forms of visual expression. This is particularly true from the Dada period onwards (i.e. from 1916) and was a particularly potent form of visual expression for German Dadaists. Its capacity for producing strange juxtapositions, innovative compositions and formal experimentation, often using ephemeral materials,

obviously appealed to Brandt's fertile imagination. Significantly, it was also a form of visual expression favoured by women avant-garde artists as both Otto and, later, Hemus have pointed out in relation to women Dadaists (Hemus 2009).

Brandt's montage *Untitled (with Anna May Wong)* of 1929 includes a number of elements that are closely related to the earring made for the Metal Party (Figure 3.14). In the late 1920s, many of Brandt's photomontages are structured around large circular forms. This is particularly the case in compositions such as *Tempo-tempo, progress, culture* (1927), *Cirque d'hiver* from the same year and *Palucca Dances* (1928). The circles, whether flatly abstract or configured from recognizable forms, create a centre from which many of the compositional elements are centrifugally flung out into the rest of the picture space. The composition of *Untitled* includes, among the newspaper clippings, a glass disc, a piece of celluloid and a number 8 made from a piece of punched out card. In paying homage to film through the inclusion of the glass 'lens', Brandt also gives the film actress Anna May Wong a large transparent earring, that hangs below the level of her chin. The film references continue with the inclusion of the diagonally placed strip of celluloid that helps to reinforce the dynamism of the composition. The celluloid is fixed over some of the women's heads, slightly obscuring them and creating a sense of depth as well as the idea that their images have been captured and transformed by the medium of film.

In contrast to the other parts of Brandt's costume for the Metal Party, the earring uses only a small amount of metal parts (Figure 3.15). The design consists of two pieces of plexiglass on to which are fastened two small metal wheels (one a small clock gear which can spin around) and a small bell (which still tinkles). The latter is clearly a reference to the original theme of the party. All the elements of the earring are held together with three split pins. The resulting object has a strong relationship with two major manifestations of modernist art.

First of all, it develops the visual language of using images of machine parts that had emerged from cubist and, particularly, Dadaist art practice. The paintings, collages and constructions of Picabia, Marcel and Suzanne Duchamp from 1915 onwards were often concerned with mechanomorphic imagery, that is to say works where machine imagery (real or invented) is given anthropomorphic qualities. Further, many of these imaginary machines do not 'work'. Indeed, the irony of these pieces, fully conceived in the spirit of Dada, is that these are images of machines (or machines themselves) that produce nothing while appearing to be, at least at first sight, logical, working mechanical



Figure 3.14 Marianne Brandt, 'Untitled [with Anna May Wong]'. Photomontage, 1929. 67 cm × 50 cm. Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Purchase through the generosity of the Friends of the Busch-Reisinger Museum and their Acquisitions Committee, Richard and Priscilla Hunt, Elizabeth C. Lyman, Mildred Rendl-Marcus and Sylvia de Cuevas, 2006.25. Photo: Imaging Department. © President and Fellows of Harvard College. © Artists Rights Society, New York. © DACS, 2016.

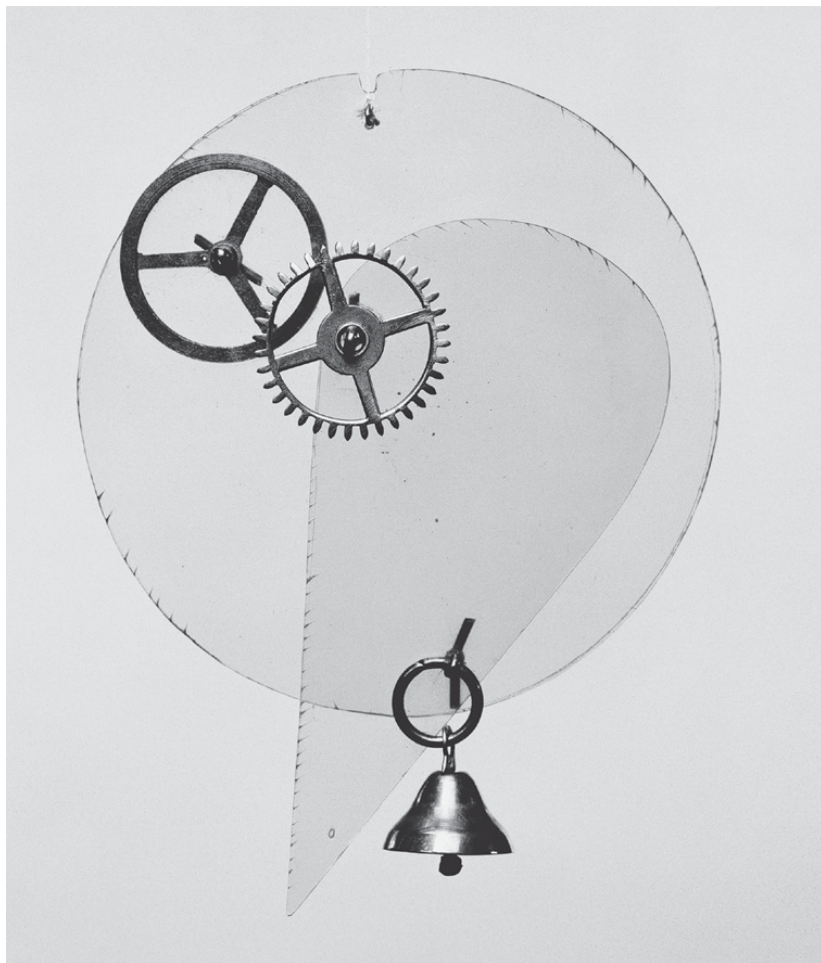


Figure 3.15 Marianne Brandt. Earring for the Metal Party at the Bauhaus on 9 February 1929. Gear wheel, small wheel and bell, nickel-plated brass, celluloid sheet. Length 11 cm. Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin. © DACS, 2016.

entities. Hemus discusses a particularly good example of this kind of work by Suzanne Duchamp, her mixed media piece of 1916 *Un et une menacés* (*A Male and Female Threatened*). It features depictions of a number of structural and mechanical components including a large clock gear, a real plumb bob and metal rings to produce a work with elements ‘that allude to industry and technology and that transgress the boundaries between science and art, handcrafted artwork and mass production’ (Hemus 2009, 139). Although Brandt had spent some time in Paris in 1920 and 1926–1927, it is not clear whether she would have known

the work of Suzanne Duchamp. She was, however, clearly aware of developments in modern art during her time as a student and master at the Bauhaus, either directly or through her peers and her mentor Moholy-Nagy.

Returning to the earring, it is interesting how it uses similar references to machine parts in order to produce a wearable modernist accessory for the body. It hangs perfectly due to the use of the bell counteracting the weight of the wheel and gear. The overlaying plexiglass in the shape of an inverted teardrop also helps to achieve this. The bell, logically placed at the bottom of the earring, literally rings in the ear. In spite of the fact that it was probably made to be worn once only (and would have been difficult to wear for a long period of time) it is a clever piece of construction and plays with the conventional understanding of what an earring is as well as exploiting the ironies of reusing the functional parts of mechanical devices to celebrate metal and its contribution to machine culture in, ultimately, an object whose primary purpose is adornment. In its context as a party accessory, the overall theatricality of the piece should also be noted.

The second and arguably most important characteristic of the earring is that it is also an essay on the principles of modernist photomontage in three-dimensional form. At the Bauhaus, photomontage had developed a post-Dada characteristic whereby the chaotic juxtapositions of Dada compositions (including the use of texts) were replaced by a concern for a more orderly and primarily visual approach. This is clear in the works of Moholy-Nagy and Marianne Brandt from the 1920s. Although both started their careers as painters, working and studying at the Bauhaus allowed them to experiment freely with many different techniques so that, in effect, photomontage became a way of working that provided a means of personal expression and a way of working out compositional ideas. Otto has shown how Moholy-Nagy, such a key influence on Brandt, had begun to see photomontage as a part of the process of creating 'photosculptures', the original montages being rephotographed to create a single image (Otto 2009). The process of creating a single photographic image from the Dada-style glued compositions of the immediate post-war period nevertheless still allowed the artist to produce an image which is, according to Moholy-Nagy's book *Painting, Photography, Film*, 'pieced together from various photographs and are an experimental method of simultaneous representation; compressed interpenetration of visual and verbal wit' (96). Brandt would certainly have been familiar with this text as it was published by the Bauhaus as the eighth in its series of *Bauhausbücher* in 1925. Indeed, the red '8' in Brandt's *Untitled* is the same '8' that appears on the cover of Moholy-Nagy's book.

Brandt's earring contains both the ironic humour and wit of the mecanomorphic nonfunctioning machine parts of Picabia and Duchamp combined with the visual experiments of montage techniques – layering, transparency, translucency, metaphorical and real sound. Above all, there is a strong sense of spatial ambiguity here created by the use of plexiglass. Unlike traditional jewellery, the mass of which is important in the way it hangs, moves and catches the light, Brandt's earring, though large, allows views of the body to be seen through it. The use of plexiglass effectively confronts the notion that a piece of jewellery should be understood as a solid mass. Here it is a modulator of light, gently swinging and by turns reflecting and distorting images of both the subject and the outside world.

Otto notes that, after her return from her second trip to Paris in 1927, Brandt 'seems to have worked in parallel in montage, metal and photography' (2009, 103). The earring can be seen, therefore, as a unique distillation of three main preoccupations of the Bauhaus. As in her photomontages, and with some humour befitting an accessory to a party costume, Brandt produced a piece which can be read as both a celebration of, and ironic commentary on, the failure of machine culture – a bridge between the nihilism of Dada and the formal experimentation of the constructivists.

The forces of modernism and modernity clearly had a profound impact on the conception and creation of jewellery and other objects of personal adornment in interwar culture. Kracauer's dream-image, used to open this chapter, of the forces of change as an inescapable fact of modern life can also serve to illustrate the creative energy applied to many aspects of interwar cultural life. Not only were the arts increasingly seen as being in 'synthesis', there were tendencies (such as the promotion of the culture of the machine and the debates about ornament) that were disseminated through growing international connections and publications. The presence of jewellery designers alongside architects and artists in the organizations that promoted the new tendencies is very significant, but so are the various individual attempts to produce jewellery that responded to or emerged from experiments in other disciplines. We can see jewellery being used to reflect the many changes in the modern world and adapting its form to various social, cultural and economic circumstances. Furthermore, through experimental practices situated at the heart of avant-garde culture, we see objects of adornment being used to critique the very nature of the modern world to which it was increasingly becoming subjected.

Representing Jewellery: Photography and Film

American artist Man Ray only had one major claim to fame as a designer of jewellery. At least that is the way he puts it in a letter to Marjorie Worthington, ex-wife of American writer, explorer, occultist, BDSM aficionado and (alleged) cannibal William Seabrook in 1941. Writing of the *succès de scandale* surrounding his relationship with Seabrook in the early 1930s, Man Ray declares: ‘Even the story; that I had designed special jewelry for you, is known, and I have now the reputation of jewelry designer amongst my other accomplishments’ (Mileaf 2010, 78). Man Ray had indeed designed a high metal collar at the behest of Seabrook for his then wife, probably in 1930. The silversmith who had earlier produced Man Ray’s chess set of c. 1926 manufactured it. According to Man Ray, ‘My silversmith made a very pretty job of it: two hinged pieces of dull silver studded with shiny knobs, that snapped into place, giving the wearer a very regal appearance . . . She was to wear the bauble at home to please Seabrook’s penchant for fetishism, and because it became quite uncomfortable after a while’ (2012, 193–4).

On occasion, Marjorie Seabrook wore the collar at social functions and apparently caused both a ‘sensation’ and a ‘furore’ (Ray 2012, 94). But this was Man Ray dabbling with jewellery design, albeit for a very specific purpose. He did produce, intermittently, some other designs for jewellery during his long artistic career but these were often based on forms from his sculptural works or images taken directly from his paintings such as the *A l’heure de l’Observatoire – les Amoureux* brooch in gold of 1932–1934. In terms of design, the late ‘Lampshade’ earrings of the 1960s, famously modelled by Catherine Deneuve, are true sculptural pieces and have been reproduced at a variety of scales and in a number of different materials. Man Ray’s attempts at jewellery design were largely hampered by the fact that he lacked specific metalsmithing skills, leaving

the making to others. With some notable exceptions (Alexander Calder and Georges Braque, for example) efforts on the part of twentieth-century painters and sculptors to engage with jewellery design can be, in this sense, rather disappointing. Certain galleries in the post-war period encouraged by now famous contemporary artists to create works that, as H. C. Fabre puts it, 'tried to renew the art of jewellery' and although museums were keen to buy these works, they remained difficult to wear, sometimes poorly conceived and represented a 'divorce between idea and technical realization marring considerably their aesthetic appreciation' (Fabre 1969, 42). Though by no means an accomplished maker of jewellery, Man Ray was very interested in jewellery objects. He deployed them in his work many times either as a means of creating form or alluding to its properties as charm, symbol or fashion accessory, combining this interest with a variety of forms of representation. In this respect he was not alone, as the rest of this chapter seeks to demonstrate.

The body and the modernist lens

Throughout the interwar years, jewellery often takes its place at the heart of modernist experimentation with new visual practices and modes of representation. Whether in 'new vision' photography, commercial imagery or in more private experimental work in film and still images, jewellery (and here it is defined in the widest sense as ornament, adornment and visual concept, both 'designed' and in the form of the found object) provided many with an opportunity to explore new visual languages. In Weimar Germany, the photographer Yva (the professional name of Else Neuländer-Simon) produced a number of important contributions to the representation of jewellery and fashion. In 1926, at the start of her career, she also produced one of the most striking self-portraits of the interwar years. The picture is a double-exposure plate which combines an image of her own head, shoulders and crossed arms with a painting by her collaborator Heinz Hajek-Halke. It was one of the first images by Yva to have been widely reproduced and is a strong, challenging representation of a young *neue Frau* (new woman). She wears no jewellery or accessories and gazes straight out at the camera. According to Mila Ganeva, 'Yva is embracing the promised modernist antedote to sexualisation and over-feminisation of women in art by emphasizing the ungendered image' (2003: 9). Yet Yva was to produce some highly sexualized images of women, in which modern accessories, including jewellery, play a major

part. She examined this relationship between the female body and accessories in a series of commercial and experimental images of the 1920s and early 1930s. She concentrated, in one series, on hands – very much a common theme in jewellery advertising of the interwar period. These parts of the body are often shown in isolation, either ‘naked’, adorned with rings and bracelets or, on one occasion, with jewellery worn over long black velvet gloves. In some examples, sets of hands are often shown as active and not at rest, helping to suggest a kind of animated conversation or dramatic gesture.

This kind of image was a common way of portraying jewellery in the 1920s and 1930s both in studio shots and more experimental pieces. The photographers Thérèse Bonney and Man Ray both used this technique as did Paris jeweller Raymond Templier. In the reproduction of his work in *Art et décoration* for February 1930, the photography studio Lecram-Vigneau preferred to show the hand modelling of Templier’s modernist bracelet and ring in a passive way – the ‘gesture’ being demure and almost acquiescent. Since physiognomy reveals character, the absolute neutrality of this particular gesture is striking. In Thérèse Bonney’s version, the setting is a bar as two hands model jewellery for men and women by Gérard Sandoz (Figure 4.1).

The male hand flips the top of the lighter as he is about to light the woman’s cigarette. His hand is much more active than hers as she passively waits for the lighting of the cigarette. The couple are clearly on intimate terms and there is a suggestion that something beyond a tête-à-tête may be forthcoming. Sandoz’s jewellery is made clearly visible, but the emphasis is on the role they play in the relationship between the couple, the intimate setting and the myth of metropolitan glamour. Focusing on the hands allows the viewer to concentrate on how the jewellery ‘works’ on a familiar part of the body and how this may promote strategies of adornment. Man Ray used real hands as well as those of a mannequin in an advertisement for Cartier jewellery published in the September 1935 edition of *Harper’s Bazaar*. But the concentration on particular parts of the body (whether real or fabricated) as sites for the display of jewellery must also be understood in the context of fetishism. As Susan Buck-Morss writes, ‘just as the much-admired mannequin has detachable parts, so fashion encourages the fetishistic fragmentation of the living body’ (Meskimmon 1999, 59).

Yva’s photograph known as ‘Hands Study’ of c. 1929 shows only certain fragments of the model’s body – two bejewelled arms emerging from what seems to be a long coat or wrap (Figure 4.2). Ganeva claims that these fragments, rather than objectifying the female body, allow the product itself to be subjected to ‘the



Figure 4.1 Jewellery by Gérard Sandoz; photographed by Thérèse Bonney, late 1920s. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Libraries, Washington, DC. © UC Regents, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

expert woman's eye' (2003, 16). This may explain Yva's interest in the close-up (an emerging trope of modernist photography) or, indeed, the demands of the client's brief. Either way, in the context of advertising images of jewellery, it should not be forgotten that such objectifying imagery was commonplace in the 1920s in spite of the emergence of the new woman.

In Germany, as elsewhere, the place of the *neue Frau* within capitalism is ambiguous in the sense that any positive aspects of the portrayal of what is also known as the 'Modern Girl' became an opportunity for further exploitation. Poiger points out that 'so-called neue frauen in Germany . . . raised both hopes and fears about forces of modernity. Neue frauen or "girls" in bobs, short, loose dresses, or sports outfits did indeed become a pervasive social presence across classes in 1920s Germany' (2008, 320). However, there was money to be made by perpetuating the image of the *neue Frau* as rebellious and willing to challenge 'preexisting ideologies of female subservience and self-sacrifice' in a way that 'reworked modern heteronormativity' (Weinbaum et al. 2008, 52). As we have seen in Chapter 1, the new woman, whether *femme moderne*, *garçonne*, *neue Frau*



Figure 4.2 Elsa Neuländer-Simon (known as Yva), 'Hands Study', c. 1929. Gelatin silver print. 19.69 × 14.29 cm. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Purchase. Photograph: Don Ross.

or Flapper could as easily be portrayed in advertising or popular film as empty headed, vacuous, dizzy or vain as she could be strong-willed, independent, active or intelligent. The exploitation of the image of the *neue Frau* also becomes, for some, problematic within the contemporary institutional critiques of capitalism. As Meskimmon puts it, the 'elite, masculine critique of consumerism' created a situation whereby:

the New Woman was evacuated of her potentially liberating aspects, paraded as a mere image in the media and described as the duped consumer by male critics. This left no space in which to take seriously the women who were emerging as independent agents in the period and their negotiations of the tropes of the *neue frau*, spectatorship and consumerism. (1999, 180)

Returning to Yva's 'Hands Study' it is an extraordinarily unique image in the recent history of the representation of jewellery. If, as is highly likely, the image

was intended for use in advertising it presents an intriguing way of promoting this particular jewellery collection (which remains unidentified). The principal interest here is how the model 'performs' in this regard. An examination of the pose is worth undertaking. To cross the arms at the elbows means that the model must be leaning forward and resting her left arm on her left knee. The right hand crosses her upper body and rests on the shoulder. The jewellery itself consists of a ring on the right ring finger (the traditional German placement for a wedding ring) and two large bracelets, both able to move up and down the arm. The scene is indeterminate. Is it a studio shot? Is it a street? Is it at night? Is the woman coming home from an evening out? Are the crossing arms protruding from the coat a gesture of protection or a flamboyant demonstration of a young, supple frame? We cannot see the model's face as she leans forward due to the cropping of the picture, but her body is athletic – how else could she perform this pose?

The whole gesture is theatrical and this is a theme that was regularly explored by Yva up until the early 1930s. According to Moortgat and Beckers, 'Yva made her photo models appear to be on stage, so as to fix a moment which was capable of suggesting movement, even in the static image' (2001, 231). The key characteristic of motion in modernist aesthetics (whether actual or implied) is important for both fashion and jewellery. Increasingly, designers in both domains were aiming to exploit movement either in the pieces themselves or in their strategies of representation. Karl Toepfer, in his commentary on early twentieth-century German body culture, refers to how 'modern bodies project an ambiguous historical function: bodies are modern because they create significant instabilities of perception' (1997, 6). The new ways in which the modern body was to perform itself can be seen in a variety of photographic representations in Weimar culture. In Yva's work, we encounter contemporary applications of the modernist body applied to representations of fashion, advertising, sports and performing arts. In spite of the fact that Toepfer considers such things as 'fashion and machines' to be things that are imposed on the body, he also says that there was 'an ambitious attempt by the culture to physicalise modernity within the body and to view the body itself as a manifestation of modernist desire' (7). This view has significance for understanding the way that Yva's bodies perform both the objects that they are wearing and the body itself. When Yva photographed the nude female form in attitudes suggestive of the modern German body culture described by Toepfer, but with the crucial addition of jewellery objects, she was using one aspect of body culture (the new female physicality) to showcase another (modern body adornment). Unlike in conventional fashion photography, here it is the nude body not the subject's costume or outfit that is

being accessorized. Thus we may see in this form of representation the use of the accessory to not only increase the erotic potential of the adorned body (and to give it identity as fashion does), but also to position the modern body firmly in the realm of contemporary culture as supple, mobile and free.

Toepfer states that German body culture produced 'the most turbulent dance culture in history' and that there was uncertainty within this culture about whether 'modernity was ultimately an ecstatic condition of nudity or an ecstatic release of movement' (1997, 7). One of the consistent physical characteristics of jewellery is how it moves with the body. In Yva's photography, jewellery detracts from the 'pure' form of the nude figure, moving our perception of the body away from consideration of its anatomical form towards a cultural appreciation of adornment. In some of Yva's photographs this process is very evident.

One in particular shows a naked model wearing nothing but a series of gold bangles on her wrists. Her twisted head-down pose renders her anonymous, but the flexible pose shows off her athletic modernist body (Moortgat and Beckers 2001, 110). Bodies like this (expressions of what was known at the time as *körperkultur*) constitute characteristic forms of interwar visual culture, emphasizing an active, healthy, flexible body. These bodies, apart from possessing athletic potential, were also capable of modelling modern accessories with ease. Similar to the series of Man Ray's photographs of chanteuse Suzy Solidor (see Chapter 1) there is a significant reference here to the practice of wearing jewellery *à l'esclave* (like a slave). Originating in nineteenth-century orientalism, the tendency to depict women in passive poses as captives wearing highly ornate jewellery (and often little else) was popularized, among others, by the painter Ingres. The erotic barely adorned body has, though, undergone a transformation in these modern images. The women here are not portrayed as passive victims, even though they may still be seen as being objectified. Their role is to model products and to use their modern bodies to emphasize the qualities of specific pieces of jewellery in the service of modern commercial enterprise.

Carmel Finnan argues that Yva's 'Hands Study' 'reduces the female body to a display medium for the consumer objects that adorn it, transforming this passive object with her camera into a sensual and sexualized image' (2006, 131). Indeed the technology of modern photography (the close-up lens, more sensitive film) together with the aesthetics of modernist visual practices (fragmentation, assemblage, collage) provided a number of ways in which female body parts could be objectified in both commercial and avant-garde representation. In Yva's work, this is also the case with some of her more conventional photographs of models wearing jewellery and is more strikingly obvious in her commercial photographs

of stockings where often only the model's legs are shown with, sometimes, close-up shots of the pattern or weave of the fabric. Many of these photographs by Yva are composed along the lines of shop window displays, where display of the product is supremely important. Her images of models sporting different ranges of jewellery are strongly reminiscent of those of the society and fashion photographer Dora Kallmus (known as Madame D'Ora) who had produced commercial images of avant-garde jewellery in Germany and France in the 1920s.

When considering Yva's representation of the body, the influence of Dada and surrealism cannot be discounted, as the tendency to objectify parts of the female anatomy (adorned or unadorned) was common in experimental film, photography and assemblage and exercised some influence on Weimar visual culture. But Yva's only significant written statement about her photographic practice, produced for an exhibition of her work in Berlin in 1927, reveals that she was interested in trying to 'utilise the artistic possibilities of pure photography', indicating that the photographic apparatus (in particular the lens) should be used objectively to reveal 'the image's own aptitude for composition' (Moortgat and Beckers 2001, 206). There is a strong flavour of the *Kunstwollen* (will to form) here, a kind of self-actualization of the photograph under the strict conditions of modern techniques. The development of the new photography in the 1920s (and what Lucia Moholy refers to as 'object photography') provided creative impetus for the exploration of new photographic languages in both the artistic and the commercial realm. As Witkovsky writes, 'rather than valuing photographs above all as artefacts of technological progress, or differentiating between the creative and the commercial realm, this new theory declared photographs of all kinds and uses . . . to be part of an ever-modern and inherently experimental field of imagery' (2007, 53). For Moholy 'the object in the picture became self-assertive; and so did the details of the object. Nothing was without significance. The minuteness of detail became essential . . . The texture of the object, its own surface, were emphasized' (1939, 164).

Florence Henri and Marianne Brandt: Objects and self-representation

Lucia Moholy and fellow modernist artist and photographer Florence Henri produced a number of portraits and object photographs in the 1920s and 1930s which, through exploitation of new photographic practices, demonstrated a

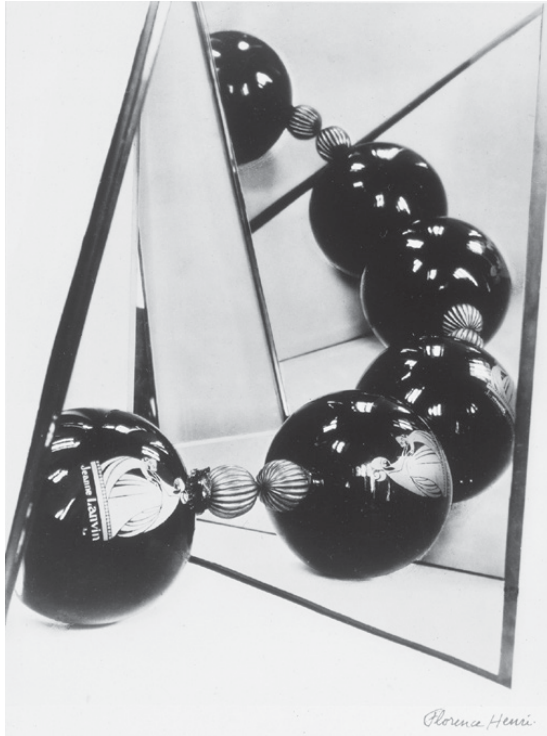


Figure 4.3 Florence Henri, advertising photograph for Lanvin perfume, 1929. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Florence Henri. © Galleria Martini e Ronchetti, Genoa.

keen interest in recording jewellery as a modern fashion accessory. Henri also used visual references to jewellery as a spur to the formal inventiveness of her images. For example, when Maison Lanvin introduced its iconic *boule noir* perfume bottle in 1927 (to contain the new ‘*Arpège*’ scent) Henri produced a striking image using a single bottle and mirrors to produce a representation of a necklace based on repeated reflections (Figure 4.3).

Henri explained that she used mirrors to ‘introduce the same subject seen from different angles in a single photograph so as to give the same theme a variety of views that complete each other and are able to expound it better by interacting with each other’ (du Pont 1990, 20). This is reminiscent of the strategies employed by the cubists, but also the various experiments with light and reflections undertaken at the Bauhaus by Marianne Brandt and others. The result is a visual construction of a necklace (not an illusion since the reflections create an *idea* of a necklace and not any necklace in particular) and is an interesting

way to connect the product and its glass container to produce a promotional image of a highly desirable brand. Of all small objects of vanity, perhaps scent bottles are the most gendered (and remain so to this day). The Lanvin boule noir with its fluted gold stopper and glittery fabric bow is both a mythic object (with classical overtones recalling Roman glass), Christmas decoration and (in Henri's constructed image) glass bead necklace. Henri's advertising image transposes a simple form into a multivalent jewellery image, the image of a jewel that evokes the transformatory powers of the scent and, at the same time, introduces a new dynamism to still-life photography. For a while, both Henri's commercial and private photographic practice employed the use of mirrors for portrait and still-life photography.

Martin Jay has written that photography's ability 'to preserve a moment that inevitably passes, an event that has happened only once, is one of the most powerful claims the medium has on us', while also adding that 'what it shows is irretrievably gone, and yet doggedly still present in a lingering image' (2015, 10). Henri's repetition of the Lanvin perfume bottle through the use of mirrors arguably produces an image of a 'jewel' that is full of the potential for movement. After all, one of the uses of jewellery in costume is to produce the restless sensation of movement through the accumulation of points of reflection. For example, a feature in *Vogue* magazine for March 1937, showed small spears of rhinestone flowers available from Saks, Fifth Avenue, that are promised to 'quiver convincingly as you move'.

Compared to Henri's representation, Thérèse Bonney's 1929 photograph of the same Lanvin bottles, illustrated in *A Shopping Guide to Paris*, straightforwardly shows them more straightforwardly as a family of objects arranged according to size and thus constituting a fairly traditional point of sale image (Bonney and Bonney 1929, 26–7). However, Henri's bottles form a dynamic visually linked sequence that must be completed in the mind to be appreciated as a necklace. The bottles are repeated so that they either confront themselves or complete their pattern in the mirror world, thus making it possible to produce what might be called a partially formed 'trans-real' necklace, where a sense of immediate perception of a real object is translated into a conceptual model of a familiar but, ultimately, unobtainable one very much in the spirit of surrealism. It should be noted once again that the fascination with the mirrored surface is a clear feature of much Bauhaus photography and Henri's use of mirrors is a further development of this interest. Herself Bauhaus trained and with many contacts in avant-garde circles, Henri's visual experiments with capturing reflections

of objects in shiny surfaces was one way to produce the strikingly modern yet disconcerting imagery characteristic of full-blown modernist photography.

Diana C. du Pont writes of Henri's portrait photography that it 'dramatizes the New Vision techniques of shooting close up, from above, and at an angle, by setting the subject's face against the designs of modern textiles and jewellery' and that 'these photographs suggest that for the modern woman clothes are more a reflection of personality than of class, and that through her appearance, a woman can make and remake herself' (1990, 41). Thus jewellery here becomes, if not a completely classless item, then at the very least a means by which an assertion of personality (or personalities) can be made within the dictates of modern fashion. As Richard Godden writes 'fashion is always disintegrative; it aims to give us several selves, thereby providing capital with a diversification of markets' (1998, xxii). It is also interesting how so many photographic portraits of artists and writers of the 1920s and 1930s (e.g. those of Man Ray and Cecil Beaton) feature the use of clothing and accessories as a way of creating alternative images for the sitter.

In portraits of Florence Henri by Lucia Moholy and Max Peiffer Watenphul, she is often shown wearing jewellery (both commercial and, probably, made by herself from found objects) which complements her style of dressing. Henri's choice of clothing usually featured a personal taste for strong, bold patterns or geometric weaves befitting a student of the Bauhaus. This is clearly shown in Moholy's 1927 photographic portrait of Henri (Witkovsky 2007, 81). Here she wears an earring that appears to have been made from a found object, possibly a lightweight industrial component. This is a sign of her artistic spirit, unconventional approach to adornment and independence of mind. Witkovsky writes of this image that 'the sitter is unequivocally modern, but to be modern means to present oneself as a screen of equivocal possibilities' (81). These possibilities are partly the result of modern capitalism (and the 'diversification' referred to by Godden) but also points to the way that many Bauhaus students and masters often invented different personalities for themselves, either through self-portraits, manipulated images or dressing up for themed parties such as the 1929 Metal Party (see Chapter 3).

Godden's contention is a useful way of considering the commodification of modern forms of jewellery in Henri's portraits and in portraits of her by Moholy. Henri's 'Portrait Composition (Woman with Three Bracelets)' of 1930 is a good example (Figure 4.4). Three bangles (probably of celluloid) are modelled as a structural modernist adjunct to the arm. They are carefully positioned to fully



Figure 4.4 Florence Henri, 'Portrait Composition: Woman with Three Bracelets', 1929. Gelatin silver photograph, 29.3 × 22.2 cm. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. Purchased 1986. Florence Henri © Galleria Martini e Ronchetti, Genoa.

show themselves to the camera. The model's simple spotted dress provides a geometric patterned area to the right of the picture. The texture of the dress is underplayed in the image so that the white dots are read as pure shapes without the distraction of texture. The model also wears a simple necklace of thick wire (similar to that worn by Meret Oppenheim in Man Ray's 1933 photograph 'Erotique voilée') echoing the curve of her chin, softly modelled by the light. She disengages from the viewer and stares, not without interest, out of the frame. She exhibits the demeanour of someone at ease with her surroundings and confident in her choice of modern clothing and accessories. Underneath the bangles is a striped fabric serving to demonstrate, once more, a clear connection with modern design.

In other examples by Henri from the same year, such as the 'Portrait Composition (Margarete Schall with Hairnet)', the sitter directly returns the camera's gaze, her hairnet and elasticated metal choker providing unusual and

contrasting personalized accessories that play a significant part in the formation of the image of this particular *neue Frau*. Some of Henri's studies show the female nude wearing a small number of items of adornment. In the case of the series of photographs of Honor made in 1934, the model wears only a buckled leather belt around her waist and a ring on the ring finger of her left hand. She seems unencumbered by this, kneeling and reaching up to fix her hair, leaning backwards with hands behind her back and staring up and out of the frame, confident and only minimally accessorized. These nudes are all wearing either very simple jewellery or accessories. They are not adorned, as in many fin-de-siècle representations of the nude, with heavy jewels intended to create an erotic effect based on notions of the exotic or the oriental. They are a very different kind of nude study where the modern accessory is deployed not only to distance the representation of the nude from these previous associations but also, as in Yva's work, to delineate and define specifically modernist bodies.

Bauhaus designer Marianne Brandt produced a series of important photographic self-portraits in the late 1920s in which objects and backgrounds are used in combination with her own image to create new formations of her self. Through performance and masquerade and, as Chadwick puts it, by 'blurring gender boundaries by using coded signs, the meaning of which shifts from historical moment to historical moment', it was possible for Brandt to represent herself in a unique way (1998, 27). We have seen in the previous chapter how her set of body adornments for the Bauhaus Metal Party were used to create an image of herself which, perhaps at first sight, appears ambiguous in terms in gender identity, an aspect that is reinforced by the metallic forms themselves (Figure 4.5). The headpiece is not worn in the conventional way or, indeed, at a conventional angle. Its strap produces a reaction in the sitter to lift the chin at an awkward angle. The neckpiece, a heavy geometric affair of circular and spherical forms, departs from any 'normal' considerations of weight and scale. To complete her 'performance' Brandt adopts cropped hair and wears a simple, black sleeveless dress. It can be argued that there is nothing here that has been directly 'lifted' from the masculine world. In fact, through the representation of a particular object-subject relationship, Brandt's jewellery helps to promote a strong image of modern femininity rather than anything that directly signifies masculinity.

As has been demonstrated in Chapter 2, Charlotte Perriand used jewellery to help define herself as a confident, professional, modern woman. However, unlike Perriand, Marianne Brandt, it is claimed, was unsuccessful in presenting



Figure 4.5 Marianne Brandt, 'Self-Portrait in the Studio with Jewellery for the Metal Party, Bauhaus Dessau', 1929. Gelatin silver print, 19.7 × 13.7 cm. Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin. © DACS, 2016.

herself in this way. As Magdalena Droste points out, 'It was difficult for Brandt to develop a professional female *habitus* as a designer even in the relatively liberal environment of the Bauhaus. The development of a female *habitus* was more promising in the weaving workshop . . . But the metal workshop was a male territory: a battleground among men' (2009, 218). Evoking Bourdieu's idea of *habitus* as behaviour specific to particular social groups, Droste argues that Brandt failed to effectively conform to the type of behaviour (and to develop the skills of self-promotion) that were necessary for artistic success both during and after her time at the Bauhaus. Crucial to this success was the ability to take control over the authorship and ownership of work produced and to project a convincing image of autonomous artistic practice. Tensions at the Bauhaus emerged when director Walter Gropius, who was in favour of cooperative working and the promotion of Bauhaus designs anonymously, clashed with staff and students about the ownership of their work. All this has relevance to the

way Brandt chose to represent herself in the photographic image. She made self-portraits on numerous occasions during her time at the Bauhaus and later in her life. However, the only self-portraits to feature herself with her own work are those which were made at the time of the Metal Party in 1929. These were works produced for a single social occasion and, unlike much of her applied craft and design work, never achieved any significant status as works of body adornment. They do, however, reveal something about Brandt's methods and intentions of self-representation. She was, above all, interested in the way metal works as a hard, reflective surface. Sometimes this is shown in her photographs of curved surfaces, often featuring reflections of herself behind or with the camera as in 'Das Atelier in der Kugel' of 1928–1929 (Bliss 2013, 180). In these images her body shape is often distorted. This can be interpreted as a response to the formalist doctrine of defamiliarization, but the relationship between herself and her immediate surroundings also seems to be uncomfortable. The 'controlling' metal of the pieces for the Metal Party present Brandt in a unique way, but this is not an image of a professional artist: 'Brandt's behavior tells us that she was unable to imagine or invent a professional *habitus* in the way [Marcel] Breuer and [Herbert] Bayer had done, even as a photographic subject. Not even at the symbolic level did she find a model which unified her professional abilities and her gender' (Droste 2009, 218). Brandt's self-portrait wearing the Metal Party accessories shows her as an awkward subject, in an unflattering pose with objects that seem to be controlling her. Whether this was done with wry humour or not (and this should not be discounted given her gift for visual wit) it is a long way from Henri's portrait compositions where the subjects are at ease with their surroundings and the objects that serve to form their identities.

Man Ray and jewellery

As a photographer, Marianne Brandt was primarily interested in exploring the compositional devices which were important in the development of her vision of the world as one which was in flux due the impact of the forces of modernity. She was also able to comment ironically on the machine culture that so many of her colleagues were enthusiastic proponents of. However, the surface remained something very important for Brandt in both her photography and her object making. By contrast, Man Ray's photographic practice objects are often represented as forms of material reality. However, their material reality is acted upon by light

to produce 'an abstract rendering of the object from which it emanates' (Knowles 2009, 130). This is particularly true of both the Rayographs and certain passages in Man Ray's experimental films, where jewellery often plays a significant role. In the Rayographs, objects are shown as shadows, mysterious traces of the objects themselves, often without human scale and always out of conventional time and space. Man Ray worked as a commercial photographer from the early 1920s and published some of his Rayographs in French *Vogue* as early as 1926 ('Études en blanc et noir', 1926, 34). His attempts to gain visibility for his more experimental work could easily have had a direct impact on the work of more commercial photographers. One of the plates published in the *Vogue* piece includes a pearl or mock-pearl bracelet, perhaps one belonging to his then partner Alice Prin, better known as Kiki de Montparnasse. Many of the objects used by Man Ray in the Rayographs are ordinary everyday objects and, as has been pointed out, Man Ray 'did not leave home in search of his material, but instead chose items that were intimately domestic in character' (Neusüss and Heyne 1998, 191). These included objects such as jewellery, pieces of lace, cooking utensils, flowers, hair (from all parts of the body), pins, wire and fabric mesh. In other words, objects often taken from the feminine 'sphere' that were both ready to hand and of an appropriate scale to be placed on the photographic paper. Such objects may also have had a very strong fetishistic character for the photographer. *Vogue* was sufficiently intrigued by the four images to declare that the results of Man Ray's experiments showed 'the results of a comical modernism, hallucinatory, disconcerting and a little mysterious' ('Études en blanc et noir', 1926, 34).

Objects, whatever their provenance, often appear disembodied in Man Ray's images, as is the case in the 1927 Rayograph 'Necklace and Bracelet' (Figure 4.6). At first sight, this image seems disconcerting as it appears to be a conventional photograph of a bracelet around which has been drawn a starburst. On closer inspection, the starburst is the necklace – an affair made from thin metal tubing crudely joined together. In fact, this may not be a necklace at all and may have originally had another function as a more utilitarian object. It stands for a necklace here and its shape serves to contain the half-shadow, half-reflections emanating from the elasticated bracelet. There is no attempt to give these objects human scale or any spatial or narrative context. They create a graphically complex and spatially ambiguous composition. These 'jewels' have a life beyond the body, in a time and space of their own.

The bracelet featured in this photograph appears to be the one worn by Kiki in Man Ray's 1928 film *l'Étoile de mer*. In a scene at 13'15", the bracelet is very

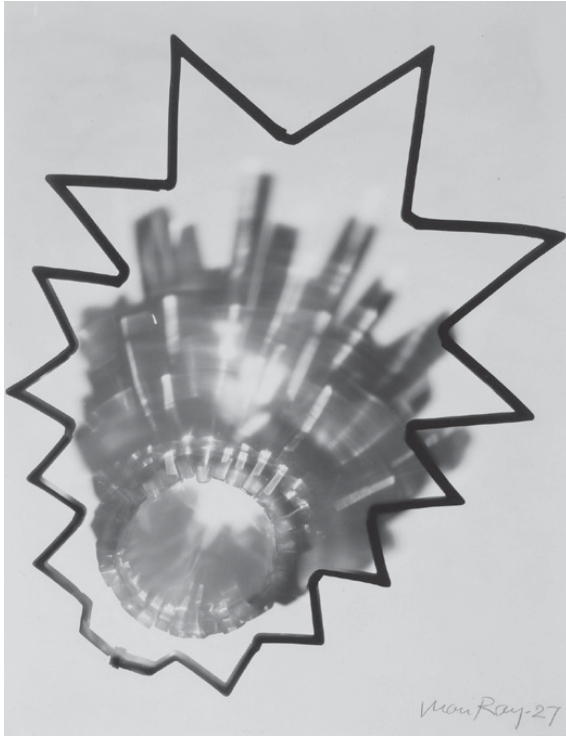


Figure 4.6 Man Ray, 'Necklace and Bracelet', 1927. Gelatin silver print. 22.9 × 17.6 cm. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. © Man Ray Trust/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

prominently displayed on Kiki's right wrist as her character climbs a stairwell, knife in hand, with murderous intent (Ray 2007). A starfish is superimposed over the frame. At 15'25" in the same film, Kiki is shown sleeping wearing only a pearl necklace at the throat and a linked metal bracelet of brass, both good examples of the contiguity of the traditional and the modern. In Man Ray's earlier film *Emak Bakia* of 1926, Kiki is shown wearing elaborate costume jewellery as she performs the famous scene at 19'30" where, with open eyes painted on her closed lids, she slowly opens the latter to reveal her real eyes before closing them again and falling back into sleep or, indeed, death (Ray 2007).

In modernist film, jewellery is evoked in other ways. In Man Ray's 1923 film *Le Retour à la raison* (*The Return to Reason*) images of a fun-fair carousel shot at night show strings of electric lights whirl in concentric circles as moving parts of the machine, recalling strings of pearls or the points of light refracting from a necklace of jewels. There is very little background visible and

these 'giant' pieces of whirling jewellery are left to define the space. A similar effect can be seen in Henry Chomette's 1925 film *Jeux de reflets et de la vitesse* (*Play of Reflections and Speed*) pinpoints of light form strings which dance rhythmically on the screen, later revealed to be the lights seen by the driver's cab of a metro train inside a tunnel. In a similar vein, a photograph of the *Bal de la couture* held at the Paris Opera in 1929 shows the interior of the hall lit by strands of electric lights, reminiscent of strings of pearls and vast sautoirs (Evans 2013, 121). In the foreground, a group of mannequins wait to go on stage. This liaison between the historic and the modern (the Opera, the pearls, the electric lights, the mannequins and the fleeting fashions) together with the spectacle of the event itself are a clear expression of Baudelairean modernity. Man Ray's 'straight' photography of jewellery made for fashion periodicals in the 1920s and 1930s sometimes featured jewellery modelled by mannequins, or parts of mannequins. These slightly disconcerting images give the product human scale, but disconnect them from the material realities of the everyday under the influence of the surrealist techniques of evoking the uncanny. Man Ray foregrounded these ideas in his experimental practice, for example, the dice-rolling mannequin hands in his 1929 film *Les Mystères du Château de Dé*. The photographs Man Ray produced to illustrate Russian émigré novelist Elsa Triolet's book *Colliers* (*Necklaces*) are an interesting case of how these aspects of his photographic practice were brought together. They also shed further light on Man Ray's interest in representing jewellery and accessories, in this case the materiality of Triolet's collection of idiosyncratic pieces.

Triolet wrote *Colliers* in the early 1930s in her native Russian. For reasons which are not altogether clear, this version was submitted to a publisher in Moscow, but was never published there. Subsequent editions have appeared in French (Triolet 1973) and German (Triolet 1999) both of which include Man Ray's four original illustrations. Her necklaces were made from a combination of found, cheap and 'poor' materials which was to lend surrealist credibility to her designs. The text of *Colliers* describes how the piecemeal work involved in producing these accessories was a way of making a meagre living for Triolet and her partner, French surrealist writer Louis Aragon. He rose at 5 am every day to sell them to representatives of international fashion houses such as Lelong and Schiaparelli. The latter was particularly keen to buy them because her intuition, sharpened by the impact of the new straightened economic circumstances of the 1930s, was that 'public taste called for an impoverished chic' (Mackinnon 1992, 79). The couple lived in a small flat which, for a time, became Triolet's workshop. The situation is described in a

section of Aragon's poem *Cantique à Elsa* written in 1942: 'You were making jewels for sale and at night / All turned into necklaces under the spell of your hands / Any bits of old rag any bits of old glass / Necklaces as lovely as light / Lovely beyond belief' (Adereth 1994, 46). Aragon writes that he sold them to dealers from all over the world but their material value was far from that associated with conventional jewellery: 'Those jewels made from nothing by your gold-washing fingers / Those pebbles which looked like flowers / Carrying your colours' (46).

A collection of forty-seven of these pieces has survived and has been held by the municipality of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, France, since 1987. They are not on permanent public display but an examination of images of extant pieces clearly reveals the variety of materials that Triolet used in their creation (*Les Colliers d'Elsa Triolet: Exposition virtuelle*, 2017). In various combinations, these include velour, leather, glass, bone, cotton, imitation mother of pearl, silk, horsehair, glass, plastic, Bakelite and a range of cheap soft metals in a variety of finishes. Some of them are clearly influenced by Louis Aragon's collection of African artefacts. They exhibit the qualities of chance inherent in the found object combined with a mysterious, often unsettling character in the spirit of Dada and surrealism. Perhaps this is because of the origins of the materials themselves; fascinating and, at the same time, slightly repellent. For Triolet, obtaining the small amounts of materials needed to make the pieces required her to visit some unsavoury parts of the city of Paris and do deals with some unscrupulous characters, who felt their livelihoods were threatened by foreign competitors. As an impoverished émigré Russian sympathetic to the cause of the Communist Party, yet herself from a bourgeois family, the contrasts between the poverty she experienced in certain parts of Paris and the millionaires she encountered in the fashion houses contributed significantly to the establishment of her political position for the rest of her life. As with the case of Nancy Cunard, jewellery played a significant part in the growth of Elsa Triolet's political consciousness. Like Cunard, Triolet was often photographed wearing quite conspicuous pieces of costume jewellery in a variety of decidedly nonprecious materials. In *Colliers* Triolet refers to her work making costume jewellery as being part of the *industrie de sourire* (smiling industries) and contrasts her experiences of east and west: 'While in the Soviet Union all trades offer the possibility of making a subsistence living, in the West there are some professions reserved for millionaires' (1973, 12). Nevertheless, she describes her determination to embark on a career: 'I decided to make and sell necklaces. I had not the least idea how this could be done. If only I had known!' (12).

Before examining Man Ray's images of Triole's work, it is important to understand that her relationship with the world of fashion was highly ambiguous. Triole liked fashion, but disliked the *world* of fashion: 'high fashion panders above all else to today's Parisian snobbery' (1973, 42). She saw the irony of both Schiaparelli's exploitation of poverty through *l'allure pauvre* (poverty chic) and her own complicity in this process by providing cheaply produced pieces that retailed at a high price while affording herself the most meagre of existences. There is something of this irony present in Man Ray's images as well as an attempt to present Triole's necklaces as avant-garde developments in jewellery design. The four necklaces photographed by Man Ray for *Colliers* are made of a variety of materials including mother of pearl, white porcelain, nickel rings and white horse hair. Triole herself models the necklaces in porcelain and nickel. One of these images is, in effect, a solarized portrait of Triole (reproduced on page 43 of the 1999 Ebersbach edition). However, Man Ray's technique, in which the photographic image (or more usually part of it) is reversed in tone, serves to provide the visual means by which the porcelain links of the necklace are enhanced in their whiteness, surrounded by deep shadow and providing a filigree outline of Triole's neck. The space she inhabits is ambiguous, there is no background and her hair appears to be dissolving into the shadows. The overriding impression is that of an object (the necklace) that seems to be in the process of taking over its wearer. As will be shown later, this sense of threat is a common feature of Man Ray's representation of jewellery.

Of Man Ray's four photographs, the most intriguing is the one which represents Triole's necklace and armband made from white horse hair (Figure 4.7). It is one of the finest examples of the technique of rayography and is an arresting representation of one of Triole's most enigmatic necklaces.

The photographic technique lends itself perfectly to drawing out both the uncanny nature of these objects and the seeming fragility of their substance. Without the body as reference and, therefore, without scale, they exist in their own world. The forms appear to float in a half-world of representation reminiscent of the way a scientific photographer may study images of microscopic life forms in the laboratory. The careful composition of the two pieces on the photographic plate plays with their meaning and nascent ambiguity: they are 'jewels' to be worn but have another life as part of a fantastical chimerical image. Their materiality appears negligible in Man Ray's photograph where the bow, in particular, seems barely to be bounded by any substance at all. It reinforces the irony that the market value of these pieces was completely out of proportion to their material



Figure 4.7 Man Ray. Rayograph of horsehair necklace and bracelet by Elsa Triolet, c. 1931. The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, REP.F.3193, facing p. 101. © Man Ray Trust/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

value. Man Ray's image seems to play with this notion through defamiliarization and dematerialization of the object.

One of the traditional uses of horsehair in clothing was as a lining (crinoline; *le crin* in French being horsehair) used to stiffen fabrics. Here, the material traditionally used to add stiffening and structure to a garment is reduced by Man Ray's technique to an image of something almost without physical substance. Triolet said of these pieces: 'I invented almost imponderable necklaces, in white horse hair, of which we wrote, when they were exhibited at the *salon des Artistes Modernes*, that they were necklaces of snow and dream' (1973, 101). The necklace becomes, through its fragile materiality, an evocative image worthy of a surrealist poem – Man Ray's response to the objects emphasizes the evanescent and fugitive qualities of ice crystals and fleeting hallucinations.

Triolet's necklaces were born of poverty and dire need and sold as accessories to the haute couture fashion houses of Paris. They have subsequently taken their

place as objects struggling with the dual forces operating within both surrealism and capitalist society. As Adereth has noted, 'looking at the Parisian world of haute couture with the critical eye of a foreigner from a socialist country, Elsa was able to reveal the life of the idle rich and that of the working poor' (1994, 160). To put it another way, Triolet's pieces invite consideration of the notion that subjective creation and modern capitalist society were in a dialectical relationship. As Ulrich Lehmann writes, 'Embracing dialectical materialism, initially for political reasons . . . brought the surrealist object closer to a materialist meaning within a culture that had not yet been "liberated" by structural change – politically, socially or economically' (2007, 23). The materiality of Elsa Triolet's jewellery was partly determined by circumstances, partly by choice. As Aragon's poem and Triolet's memoir shows, she was forced to use almost entirely worthless materials but also chose to work with them in a way in which she felt unencumbered by the traditional and, perhaps, hidebound making practices of the jeweller. As she writes in *Colliers*, she did not care to be judged against the standards of professional jewellers or by the way in which their work was often appraised purely in terms of material value: 'I did my best to manufacture necklaces from a material that had not yet been used, so no one could teach me the technique. Likewise I had to adapt the tools to be suitable for doing the work' (Triolet 1973, 34). So in not allowing herself to be judged against traditional practices, Triolet was able to freely create unhampered by convention and by the 'norms' of technique. Man Ray was able to utilize his radical techniques of representation to present this unusual collection of accessories as a mysterious synthesis of form and the uncanny. Happily for Triolet, the House of Schiaparelli became one of her most regular clients, the latter's penchant for Surrealism surely being a factor in this.

At around the same time Man Ray was making images for *Colliers*, he produced a series of photographs of Lee Miller modelling a large necklace made from sea sponges at Juan-les-Pins, further evidence of his interest in the potential of the uncanny object and a new materiality of jewellery. Later, in 1938, Man Ray's mannequin at the international surrealist exhibition stands next to an enamelled street sign for the (fictional) *Rue d'une perle*. The mannequin is adorned, among other things, with large glass tears. These are a variation on the smaller glass 'tears' he used for his photograph *Larmes* of 1930–1932. In his 1935 essay 'Surrealist Situation of the Object', André Breton wrote that 'to aid the systematic derangement of all the senses, a derangement recommended by Rimbaud and continuously made the order of the day by the surrealists, it is my

opinion that we must not hesitate to *bewilder sensation*' (1969, 263). This had been a central tenet of surrealism from the very beginning of the movement, but any successful attempt to reconcile jewellery objects with surrealism must, however, rely on more than just bewilderment. One of the reasons why self-conscious attempts to produce so-called surrealist jewellery (such as those by Dali) consistently fail is because they merely graft a surrealist approach on to already existing conventional jewellery forms. Forms from paintings or already existing surrealist objects are reused out of context as pieces of jewellery with a hollowness to the irony. In the found object, however, the surrealists were able to capture the irrationalities that underlie rational thought. This is difficult to achieve in design, but not so in representation. Indeed, design and surrealism are uncomfortable bedfellows, except in the arena of the constructed image, where the relationship between the wearable object, the body and its context can be used to capture the essence of the surreal. When jewellery is examined through the lens of the camera it becomes a truly mysterious and enchantment-laden phenomenon because its reality and formal language can be subverted for both powerful artistic and commercial ends.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Man Ray appears to have been very interested in jewellery as an erotic and darkly powerful force in the late 1920s and early 1930s, linked to his brief association with William and Marjorie Seabrook. It is also possible that an earlier acquaintance with the Marchesa Casati (whom he photographed draped in a boa-constrictor) may also have promoted this interest. The relationship between adornment and fetishism, according to Walter Benjamin, is clear: 'In fetishism, sex does away with the boundaries separating the organic world from the inorganic. Clothing and jewellery are its allies. It is as much at home with what is dead as it is with living flesh. The latter, moreover, shows it the way to establish itself in the former' (1999b, 69). In images such as *Le collier tragique* (the tragic necklace) which appeared on the front cover of *Vu* magazine on 23 July 1930, Man Ray depicts Mademoiselle Dorita (performer at a Montparnasse cabaret) attempting to repel the apparently murderous advances of a boa-constrictor. The accompanying text reads: 'all the anguish of a horrible death is painted on the face of this young woman who is about to be strangled by a snake' (Leenaerts 2010, 118). The idea of dereliction and death through (or by) jewellery, is an interesting one that recurs a number of times in well-known depictions such as these. In 1926 Man Ray depicted Nancy Cunard, arms covered by her trademark African bracelets, in a pose suggesting self-strangulation. In a photograph of 1932, Lee Miller, Marie-Berthe Aurenche,

Max Ernst and Man Ray himself are shown in a vertical group pose. Each has one arm locked around another's neck suggesting, at the very least, collective strangulation.

In the fin-de-siècle, jewellery was an accessory that, according to Barthes, effectively identified women with traditional notions of evil, sorcery and the destructive powers of the femme fatale (Barthes 2013, 56). Biblical text also directly connects the wearing of precious stones with the power of women to corrupt (*Rev.* 17:4). In Man Ray's photograph, the woman appears to be destroyed by a living object of adornment rather than it leading men to their doom. Medusa wore snakes in her hair as accomplices to evil – here the snake causes the destruction of the woman. The theme of jewellery and death is, therefore, not just an aspect of fin-de-siècle culture. Former Bauhaus student Irene Hoffman's *Dame mit kette* (*Woman with Necklace*) of 1932 is an interesting example. The image has the appearance of a crime scene (jewellery and crime are natural bedfellows in the popular imagination) but also something more sinister. The pearl necklace emerges out of the mouth of the prone woman like a parasite leaving its host in search of a new victim. The 'chain' is something like the cord of life, connecting the physical body with the soul. Here, it appears to have been severed. In a less melodramatic fashion than Man Ray, Hofmann has nevertheless still produced an image of a 'tragic necklace'.

Man Ray had produced a number of bondage-themed images (some commissioned by Seabrook) in the 1920s and 1930s. He wrote candidly in his autobiography of his violence against women, including his first wife Adon Lacroix (known as Donna) whom he beat with his belt on discovering her infidelity (Ray 2012, 94). Mileaf's view is that 'Man Ray was oddly more willing to claim alliance with the actual abuse of women, which he associated with creative prowess, than he was to claim the performative violence of sadomasochistic sex practices, which in other cases might more easily be understood as benign' (2004, 20–2). Man Ray clearly had an interest in objects and devices which restricted movement, hampered the body in some way and were either physically or mentally controlling. Whether at the behest of a client or not, he was often concerned with representing the darkly erotic side of jewellery as BDSM accessory: amoral, coolly and clinically objectifying its wearer.

In the more prosaic, commercial world of the Parisian visual arts magazines, some attempts were made to represent modern jewellery in a way which evoked avant-garde practice. Clearly attempting a radical envisioning of two pieces of modern jewellery by Raymond Templier, photographers Lecram–Vigneau

produced dramatic images for *Art et décoration* where the shadows cast by the rings appear to have an independent life of their own (Varenne 1930, 51). Here, a deliberately avant-garde sensibility is at work, the use of the shadows recalling Man Ray's practice through the projection of the shape of the rings as an abstract amorphous shadow.

Erwin Blumenfeld's advertising image for Cartier jewellery, published in *Harper's Bazaar* in September 1939, has been described by Lehmann as 'a perfect example of fashion's ironic quotation from its own past' (2000, 231). Blumenfeld used an enlarged negative of a nineteenth-century fashion image into which real jewellery (tiara, earrings and pearl necklace) were inserted and then rephotographed. It is an interesting take on the cycles of fashion and also suggests, as a real hand reaches out to clutch the necklace and (perhaps) tear it from the neck of the sitter, a way of referencing the destructive power of modernity. As Lehmann puts it, 'What the fashion commodity can achieve . . . is to escape its demise by ironically advancing its death and perpetually renewing itself. When the design has been accepted into the sartorial mainstream, the actual innovation dies and the process of inventing and promoting a new style or look begins anew' (232). In the image, the Cartier pieces are not in themselves modern – that is, they do not possess a modernist aesthetic. The pearl necklace had been a staple item of jewellery for women since the early nineteenth century and, as has been shown in Chapter 1, continued to be adopted in the 1920s as an accessory that was compatible with a variety of outfits that could be worn at any time of day and in a variety of contexts. Since fashion must always rewrite its own history as it develops, the hand in Blumenfeld's image reaches out to reclaim the necklace for *now*, since fashion must always be in the present and never in the future. As an advertising image, Blumenfeld's piece may not be that successful, but it creates an intriguing way of representing the constant push and pull between fashion and its past and between the real commodity and its representation. Here, Walter Benjamin's idea of the 'aura' is significant because, as he argues in his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', the unique aura of a work of art is lost in modern reproduction techniques, leading to the viewer's disconnection from materiality and 'authentic' experience. Although the reproduction of works of art has always taken place, it was the speed with which modern techniques could capture and endlessly reproduce art works that was so significant (Benjamin 1999a). The spatial and temporal ambiguities in Blumenfeld's image point also to a surrealist sensibility as well as the idea formed by Baudelaire in the 1860s that modernity is characterized

by a simultaneous experience of the transitory and the eternal: 'By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable' (Baudelaire 1995, 12).

Jewellery on film

In the visual arts, jewellery and related accessories can be seen as being consciously used to reinforce radical techniques of visual representation, discourses of commodity culture, notions of real and fictional identities as well as forming part of the personal preoccupations and obsessions of individual artists and designers. In the interwar years, the newer art form of film also became a medium through which discourses relating to jewellery and accessories could be explored. In more mainstream interwar cinema, jewellery has many uses as a plot device. The relationship between crime, sex, death and disaster is a common one. Johnathan Faiers links the portrayal of jewellery and fur on screen as performing an 'unassailable' function in the creation of filmic spectacle, but the mores of mainstream cinema also dictate that retribution is 'brought to bear on those who either display or covet such items too obsessively' (2013, 60). An example from early Hollywood, Edwin S. Porter's 1905 production *The Kleptomaniac* presents a moral tale of injustice whereby a wealthy woman is apprehended stealing jewellery and stockings in a department store only to be let off by the same judge who condemns a poor woman to a jail sentence for stealing bread for her hungry children. The fact that the woman who steals 'unnecessary' items for pleasure escapes punishment points to the importance and economic significance of the luxury trades. As Michelle Tolini Finamore writes, the film is 'a melodrama about injustice related to class difference and different conceptions of "need"' (2013, 30).

In Clarence Brown's 1931 film *Possessed* the kept woman (Marian Martin/Joan Crawford) is shown pulling leaves from a calendar from 1928 to 1930. The shot is close in on her arm and the calendar. As the years pass, so additional gem-encrusted bracelets appear on her arm. It is, in the traditional sense of jewellery giving, supposed to be a sign of her 'value' to her lover, but one that can never be made public: 'The montage sequence seems to ridicule the practice of hanging wife or lover with as much gold and fur as possible as the bangles pile up comically one after another with relentless predictability' (Faiers 2013, 61). For Faiers, there is a connection to be made with Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure*

Class, in which the provider (male) and wearer (female) both form part of their 'maintenance of societal status' (61). Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption is part defined through his outlining of the purchasing, exchanging and display of precious materials and other luxury items. The dangerous mobster Tony Camonte/ Paul Muni in Hawks and Rosson's 1932 film *Scarface* continually accessorizes as we follow his ascendancy. In his pomp he wears an elaborate signet ring on his right hand and a diamond-encrusted horseshoe tie clip. These are all temporal symbols and point to the fragility of his position. His permanent physical scarring remains as a sign of his psychopathic state. Ultimately, the possession of fine accoutrements in film can symbolize the potential for a significant fall from grace.

The descent into corruption, violence and criminality is a central concern of Marcel L'Herbier's 1928 film *L'Argent*. Adapted from Emil Zola's 1891 novel of the same name, the film features costumes by Paul Poiret and jewellery by Raymond Templier. It is not necessary to outline all of the intricacies of the plot here, save to say that two successful Parisian financiers, Saccard and Gunderman, vie for supremacy at the Paris stock exchange. The latter, who coolly professes never to resort to gambling as a strategy for making money, ultimately triumphs over Saccard, who is more impulsive and reckless with his (and others') investments. The film features jewellery as an important symbolic device on a number of occasions.

Saccard's mistress, the Baronne Sandorf played by Brigitte Helm (fresh from appearing as Maria in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* the previous year), receives a bracelet from him in an early flashback scene. When she later becomes Gunderman's mistress, he too provides her with a large ostentatious bracelet. She wears both at the same time at a meeting with Saccard, which enrages him when he discovers who has purchased the other bracelet. A struggle ensues (Figure 4.8).

Here, the bracelets (as in *Possessed*) point to the Baronne's status as a kept woman. She is happy to wear both bracelets in anyone's presence and turns them into symbols of her power and control over her lovers even though convention would dictate that this power relation should be the other way around. The flawed Saccard falls in love with his business partner's wife, Line Hamelin, and attempts to win her with a bracelet that he buys at a jeweller for 125,000 francs. He tells her that it is second hand and is only worth 15,000. She accepts the bracelet, believing Saccard's lie that it is being paid for through her husband's bank account. She immediately wears the expensive bracelet as she shows Saccard out of her apartment. The final shot in the scene is a close up of the bracelet. The very next scene opens with a close up of the Baronne's hands on



Figure 4.8 Pierre Alcover and Brigitte Helm in Marcel L'Herbier's film *L'Argent*, 1928. Screenshot.

which she wears both lovers' gifts. Here, jewellery implicates everyone because at some point in the film, all of the characters demonstrate a love for money and material possessions that brings them nothing but difficulty. The bracelets work as symbols of power, ambition, lust and of capital itself. Film historian Noel Burch has said that *L'Argent* is a film that deals with 'the eroticization of financial dealings' and the jewels of Templier certainly play a significant role in this (*Marcel L'Herbier: Poète de l'art silencieux*, 2007). As an interesting parallel, the German satirical magazine *ULK* for 26 October 1928 featured a cover illustration by Dörte Clara Wolff (a.k.a. 'Dodo') entitled *The Hero*, in which a prosperous businessman accompanies his mistress through the city. Like Helm, she is dressed in furs. The businessman touches her left hand which is protruding from the fur coat to reveal a gold ring and a bangle (which match up with her earrings and gilded cloche hat). All proof of his ownership. Dodo's depiction shows the couple to be apparently entirely satisfied with the arrangement as she satirizes this encounter between capital, accessories and sex.

On a visual level, Helm's performance in *L'Argent* is the highlight of the film as she literally glitters in some way every time we encounter her on screen. In

this respect, she differs from Line who, apart from her brief adoption of Saccard's glittering gift, only wears a discreet engagement ring and wedding band through the entire film, seemingly eschewing all other types of jewellery. It is an effective and telling contrast. In the brief scene at the jeweller's shop, a sign for work by Gustave Sandoz (the firm for which the modernist jeweller Gérard Sandoz was artistic director) can clearly be seen between Saccard and the salesman, perhaps constituting an early example of product placement. L'Herbier's earlier film *L'Inhumaine* (*The Inhuman Woman*) of 1924 showcases the French decorative arts of the 1920s in a way which foreshadows the 1925 Paris exhibition. It includes prominent displays of modern furniture, fashions and interiors in a way that is absent from *L'Argent* (with the exception of the climactic party scene). The treatment of fashions and accessories in the later film is much more sophisticated, contributing to the drama less as props and more as essential elements in the narrative drive of the film.

The image of moving mechanical parts, established in cubo-futurist paintings before the First World War, given an ironic aspect in the works of the Dadaists and the surrealists and canonized in the works of the constructivist artists of the interwar years, was a major feature of experimental film. The obsession with movement, speed and dynamism focused on moving parts almost to the point of it becoming fetishized. Murphy and Léger's *Ballet mécanique* clearly exemplifies this, making a close liaison between machine and flesh, inorganic and organic movement. Bodies and machines are depicted performing the same repetitive actions. The interest in dynamism and motion, fundamentally modernist concerns, can be seen in the rotating metal dishes in Henry Chomette's *Jeux de reflets et de la vitesse* and Duchamp's 1926 film *Anémic Cinéma* which consists of painted rotating discs creating less of a dynamic montage and more, in true Dada fashion, of an ultimately futile mechanically induced hallucination. The former certainly brings to mind Jean Després's kinetic *bagues moteurs* with all their evocation of machine forms.

Film, in its ability to capture movement, to overlay and montage different sequences was often a perfect medium for portraying ideas about modern adornment, whether in the form of clothing, jewellery and other accessories. The latter's representation through printed images or on the screen is an important aspect of the way that jewellery can be understood in interwar culture. It can sometimes give us a full understanding of the way individuals wish to be seen by others, or how the objects themselves can be presented to an audience or consumer. The relationship between fashion and film,

for example, is as old as film itself. As Adrienne Munich puts it, ‘cinema has been one of modernity’s – and even postmodernity’s – messengers. The relationship between fashion and film contains layers of meanings – aesthetic, commercial, patriotic, political . . . To investigate fashion and film in tandem reveals that the two cultural performances have been connected and mutually enrich each other both materially and aesthetically’ (2011, 2). The position of jewellery can be equally significant and should not be overlooked. It can work in the same way that costume may identify a character’s identity, narrative purpose or ultimate destiny. In Billy Wilder and the Siodmak Brothers’ 1930 film *Menschen am Sonntag* (*People on Sunday*) non-actors were hired to portray two women and two men spending a leisurely Sunday in and around Berlin. It is shot in semi-documentary style and shows, with humour and wit, two young couples living very much for the moment with, as it turns out, no firm plans to meet again. One of the characters, a film extra played by Christl Ehlers, wears a large piece of modern costume jewellery in the form of a necklace throughout the film. It becomes her signature from the first moment she appears on screen until the last shot. At times, it features significantly in close-up shots (Figure 4.9).



Figure 4.9 Christl Ehlers in Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer’s film *Menschen am Sonntag*, 1929. Screenshot.

What is interesting about the fashions in the film is that they appear to come directly from the characters themselves and not from the wardrobe department, though input from the latter cannot be discounted. The believability of the characters is due to a striking naturalness in front of the camera, including the way they dress, undress and adorn their bodies. Ehler's jewellery is a significant element of continuity for her character as she effortlessly portrays possibly the Weimar Republic's most natural on-screen Modern Girl.

Jewellery has the unique ability, through its materiality and its portability, to be charged with meanings that go beyond conventional strategies and notions of adornment. Jewellery's place in film and the new photography is proof of this. That jewellery figures as the inspiration for a number of avant-garde experiments in visual culture and, through its signification of both the extraordinary and the everyday, makes its relevance on screen and in the printed image vital. The representation of the object itself and its relationship with the body offers the opportunity to examine jewellery at the heart of modernist visual representation. The ability of photography and film to manipulate scale and to explore materiality and wearability is a major theme in both avant-garde and more mainstream visual practices. The photographer Yva's representations of the body were usually related in some way to wider commercial ambitions, but she was also keenly aware of the fact that it was possible to make modern accessories a major element in her exploration of body culture. Just as advertising images utilized the latest technological developments in photography, so the compositional innovations of the experimental photographers were employed to represent accessories in new ways. This could take the form of joyous and sensuous images of modern accessories on display, such as those of Thérèse Bonney or Florence Henri, or the darker more esoteric images of Man Ray where the object often occupies its own world, referencing loss, melancholy desire and a distinct absence of love.

Displaying Jewellery 1920–1939

In the summer of 1929 Henri Clouzot, writing in *La Renaissance de l'art français et des industries de luxe*, expressed his view that:

Once reserved for an élite, the jewel has spread during the last ten years among all classes of society. Some buy them, others desire them, and of this last group, as with motor cars, there are perhaps those who, above all, love to look at them. But this passion is reasoned. The public has become knowledgeable. It is no longer sufficient for him to love, he wants to know why he loves. (1929a, 371)

Clouzot was referring to the impact and importance of the exhibits at the *Exposition de joaillerie et d'orfèvrerie* held at the Musée Galliera in Paris in the summer of 1929. Opened on 27 May with a formal inauguration on 7 June, this was an extensive exhibition of mainly French jewellery and silverware mounted to demonstrate progress in the art since the 1925 *Exposition des arts décoratifs*. Clouzot captures the mood of the period beautifully. Audiences were curious about new trends and new approaches, were ready to believe that new fashions, accessories and luxury objects were no longer completely out of their reach. Even if they were nigh impossible to purchase, these objects could be seen in public and exhibited in ways that brought them to life as desirable objects. At the very least, they could be understood (and loved) if not bought. Events such as this exhibition, staged at the well-frequented Musée Galliera in central Paris, were intended to make very public statements about both the quality and availability of jewellery to a wider cross section of society. Perhaps crucially, Clouzot alludes to the fact that these objects were now becoming part of mainstream culture and had a life away from adorning the bodies and costumes of the ruling class, wealthy industrialists and film stars. In short, jewellery could, in the modern forms referred to throughout this book, communicate directly to a mass audience through the medium of display.

This chapter discusses a number of methods used to present jewellery in the public arena in the 1920s and 1930s and considers some of the contemporary

critical reactions to these methods. It focuses on display, retail and exhibition design in order to demonstrate the contexts in which the general public may have encountered jewellery. It is concerned, therefore, more with a consideration of the spaces created to view jewellery and the techniques used to display it than with the objects themselves. One of the ways in which both the consumer and the art lover might have experienced jewellery in the flesh is through the shop window, in a display case or at a public exhibition. Increasingly, jewellery could also be viewed on the bodies of shop mannequins.

The mannequin

The mannequin is usually associated with displays of fashion. Whether real or static, the model has played a major part in the retailing of clothing and accessories since the mid-nineteenth century. As Caroline Evans writes, 'taking her name from the nineteenth-century lay figure that she came to replace in the dressmaker's salon, her status hovered uneasily between that of a subject and an object, animate and inanimate, live woman and dummy' (2005, 125). Indeed, the 'lay figure' or jointed wooden model was traditionally a way for artists to draw the human form in the absence of a real body. But fashion and jewellery, usually in combination, required either a live model or a very close substitute for the effect of a garment or parure to be shown to a customer. Charles Frederick Worth is credited with the innovation of showing his designs on live models from the 1850s in Paris and the English dressmaker Lucile pioneered the first London mannequin parades in the 1890s (Evans 2005, 125). By the 1920s, the mannequin (both live and artificial) was the established way in which a collection was modelled and observed by potential consumers of European and American fashion. In addition, as has been shown in Chapter 1, live models were sometimes used to demonstrate the impact of a particular jewellery collection. As part of the development of modern commerce, consumption and the experience of modernity, the use of the mannequin has many significant characteristics, placing the three dimensional form of women, men and children at the centre of the display system of garments and accessories and at the heart of modern capitalism.

For Evans, the mannequin represents a Taylorist approach to the use and presentation of the modernist body. For example, the American models recruited by fashion designer Jean Patou in 1924 were chosen to work as members of a team whose sole *raison d'être* was the slick, efficient and unflinching display

of his collections. And they were certainly worked hard. One model, Lillian Farley, recalled that twenty of Patou's models showed five hundred dresses in an evening and that their shows became a significant part of the social scene in Paris (Evans 2005, 139). The introduction of movement into the patterns of displaying and selling haute couture was, irrespective of how modern the fashions may or may not have been, a clear sign of the forces of modernity at work. Evans's discussion of the live model reveals a crucial aspect of the impact of modernity on fashion merchandizing. It also has wider cultural manifestations, as film and photography were also beginning to play a major part in the promotion of fashion and accessories, either directly or indirectly as 'placed' products, as we have seen in the previous chapter. The major fashion and jewellery houses were able to directly engage mannequins with their clientele in a way that mass retailers or small business owners were not able to. They relied on the mannequin 'dummy' and on window display as a way of reaching their no less discerning but less affluent customers. The mannequin also had a significant role to play in jewellery retail alongside that of fashion.

In interwar London, a major commercial player in retail display was the firm of E. Pollard and Co. Ltd. It specialized in all kinds of display equipment and techniques for the retailer, from the smallest point of sale detail (printed labels for generic jewellery types) to a full architectural, interior design and shop fitting service. Company catalogues from these years give an interesting insight into strategies of display available for the fashion and jewellery retailer. Pollard's *General Display Equipment* catalogue of 1925–1930 presents a full range of wax mannequins available to the fashion retailer representing women, men, boys and girls. In the form of women there are 'English' and 'Continental' models, each given their own characteristics and names. For example, some of the English female mannequins are 'Irene', 'Amy' and 'Ruth', the latter part of a set of 'Matron Figures'. As a mature woman, 'Ruth' is shown wearing a long pearl necklace with a single knot – an easy way to add a level of sophistication befitting a mature, but fashion conscious woman (Figure 5.1). She is posed against a modernist chevron background and wears a fashionable drop waist dress typical of the late 1920s. The 'V' of her necklace is a visual echo of the modernist chevron design.

As for the Continental models ('Antoinette', 'Cécile', 'Yvonne') the catalogue is clear that these are made abroad 'by artists in their own environment' and are clearly younger looking (E. Pollard and Co. 1925–30, 10). All the Continental mannequins wear short and simple strings of pearls which contribute to their essential new woman-like appearance, both 'Yvonne' and the slightly stern



Figure 5.1 Mannequin 'Ruth' from the E. Pollard and Co. Ltd catalogue *General Display Equipment*, c. 1928. © The British Library Board (shelfmark YD.2004.b.1041). Image used with kind permission of www.pollardsinternational.com.

looking 'Cécile' both sport simple modern metal bracelets. Pollard's male mannequins are totally conservative in their dress and actually highly typical of the restrained, respectable sartorial styles of the 1920s. Apart from the occasional cane, hat, pocket-square and cigarette, these mannequins sport no accessories and definitely no jewellery. Perhaps befittingly, these drone-like characters are given no names, only numbers.

In Paris, the most celebrated interwar retailer of mannequins was the firm of Siégel. Among their catalogues, those from 1927 and 1934 are interesting in the

way they promote both the company's products alongside fashion collections and certain pieces of 'high jewellery'. The later catalogue contains, in the spirit of Blaise Cendrars's texts for Raymond Templier, a short celebratory account of Siégel's products by novelist and fashion commentator Colette (discussed later) – part of her lesser-known career as a writer of slogans and copy for a number of commercial companies including Ford, Perrier and Lucky Strike.

In 1927, the company were keen to promote their products off the back of their success at the 1925 exhibition and the 1927 *Exposition Française de Madrid*. In collaboration with French *Vogue*, Siégel announces the presentation of the mannequins as follows: 'Did we say work of art earlier? Our models still aspire to this through what they evoke of psychological life and complete adaptation to the setting which suits the outfit being presented, the beach or the race track, the theatre box or the sports ground' (1927). Emphasis is, therefore, placed on the mannequins' lifelike appearance and ability to be recognized by their psychological state. Restrained as these states may be, they nevertheless represent bodies that are capable of being believable in a variety of costumes, poses and circumstances. After the text, there then follows a series of photographs of the mannequins dressed by contemporary fashion designers and jewellers. The jewellers represented are Jean Fouquet, Mauboussin, Van Cleef and Arpels, Boucheron and Cartier. Each one is meant to illustrate a key characteristic of the Siégel mannequin through legends printed at the top of the page such as 'Une oeuvre d'art industrialisée' (an industrialized work of art), 'Toujours en harmonie avec la mode' (always in harmony with fashion), 'Le mannequin de notre temps' (the mannequin for our times) and 'En accord avec l'étalage moderne' (in keeping with the modern show window) (Siégel 1927).

The example illustrated here (Figure 5.2) is reproduced under the legend 'En union étroite avec le décor' (in close union with the décor). The mannequin wears a hat by Rose Valois, a silvered fox fur and dress by Yteb and appears in front of a fabric backcloth by Primavera. The jewellery is by Mauboussin consisting of two bracelets and a three-strand pearl choker.

This ensemble, put together by *Vogue* for the shoot, clearly attempts to portray the mannequin less as an inanimate object and more as an active player in the consumption and outward display of both haute couture and *haute joaillerie*. The contribution of Mauboussin's jewellery should not be underestimated and it is interesting how the pose of the mannequin is used to amplify all the elements on display. As the mannequin checks her make up in the compact mirror she does so from a distance in order (we are to imagine) to take in both her own image



Figure 5.2 Mannequin from Siégel's *Album publicitaire*, 1927. Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris. George Hoyningen-Huene/Vogue © Condé Nast.

and that of her costume and her chic surroundings. In doing so she exposes Mauboussin's jewels against a backdrop of modernist fabric. Furthermore, the mannequin wears the bracelets over the top of her gloved hands, making no contact with her 'skin'. Wearing bracelets over gloves was not uncommon at this time, but introducing a barrier between metal and flesh serves to emphasize further the erotic quality of this display. The fabric of the bow of the mannequin's hat hangs carefully to expose the only elaborate element of the pearl choker – the intricate clasp.

The aforementioned text by Colette for the 1934 Siégel catalogue responds, like the photographs of Atget from a decade earlier, to the mysterious characteristics of the mannequins who, behind glass, appear at one on and the same time to be both alive and dead. In a remarkable piece of writing for a commercial catalogue, she extols the virtues of the *vitrines* of Paris as her living museums, enlivening her regular walking routes about the city by their constantly changing displays. The mannequins have a major part to play in this and, in particular, those of Siégel are (naturally) made in such a way that they are capable of tricking the viewer into believing that they are alive. Furthermore, for Colette, they exhibit national characteristics: 'they are French in their grace, desirable

and so woman-like that you stop, having thought to see lifelike hair move, a glowing mouth smile, and I am not certain that a lovely throat had not, under the silk, been breathing' (Siégel 1934).

The uncanny nature of the shop mannequin also strongly appealed to the imagination of the surrealists. This was given full expression at the February 1938 *Exposition internationale du Surréalisme* at the Galerie Beaux-Arts, Paris. Here, celebrated surrealist artists (including Arp, Dali, Duchamp, Ernst, Man Ray and Miró) displayed individually 'dressed' mannequins in ways that demonstrated the development of surrealism's approach to the body. Critics and historians are divided in their opinions of the motives for this and, also, the success of these experiments with the 'almost alive'. Marquard Smith, author of *The Erotic Doll: A Modern Fetish*, regards the whole exercise of displaying the sixteen mannequins of 1938 as a master class in advanced misogyny, as the 'kidnapped' mannequins (to use Man Ray's phrase) were subject to their body parts being objectified, electrified and, in some cases, sexually violated (Smith 2013, 145). He is particularly critical of the relationship between surrealism and fashion which, at the time of the 1938 show, was becoming a strong one: 'the complicity between Surrealism and fashion is born of a shared and undemanding sense of the appeal of the mannequin as an uncanny, fetishistic and perverse inanimate human form, tied to mimeticism, materiality and time, but only ever in a non-specific way' (148). So the surrealists' dressing of their mannequins shows them at play with the process of adornment but for no real end other than to satisfy their own desires.

From the mid-1920s, the tendency of some mannequin producers (including Siégel) had been increasingly to produce stylized rather than mimetic representations of the human form. According to Gronberg, 'this defamiliarisation of woman involved not only a reconfiguration of expressive parts of the body (such as face and hands) but also a transformation of surface; the modern mannequin might have "skin" that was "gilt" or "silvered over"' (1997, 379). Referred to critically as a 'physiognomy of effacement' it is also an indication of a reductivist attitude to representing the human form that can be found in the contemporary paintings of Oskar Schlemmer, for example, whose female heads show striking similarity to both the traditional artist's lay figure and the modern mannequin. The gilding or silvering of the surface of the mannequin's skin, however, provided a new way to link the human form with the machine aesthetic and the reflective qualities of the metallic surface. An effect captured in some of Thérèse Bonney's photographs of mannequins from this

time, their bronzed surfaces and expressionless attitudes provide an alternative to the disturbingly cadaverous characteristics of more traditional mannequins. The latter, of course, appealed much more to the surrealist imagination.

If Siégel's mannequins, as Smith says, transfer the consumer's gaze to the commodity (and thus fulfilling their proper modern commercial function) then did the objects used by the surrealists to adorn their mannequins work in the same way? Perhaps the process is reversed? Smith is less interested in the way the 1938 mannequins are adorned, but for this study it is useful to consider the ways in which the mannequins were used to experiment with unusual ways of adorning the body. Some of the mannequins were adorned with either found objects or specially adapted materials in ways which prefigure developments in avant-garde fashion, jewellery and accessories that we are perhaps more familiar with from the 1960s and 1970s onwards.

According to Ingrid Pfeiffer, the mannequins at the 1938 *Exposition internationale du surréalisme* 'displayed the motifs and processes of surrealism, which used concealment and exposure to articulate suppressed desires, the power of subconscious urges, and the violation of taboos' (2011, 61). In contrast to Smith's damning critique, where the 'violation' of the object stands for the violation of women not the taboo of violation itself, Pfeiffer emphasizes the way the mannequins themselves were adorned, through a visual presentation of the photographs of these objects taken by Man Ray, Denise Bello and Raoul Ubac during the installation at the Galerie Beaux-Arts.

The found object was a key feature. Everything from fishing nets, goggles, shark teeth, live snails, tea spoons, pins, wigs, mesh food covers, electric lights, magnets, stuffed animals, bird cages, candles, rope, shrouds and models of insects were draped, fixed or inserted into the forms of the mannequins. Many of these objects served to emphasize a contrast between hard and soft materials. Metal objects were used to adorn the mannequins too, although this usage was probably deliberately intended not to set up any associations with conventional jewellery forms. They do, however, point to the act of adornment of the real or substitute body with objects as an act in which ritual, fetishism and a darker element of coercion might be present. In spite of their surrealist credentials, the mannequins were lit and then photographed in ways that recall both fictional and, increasingly, filmic characteristics associated with the already well-established horror genre in which victims (often women) are subject to abjection.

Julia Kristeva in her 1982 essay on abjection states that 'so many victims of the object are its fascinated victims – if not its submissive and willing ones' (1982,

9). Can this explain the strangely accepting attitudes of the mannequins when being so crudely, if not violently, adorned? Did the surrealists aim to exploit this apparent appearance of *jouissance*, of pain and pleasure, in experiencing both captive circumstances and enforced adornment? The nature of the mannequins' facial expressions, produced in the maker's workshop to high commercial standards, nevertheless produced the 'mechanical smile' which was exploited by the surrealists in their crude adorning of their bodies. They appear as willing victims of the artists' unskilled and vicious strategies of adornment. Kristeva considers abjection as perverse 'because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or law; but turns them aside, misreads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them' (1982, 15). In this sense, the mannequins also allow the denial of all kinds of rules: social, sexual and, crucially, those of adornment. The mannequin dressed by Spanish writer Agustín Espinosa at the Galerie Beaux-Arts can be usefully examined in this context (Figure 5.3).

The figure is largely 'naked' from the waist down, save some strips of black fabric wound around the left leg. There are clusters of large pins at the knee, to the right of the groin and on the left arm and hand. From the waist up, Espinosa has created an ensemble featuring a number of disconcerting adornments seemingly at odds with the mannequin's fixed smile and distant gaze. The hat features a large part of an animal's skull (skull cap?) hopelessly at odds with the normal expectations of the weight and sartorial appearance of a hat. The eyebrows and lashes are painted gold. Around the neck, as a kind of absurdist cravate ornament, is positioned a stone sculpture. On the shoulder, a large butterfly is pinned to more black fabric. At the lower part of the neck and directly inserted into the left nipple are two more clusters of large-headed pins. At the throat is positioned a coloured light bulb. Pinned at the waist is the tiny figure of a child.

However we might wish to interpret the meaning (combined or singularly) of the accessorized body of Espinosa's mannequin, it cannot be denied that this seemingly random collection of objects tells us something about surrealist attitudes to the dressing of women's bodies as well as what might be suitable for adorning the body in the first place. When Lalique made carefully jewelled insects and dragonflies as corsage ornaments at the end of the nineteenth century, he would probably not have anticipated that lifelike specimens might turn up to challenge his exercises in the translation of nature into culture. Indeed, in the autumn of 1938, Schiaparelli, inspired by the work of the surrealists, produced a flexible, circular neckpiece of clear plexiglass with



Figure 5.3 Mannequin dressed by Agustín Espinosa for the *Exposition internationale du surréalisme*, Paris, 1938. Photograph by Raoul Ubac. The Image Works. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2016.

lifelike insects crawling around it, now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. When a dressmaker uses pins (themselves jewellery objects) to help sketch out a garment on a mannequin or client, the proximity of the sharp metal to the surface/flesh adds an element of uncertainty, risk and danger to the exercise. Here, the pins are clustered at key points in an 'attack' on selected parts of the body. As jewellery is often inserted into the body, and probably has been since its inception, Espinosa references a quintessential cultural practice. (Today, who would be surprised by a pierced nipple or a tattoo produced by mechanical needles?). The stone ornament, once again too heavy to be worn 'for real', calls in to question what should be the desired weight, scale or material of any kind of body adornment, anticipating the work of the revolutionary New Jewellery movement and its later followers by several decades. This is also true of the strategically placed coloured light bulb.

There are numerous examples of similar incongruous and provocative adornments among the other mannequins and it is clear that their display was an influential part of what was possibly the high point of surrealist experimentation at the 1938 *Exposition internationale*. If some of the objects displayed were, among other things, part of a critique of conventional objects of adornment in capitalism, as we have seen with Espinosa, then perhaps, as Lehmann suggests, they become objects which 'demonstrate the very history of the objectification of the object', a particular type of object-critique that was to achieve full flowering in the latter part of the twentieth century (Lehmann 2011, 135).

Gronberg had earlier suggested that an interpretation of the 1938 surrealist mannequins might usefully be that of a parody of contemporary considerations of advertising (*publicité*) as a manifestation of the rationality of the modern urban scene. Perhaps, inexpertly adorned with their found objects, clothing fragments, absurdist jewellery and fetish objects, the mannequins demonstrate, as Gronberg puts it, 'the extent to which the mannequin involved not only economic but also psychic investments' (1997, 391). Without being divested of and then redivested with alternative adornments, these figures would fail to express this key contrast between 'rational' commerce and 'unconscious' modernity. As such, the surrealists were keen to play with adornment to provoke the viewer into considering these two ostensibly opposite worlds as, actually, complementing one another. These works nevertheless ask of the viewer that they consider the role of display in relation to adornment. Display design, 'window dressing' and store design were part of a significant series of new developments in retailing practice in the interwar years.

Inside the jewellery store

In an American context of the retailing and display of consumer goods, William Leach has described the 'conditions for the emergence of display and decoration' as being based on the transformation of American capitalism from an agrarian model to industrial capitalism in the period 1890–1920, creating 'the institutional basis for a consumer society' (Leach 1989, 100). Consumer growth was rapid and 'far out-paced the needs of the population' (101). Entrepreneurs were keen to exploit this desire for consumption on the part of those 'longing for individual material well-being, happiness, and pleasure' (101). As Veblen had observed, many urban American consumers were, at the end of the nineteenth century, able to arrange their lives through a combination of work, leisure and consumption in which the display of goods played a major part. Leach also considers the fact that America's art schools, like some of those in France and Germany, began to teach commercial skills (including retail display) as part of their curriculum, so that there were hard-headed applied skills being taught alongside art school utopianism. In order to bring displays to life, the designer also needed new technologies and spaces capable of being transformed by light, colour and materials into places where the desire to consume can be inculcated. Indeed, the design critic Reyner Banham observed that modern architecture produced buildings that were best seen at night – when all the techniques of modern illumination could reveal them from within (104). We have already seen in Chapter 3 how the Weimar Bauhaus had made such an impression on Oskar Schlemmer. In the realm of commerce and consumption, these activities were no longer limited to daylight hours.

In modern consumer culture, glass is taken out of the realms of the mystical and the courtly (cathedrals, palaces) and given full expression in commercial and industrial architecture and new kinds of memorial structures. Leach considers a number of American structures made out of 'jewels' (mostly coloured glass) that were constructed around the time of the First World War – the 1915 *Tower of Jewels* at the San Francisco World's Fair, the jewelled arches of 1919 in Chicago and New York constructed to celebrate America's homecoming troops, and the *Fountain of Jewels* built to honour the Silver Jubilee of the unification of the five New York City boroughs. For Leach 'these jeweled forms signified a new way of life, welcoming Americans into the pleasures of a new consumer age' (1989, 105). But they were also putting the 'jewel' on centre stage in the public

realm and no longer in the private spaces of the wealthy and powerful. In this respect, the *Crystal Fountain* by Lalique at the 1925 Paris exhibition was another public manifestation of the idea of what we might call the 'jewelled outdoors'. The fact that these jewelled buildings were ersatz meant that they were perfectly in keeping with the transformation of the modern jewel from privately owned precious stone to public accessory. Also of note in relation to the public display of the 'mass jewel' was the fashion designer Paul Poiret's *Fête du Théâtre et de la Parure* which took place in Paris in 1925. This event included the performance of a dance piece *The River of Diamonds* by The Tiller Girls who, as Gronberg puts it, 'enacted decoration not only on a human but also on a more monumental scale' against a giant backdrop of a fake diamond-encrusted spider's web (1998, 10).

The semi-private encounter with jewellery persisted, of course, in the form of the jewellery shop or section of a large department store. The rebuilding of Liberty's store in London in 1922–1924 by architects Edwin T. and Stanley Hall in the Tudor style brought in an approach to displaying goods which was a far cry from the large, glittering, communal spaces of the Parisian department stores such as the Bon marché or the Galeries Lafayette. Liberty's rooms were smaller and more intimate, creating a more domestic feel, but one which was also more exclusive, if not secretive, in character. Alison Adburgham describes the Fine Jewellery Room at the Tudor style Liberty's as 'a small panelled room on the ground floor, with a heavy iron gate kept locked . . . a holy of holies where important customers . . . used to be shown rare pieces. There was a special sofa for Queen Mary' (1975, 110). Here we encounter the association of jewellery with intimacy, secrecy, privacy, privilege, situated well away from the public gaze. The above description has something of the sepulchral about it that may have appealed to the fin-de-siècle imagination two decades earlier, but was a strangely anachronistic approach in the mid-1920s. This was a very traditional way to display and sell goods in a metropolitan setting in an era which was beginning to see the 'bright young things' wear their hearts on their sleeves. But, in truth, Liberty's clearly had a different generation in mind for its fine jewellery department. This was a generation brought up on the idea of jewellery as a traditional purchase made for particular purposes that were not always fashion-related. For these consumers, pieces had to have material value, longevity and heirloom potential. Gronberg reports that the spaces of a Parisian design for a jewellery shop by Djo Bourgeois, part of the *Place Publique* at the Salon d'Automne of 1924, exhibited qualities of mystery, secretiveness and narrowness (Gronberg 1998). These were spaces, like those at Liberty, that

encouraged a kind of clandestine browsing, but also, as Gronberg suggests, ‘the boutique becomes enigmatic in order to arouse the desire of the consumer, to “seduce”’ (1998).

The display of individual pieces or collections of jewellery in a store setting was, of course, important for every retailer at whatever level of the industry they were operating. Returning to Pollard’s catalogue, we see a collection of rings, a bracelet and a watch by Bravingtons of King’s Cross, displayed on a variety of pads and are photographed from a jaunty modernist angle. The accompanying text is clear about the value of display in a retail context and contains advice to the display designer:

For the successful and artistic presentation of jewellery, the designer must have unerring taste, as well as an understanding and sympathy with his subject unparalleled in any other branch of display . . . the spacing and design of its pads must answer every requirement of stock and handling, yet be possessed of a character and an individualism which will mark well the nature of the business and stimulate its growth. (E. Pollard and Co. 1935, 72)

This cannot simply be dismissed as trade catalogue blurb, because the emphasis here is that the display of jewellery requires a particular type of understanding. The consumer’s experience of buying jewellery at this time is, naturally, always compromised by fears about security. Furthermore, handing pieces made from precious metals has to be balanced against the subsequent need to repolish the item. So the emphasis is on looking and facilitating easy access by the shop worker to the merchandise. The Bravington’s display is from the Pollard catalogue *Everything for the Jeweller Except Jewellery*, produced in 1935. It uses some striking modernist typography to introduce its customer base to their range of shopfitting and display services. The emphasis is on the alliance between modern commerce and innovations in display. There is a clear sense that the needs of the modern jewellery retailer require both new technical solutions combined with an appraisal of what the modern consumer of jewellery increasingly requires in both spatial terms (i.e. the physical retail space) and in point of sale items to assist purchase.

As far as display is concerned, much is made of Pollard’s own ‘invisible glass’ for use in shop fronts and display cases. According to the catalogue, Pollard were the sole concessionary with ten patents for this material. For them, the benefits are obvious: ‘the effect is startling – the jewellery looks as if on shelves open to the street’ (E. Pollard and Co. 1935, 6). Furthermore, the grand claim

that 'it is the greatest advance in shopfitting since the introduction of plate glass in the middle of the last century' may actually have some foundation (7). Before modern shopping became as much about looking as testing goods in advance of purchase, most goods were not separated from the viewer by glass. But jewellery must be secure, so reflecting glass is a problem in the modern store – particularly if public display to passers-by is essential. Pollards also promoted this material to exhibition designers. A letter from Pollard was written to the Goldsmiths' Company on 6 February 1934 asking for the product to be considered for use in the company's displays at the 1935 British Art in Industry exhibition at the Royal Academy (discussed later) insisting that 'nothing is so intriguing as this apparent unprotection' (Goldsmiths' Company Archive, 0.II.I).

Nonreflective glass is a way of achieving absolute transparency with the minimum of interference with vision, thus making the object on display clear and unambiguous. This attempt to reduce ambiguity is argued as being part of the sales process. Ironically, it was photographers such as Atget and Man Ray who utilized the reflections of normal plate glass when photographing objects (such as mannequins) in shop windows. The reflections from the outside world merge with the inner world of the store interior to produce a new world, but this world is not the world of commerce. It is a world of mystery and half-lives. In relation to the display of products behind glass, Jean Baudrillard pointed out that 'whether as packaging, window or partition, glass is the basis of a transparency without transition: we see, but cannot touch. The message is universal and abstract. A shop window is at once magical and frustrating – the strategy of advertising in epitome', adding that glass 'allows nothing but the *sign* of its content to emerge' (1996, 42).

Once the potential jewellery buyer has understood the 'signs' of the contents behind the glass, they must now negotiate the space of the store itself. In the 1935 catalogue, Pollard are very keen to promote their redesign of the Morabito jewellery store at 346, rue Saint-Honoré in Paris (Figure 5.4).

It is described as 'ultra-modern Continental style as depicted in a fashionable Paris Jewel salon. The clever use of rich decorative hardwoods and brilliant metalwork in modern design, the attractive lighting arrangement and layout of the shop in general, symbolizes exclusiveness' (E. Pollard and Co. 1935, 38). This is modern design as luxury and the accompanying image is a clear demonstration of how the company's interior design service was promoting spaces where the modern consumer might feel more at home. Compared with Liberty's secretive fine jewellery room, this promises to be a very different jewellery purchasing



Figure 5.4 Interior of the Morabito jewellery store, rue Sainte-Honoré, Paris, from the E. Pollard and Co. Ltd catalogue, *Everything for the Jeweller Except Jewellery*, c. 1935. © The British Library Board (shelfmark YD.2004.b.1104). Image used with kind permission of www.pollardsinternational.com.

experience. There is freedom to see clearly what is on offer and the possibility of browsing without having to engage closely with an assistant together with, crucially, the potential to examine the objects at close hand in their cases. The positioning of chairs in the photograph strongly suggests that buying was to be considered a matter of discussion, negotiation and agreement on what was appropriate. Time could be spent on this in a more relaxed way in the presence of the assistant. The use of geometric shapes, the presence of a minimum

amount of applied decoration (most of the decoration derives from the grain and patterning of materials rather than applied ornament) combines with a generous amount of floor space to suggest a new kind of modern browsing and purchasing experience. Throughout the shop fitting section of the catalogue, emphasis is placed on the use of modern materials; nonreflective glass, bronze, metal, rubber floors and the installation of modern furniture (including tubular steel). Acknowledgement of modernist approaches is clear, too, in the description of the Dimmers jewellery store in Southampton, which the catalogue describes, like the Morabito store, as achieving a perfect balance 'unassisted by any attempt at extraneous decoration' (19).

Browsing is a key activity in modern consumption. The company knew this very well and, in the design of the exterior of the jewellery store, browsing can be improved by splaying windows on either side of the main entrance. This not only features the entrance to the store more clearly, but it also increases the amount of window space and allows for the possibility of slightly more discreet browsing on busy thoroughfares, where customers can take relief from crowds and inhabit a small arcade-like transitional space. Pollard's redesigned store of John Angell, in Tonbridge, Kent is a case in point. But perhaps the best example of a new spatial arrangement for the jewellery store suggested by Pollard is their remodelling of T. Pickett Ltd. in Portsmouth (Figure 5.5). This 'set a new standard' in jewellery shopfitting: 'ten windows are arranged round the arcade, including two on the main frontage, each occupying its correct percentage of space. All is contained within a frontage of 30ft' (E. Pollard and Co. 1935, 23). This allows for a huge amount of browsing capacity in a small space within an arcade. Here, the relationship between Pickett's goods and its retail space becomes both a public, semi-public and private activity.

On a practical level, the amount of space devoted to the display of products becomes extensive given the size of the shop window frontage, whereby 30 ft of frontage becomes 80 ft with the creation of the arcade. The cruciform arcade arrangement, here applied to an individual shop, also maximizes safe consumer access, increases the perception of abundance (often the aim of high street jewellery retailers to this day) and provides off-street semi-private browsing space. It is also worth remembering that an element of private and discreet contemplation on the part of individuals and couples is often required on the occasion of the purchase of significant, personal and often expensive items be they items of jewellery or silverware. This space allows for all that to take place while allowing the products themselves to be retrieved from the rear

SHOPFRONTS AND INTERIOR FITTINGS



This Reconstruction set a New Standard



Messrs. T. Pickett Ltd., Portsmouth

THE planning and construction of this arcade front of Messrs. T. Pickett Ltd., in Commercial Road, Portsmouth, set a new standard in Jewellers' shopfitting.

Ten windows are arranged round the arcade, including two on the main frontage, each occupying its correct percentage of space. All is contained within a frontage of 30 ft.

The plan, reproduced below, demonstrates the care with which each window was planned in relation to the required display. The front is framed in bronze metal, with black granite stall risers and black and red granite pilasters and facia.



A "close-up" of the entrance doorway which forms the central feature of the arcade. The lobby floor is of marble tiles and the door is polished ancona walnut, with a surround of red and black granite.

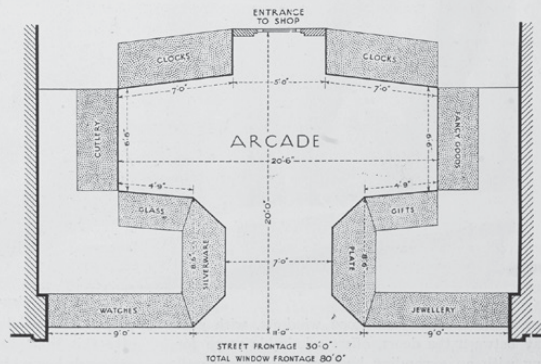


Figure 5.5 (Lower right) Plan of arcade at the entrance to the T. Pickett Ltd jewellery store, Portsmouth, UK, from the E. Pollard and Co. Ltd catalogue, *Everything for the Jeweller Except Jewellery*, c. 1935. © The British Library Board (shelfmark YD.2004.b.1104). Image used with kind permission of www.pollardsinternational.com.

of the display cases by the shop assistant. In contrast to many shop frontages that attempt to push the inside of the shop out towards the consumer, this arrangement deliberately invites the browser in, with no obligation to actually enter the interior of the shop itself.

Although unlike the sort of Parisian arcade that interested Walter Benjamin, this kind of spatial arrangement still provided for a kind of spectacle. In Graeme Gilloch's view, Benjamin identified the arcade as a private space which was 'a locus of the exclusive and of exclusion'. The display windows 'presented commodities not as objects for use, but as pure spectacle. The glass screen ensured visibility, suggesting proximity, yet denied tactility . . . Within the arcade, commodities became objects of unrequited desire' (Gilloch 2002, 131). This could be said of all emporia specializing in objects of luxury, but it is particularly pertinent to the jewellery shop. In the semi-private space of T. Pickett's jewellery arcade, consumers could experience something of that strange, contradictory feeling of repulsion and attraction in the presence of the exclusive.

Designer Frederick Kiesler's contemporary polemical guide to modern store design is an interesting account of the relationship between the customer and new tactics for the display of goods. He stated that 'contact between street and store, between passerby and merchandise; this is the function of the show window. After the passerby has halted, the silent window has a duty: to talk. To demonstrate. To explain. In short: to sell' (Kiesler 1930, 68–9). To make this point he illustrates examples of modernist architecture (Mies van der Rohe, De Stijl, Purism) to highlight the ways in which successful store design and shop window displays can be achieved in the modernist vein. This includes exploiting the large plate glass window, utilizing a single material where possible, applying modern typography, electric lighting, asymmetrical arrangements, spatial complexity and staggered entrances to shops. Glass is the key component, as the section on 'the ideology of the show window' reveals. It might be a long way from Kiesler's heady metropolitan modernism to the display of jewellery at T. Pickett's Ltd in Portsmouth, but the production of the kind of space produced by Pollard's design team to allow the extended functions of browsing and, ultimately, buying as outlined above was seen as a key concern of the display of goods in modern consumption. It will be made clear later that the display of jewellery in retail and exhibition environments was subject to as much debate and controversy as any other kind of exhibit or product.

Inside the jewellery shop, the consumer is faced with the finer details of point-of-sale and a more direct experience of the objects themselves. The Pollard

catalogue duly obliges, containing a plethora of items to assist the retailer in the display of jewellery. It is not necessary to list them all here, but an examination of the display systems and all the items required to support the visual promotion of jewellery and accessories is an indication of how seriously the retailing of these items was taken. That Pollards included the type of furniture that might be used in a jewellery store (some of it reminiscent of the tubular steel furniture of the Bauhaus) reveals that all aspects of the experience of the modern retail environment were being promoted. It offers advice, too, on how to display particular items in conjunction with its own system of window display. The 'Pollard rod dressing system' is a system of rods, brackets and glass shelves which enable the window dresser to produce a flexible display 'by giving each article or group of articles a shelf to itself' (E. Pollard and Co. 1935, 128). This is interesting, because emphasis is on the objects occupying their own space instead of the space allotted to them on a traditional long shelf. For Pollards, the modern jewellery-buying experience must focus on each item occupying its own space, so it can become, potentially, uniquely presented to an individual customer, rather than one item of many heaped together on a shelf.

Exhibitions in Paris and London

The promotion of jewellery through retail display can be usefully compared to the approaches taken by designers of major exhibitions, of which there were many notable international examples in the interwar period. The great exhibitions of manufacturing of the nineteenth century in Europe and America had paved the way for a great variety of trade fairs and international gatherings all designed to stimulate trade, promote innovation and, of course, to strengthen national identities through conspicuous displays of the latest products. For the purposes of this book, it is my intention to focus primarily on the displays of jewellery at the Paris exhibitions of 1925 and 1929 and the 1935 British Art in Industry exhibition, held in London.

As has already been mentioned, the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris provided the impetus for the development of jewellery that, for the first time, was clearly impacted upon by modernism. But it is useful to note how, among all the other sections of this epoch-defining exhibition, the organizing committee of Paris 1925 chose to display the work of, principally, French jewellers. With the exception of

the official material produced by the exhibition authorities (including the *Encyclopédie des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes au XXème siècle*) the best near contemporary source for an assessment of the jewellery and silverware displayed at the 1925 exhibition is the 1934 tome *La Bijouterie, La Joaillerie, La Bijouterie de Fantaisie au XXe Siècle*, edited by Emile Sedeyn et al. under the direction of Georges Fouquet. This is an extensive account of the development of French jewellery; part design history, part economic history and part survey of the trade, which attempts to put into context the major achievements of the French jewellery industry from 1900. Some of the texts are drawn, or adapted from, earlier publications (particularly in relation to the 1925 and 1929 jewellery exhibitions). The volume describes the setting up of bodies to promote and organize the French jewellery trade along with some key cultural events which contributed to its promotion, including the 1900 Paris exhibition, formation of the *Société des artistes décorateurs* and the various *salons d'automne*. Also cited as important artistic influences were the influence of the ballets russes and the German *werkbund*. Many of these elements came together for the first time at the 1925 exhibition. Jacques Guerin's account of the organization of the event explains very clearly that the organizing committee for the jewellery section required that the attributes of the work selected had to include not only originality but also new (i.e. modern) inspiration. Further, there were to be no copies or imitations of previous styles allowed (Sedeyn et al. 1934, 164). According to Guerin, in 1925 there were more than 400 *bijoutiers-joaillers* in Paris, but only thirty firms or individuals were exhibited indicating that the selection criteria were strictly enforced (Sedeyn et al. 1934, 168). The five categories of exhibits for the 1925 exhibition were Architecture (1), Furniture (2), Costume (3), Arts of the Theatre, Street and Garden (4) and Education (5). Each category was subdivided into 'classes' and allocated spaces. The *Pavillon Bijouterie-Joaillerie* was positioned as class 24 of the exhibits in the overall 'Costume' category, which also included clothing (20), accessories (21), fashion and flowers (22) and perfume (23).

The introductory essay to the class 24 exhibit in the *Encyclopédie*, produced to accompany the exhibition, aims to present a clear picture of the progress in modern high and costume jewellery since 1900. The author reiterates the selection criteria outlined above, but also presents the desired effect of the exhibition as that which promotes reflection on the unity of design (geometric forms, modern inspirations) between the major producers, that they are able to produce work which is decorative yet possessing integrity and which, materially, is varied

and capable of delivering a modern sensibility to the consumer through design rather than predominantly through the use of certain materials. The economic strength of the jewellery trade in France is made clear through reference to a set of statistics that reveal the huge success of the exportation of French jewellery and French taste abroad (*Encyclopédie* 1977, 90).

For the 1925 exhibition architect Eric Bagge, himself a designer of jewellery for the Fouquet firm, was commissioned to design the pavilion, which was constructed inside the Grand Palais (Figure 5.6). The display was arranged around an enormous central lighting fixture underneath which was placed some seating, the whole space having its light subtly modulated by a canopy of fabric.



Figure 5.6 *Pavillon de bijouterie et orfèvrerie* at the *Exposition des Arts décoratifs*, Paris, 1925, designed by Eric Bagge. Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris, Collection Maciet.

The individual *vitrines* were viewable from all sides so that visitors could walk through and turn back on themselves if they wanted to see more.

Jacques Guerin's description of the use of colour emphasizes the importance placed on the objects themselves through the intention to create an environment in which the spatial design was not seen to dominate. He mentions the soft rosy hues of the paint scheme and the grey carpet and seating, all of which 'gave a nice atmosphere to the hall and placed all the importance on the display cases, all of the same model' (Sedeyn et al. 1934, 168). There was seemingly every attempt to create a sense of unity and luxury without overpowering the individual items, a point further reinforced by Guerin when he suggests that in spite of the diversity of the designs on display and the impact of the varied colours to be seen inside the cases, the designers had created 'un ensemble d'une rare distinction' (172). The effect of unity is helped by the fact that each display case was designed to light objects from above using diffused light through etched glass. Furthermore, a series of dynamic geometric motifs were etched into the glass inserted into the upper section of the frame in each case (which also carried the names of the companies exhibiting there) thus creating a visual theme of modern design uniting the displays. This theme is further carried through in the central light fitting and the wall coverings of the entrance to the pavilion.

Bagge's 1925 pavilion had an independent life of its own within the vast spaces of the Grand Palais. A few years later, in 1929, Bagge was asked to produce designs for an exhibition of jewellery and silverware at the Musée Galliera. One of his drawings of the scheme was featured on the front cover of a special free supplement of the *Figaro* magazine, ensuring significant publicity for the show (Figure 5.7). At the Galliera, the problem remained of mounting an exhibition of small, often intimate items of modern jewellery in a space with a character all of its own – the Palais Galliera was completed in 1894 in a neo-Renaissance style. Unlike the Grand Palais, which was cavernous enough for independent structures to be built inside, the Galliera was a different kind of space, but still on a scale that presented a considerable challenge to the exhibition designer. As Guerin noted, the major question was 'how to bring together under the Italianate painted vaults, between balustrades and porticos, the scintillating treasures of contemporary jewellery and silverware?' (Sedeyn et al. 1934, 147).

Clouzot's description of the show in the *Figaro* article praises the designer for rendering the interior of the Galliera unrecognizable and that Bagge had hidden the renaissance character of the museum 'under an arrangement of a magnificent sobriety' adding that the lighting seemed to come directly from the



Figure 5.7 Cover of the *Supplément artistique* of *Figaro*, 13 June 1929, featuring Eric Bagge's design for the jewellery exhibition at the Musée Galliera. Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris. © Le Figaro / 13.06.1929.

exhibits themselves (Sedeyn et al. 1934, 148). It would seem that visitors would be in no doubt that the organizers of the exhibition (the *Chambre syndicale de la Bijouterie, Joaillerie, Orfèvrerie de Paris*) intended the exhibits to have maximum impact and to tell a now familiar story that the development of a modern sensibility in jewellery had emerged, both in France and elsewhere. This development also had economic and wider cultural value, too. Clouzot stressed the fact that modern French jewellery was capable of expressing what he considered to be the national characteristics of 'order, moderation and reason,'

and that the taste for jewellery is not just for the privileged. Furthermore, far from being the preserve of the élite, taste in fine jewellery could also become the preserve of 'Monsieur Tout-le-monde' (Clouzot 1929b, 589). As far as putting jewellery in the public domain is concerned, he suggests that an annual jewellery show could, like an automobile show, attract the curious in their hundreds of thousands (Clouzot 1929b, 590).

Georges Fouquet, president of the exhibition, stressed in his contribution to the *Figaro* supplement that 'the characteristic of the life of the present time is speed. It is necessary that the composition of a jewel is quickly understood, and it must therefore be designed with simple lines, devoid of sentimentality and all superfluous detail' (1929, 607). As we have seen in Chapter 3, this was a familiar mantra from this particular jewellery firm, but how does Bagge's vision for the display of jewellery help to promote the modernist sensibility so clearly stressed by the organizers of the Galliera show? From the evidence of Bagge's drawing it is clear that he was trying to manipulate a very traditional exhibition space in order to achieve ease of circulation, minimum of distraction from the exhibits and an overall sense of restraint in the décor. The drawing as it appeared on the cover of *Figaro* is very close to those descriptions contained within. The design is clear and the articulation of the space, the display cases and the lighting suggest that the most obvious aim of the design, that of visitors' concentration on the quality of the exhibits, was achieved. The room is populated with modern, fashionable people, dressed quite soberly. They are obviously products of the changes in fashion and design that had dominated the 1920s. In giving each of his viewers one window to themselves to view the exhibits, Bagge respects the fact that a person viewing a piece of jewellery is so much wider than the piece he or she is looking at. This is not usually a problem in exhibitions of paintings, but represents a real challenge to the designer of jewellery exhibitions, as acknowledged by noted exhibition designer Margaret Hall in her book *On Display* (1987). Bagge's scheme has the gravitas of an exhibition without the clutter and overabundance of the jewellery shop. In keeping with the theme of luxury (never, as we have seen, a quality completely abandoned by modernist jewellers) the cases are filled in such a way that individual pieces can be appreciated for both their technical mastery and their aesthetic effect.

The exhibition was opened by Fortuné d'Andigné, former president of the *Conseil Municipal de Paris*, who later reproduced a number of his speeches made at the opening of exhibitions at the Musée Galliera in his 1931 book *Mon beau Paris*. His speech at the formal opening of this particular exhibition on 7 June

1929 is of interest in a number of ways. He refers directly to Bagge's exhibition design, referring to it as a temple of jewellery where, although the spaces are dressed with majestic columns and grey sails, the lighting is unobtrusive but powerful. Further, he refers to a sense of uniformity in the design which, far from being boring 'creates charm and arouses wonder' (d'Andigné 1931, 202). A final plea to viewers of the exhibition is to remember that without being worn (and worn by women in particular) jewels are cold museum pieces that can only be brought to life by the viewer through imagining the life of the objects beyond the display case and on the body (204).

In Sedeyn et al.'s account of the show, men are permitted a small part in the narrative. However, as has been pointed out elsewhere in this book, the range of jewellery available to men was limited. In this exhibition, rings and small ornamented cases for men are briefly discussed, but emphasis is placed on how these items are made and decorated rather than how their design and use may relate to the gender of the wearer (Sedeyn et al. 1934, 152). It was obviously thought more appropriate for men to be interested in manufacturing techniques, rather than the adornment potential of the pieces themselves. In contrast, the new jewellery for women was described very much in terms of how it can be worn by active women, whose sun-browned necks and athletic bodies require different types of jewellery, forms which do not get in the way while grasping a tennis racket or golf club (149).

The Galliera show was not the overtly modernist design triumph that, for example, characterized the salon d'automne of 1929 when Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand displayed their furniture and objects in a pure modernist interior. This is a more pragmatic conception occupying a space often used for the display of fashion, textiles and other crafts. Bagge makes a subtle intervention into this space. An exercise in extreme asceticism would have made little sense for a display of modern jewellery. As the exhibition organizers said, they were keen to illustrate to the visitor 'the general tendency of jewellery towards simplicity' (Sedeyn et al. 1934, 148).

As indicated at the start of this chapter, the public exhibition of jewellery was one way in which to introduce the general public to the economic and cultural importance of the jewellery industry. Events in France were not unique in this respect. In Britain, part of the interwar drive to create alliances between art and industry (usually a byword for the encouragement of a modernist approach to design by such bodies as the Design and Industries Association) resulted in a variety of exhibitions held under the auspices of a number of high profile

institutions. An examination of one of these events, the British Art in Industry exhibition held at the Royal Academy of Arts from January to March 1935, reveals that the display of jewellery by the UK Goldsmiths' Company raised some very important questions about how the products of the trade should be represented to the public as well as raising questions about the state of modern jewellery design in Britain. The company had exhibited regularly at the British Industries Fairs in the 1930s, but the Royal Academy show required a different approach as this audience's expectations were very different.

Records show that the company had been planning for this exhibition as early as 1933 where, alongside the expected display of silver and goldsmithing work, it had decided to display jewellery too. Architect John Grey was employed to supervise the displays of the company in rooms E and F along with jewellers Catherine Cockerell and Anna Zinkeisen. Extensive correspondence between John de la Valette of the Royal Academy, George Ravensworth Hughes of the Goldsmiths' Company and the artists and designers involved in the exhibition survives in the archive at London's Goldsmiths' Hall. The evidence from 1933 up to the opening of the exhibition in January 1935 shows that, initially, the key players were optimistic about the inclusion of jewellery in the exhibition. However, in response to a call for participation in the show (and a competition) by the Goldsmiths' Company, it would seem that the quality and appropriateness of the exhibits fell short of the expectations of the Royal Academy organizing committee. In a letter from de la Valette to Hughes of 3 August 1934, the former is clear that the proposed exhibits were falling short. Although there was evidence of 'high class jewellery' which was 'quite dignified':

What we want to show is ingenious and attractive design, applied to ornaments such as increasing number of women wear nowadays. I feel, therefore, that a very strong effort ought to be made to bring in the artificial jewellery trade and the workers in less precious stones . . . I am very anxious that we should get the jewellery section in such a position that it will once and for all kill the feeling which is now prevalent amongst many English women, that one must go abroad to get well designed jewellery. What we have seen so far is more apt to confirm that feeling rather than dispel it. (Goldsmiths' Company Archive, 0.II.I)

The response to this stinging criticism was, ultimately, to include a large number of 'paste jewellery' sections in the final displays in Room F, clearly visible in John Grey's final plan for the exhibition space (Goldsmiths' Company Archive, 0.II.I). But the criticism itself reveals more than just the fact that the British

jewellery trade had some local difficulties with quality. De la Valette suggests that the company was not able to amply demonstrate that it was catering for the mass. In effect, although the term was not in general use, the Royal Academy's view was that costume jewellery was more representative of modern tendencies than traditional jewellery in precious metals. This is an interesting echo of the German costume jewellery manufacturer Fahrner's claim that their mass manufactured products constituted the true 'jewellery of our time' (see Chapter 3). The exhibition displays themselves were also criticized. In a strange (and very short) quasi-poetic note dated 5 February 1935 from Mr Hodges of the Goldsmiths' and Silversmiths' Co Ltd (who were represented in the show) the writer penned the following, damning the work of Cokerell, Zinkeisen and Grey in one fell swoop:

Re R.A windows.

If therefore the brighter and fairer the gem

The plainer and simpler the setting should be

The idea underlying those windows is all wrong – not art in industry

(Goldsmiths' Company Archive, 0.II.I)

Whether sufficiently 'modern' or whether or not it was willing and able to embrace the rise of interest in costume jewellery, the Goldsmiths' Company nevertheless paid great attention to the display of its works in the public domain. In the 1930s the company worked with established architects (John Grey, Howard Robertson) and display companies (Harrods, Display Craft, Pollards) to attempt to provide appropriate, secure environments for their wares. But fully embracing the modern aesthetic in jewellery appeared to be a challenge for some at a company which, by its own admission, did not get truly serious about jewellery until the early 1960s. In 1935 it provided photographs of silverware to the *Exhibition of Everyday Things* organized by the Royal Institute of British Architects to promote, ostensibly, the beauty of practical, functional and plain objects. A letter from the company of 27 November 1935 to designer H. G. Murphy nevertheless lamented that 'it is a pity that these architects should be allowed to get away with the policy of cheapening everything by eliminating all forms of decoration, which is more or less what it comes to' (Goldsmiths' Company Archive, 0.II.I). As has been shown in Chapter 3, Murphy was well aware of the modern tendencies in contemporary metalwork and was busy making his own contribution to the modern movement.

The art of window display has been considered part of the spectacle of modernity since the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1920s this activity had developed specialist credentials and an activity worthy of serious discussion among both designers and entrepreneurs. In 1927 V. N. Siégel founded the journal *Parade: Revue du décor de la rue* (*Journal de l'étalage et de ses industries*) (*Parade: Review of the Décor of the Street [Journal of Window Display and Allied Industries]*) to promote the idea of window display as an essential part of modern commerce and culture. It also allowed for new products by Siégel to be promoted to a wider audience. Displays by the modern Parisian jewellery houses were well represented in the journal, which featured a visual record of a range of examples, most of them from the *vitrines* of fashion, textiles, accessory and jewellery houses as well as the *Grands Magasins*. For example, the edition of 15 July 1928 contains a full-page visual record of displays by Mauboussin, Jean Fouquet and Paul Brandt, the latter's displays being designed by René Herbst.

What is interesting about the displays recorded in *Parade* is how the practice of window display is not only consistently allied to making the necessary alliances between art and commerce in the cause of making profit, but how conspicuously modern design techniques reflect the way forward. This is perhaps not entirely surprising due to the fact that Herbst is credited as being the magazine's director.

The edition of 15 September 1928 advises on the twelve essential points of 'L'art de l'étalage'. These include the power of attraction, choice of merchandise, arrangement, originality, display of the price, and so on. Significantly, it warns against confusing novelty and originality, together with an understanding that keeping objects clean in windows is essential. Above all, the impression given by some of the obviously modernist-influenced *vitrines* published in *Parade* is that regularity and conspicuous quality is favoured over impressions of abundant availability, a theme that unites all of the examples discussed in this chapter.

In France, it would seem that the 1929 exhibition at the Musée Galliera was the high point of the attempt to draw attention to the position of jewellery in relation to the conditions of modernity, if not modernism itself. This effort very much relied on the success of the efforts of certain major jewellers and their allies in fashion, design, architecture and the wider cultural scene. After the economic troubles of the early 1930s, the leading French jewellers began to lose their influence as a bloc and the industry diversified into many different strands, serving a greater variety of markets and new types of

consumers offering them a wider range of options, particularly in terms of materials. The 1925 exhibition had promised (and, arguably, delivered) much in terms of the creation of an internationally influential modern language of jewellery, but its major successor, the 1937 *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques Appliqués dans la Vie Moderne* in Paris saw jewellery presented in a less coherent way. Here, class 55 of the exhibition ('Parure') was presided over by Georges Fouquet but the emphasis in the text of the *Livre d'Or Officiel de l'Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne, Paris 1937* was on the relationship between jewellery and fashion suggesting that 'If jewellery is a work of art, it is also a fashion item, so it continually changes' (*Livre d'Or*, 294). If there was a strong suggestion that jewellery had been subsumed by fashion, then it may also have been irksome for some jewellers to read in the *Livre d'Or* that the role of jewellery in fashion was compared to the way that a whiff of perfume might add a note to an outfit (294). Nevertheless, the jewellery section was housed in its own building, designed by Hourlier and Schmitt, dubbed the *Palais de la Bijouterie*. The diffusion of the major jewellers' work among a variety of different pavilions meant that Jean Després, for example, had his work on view in six different categories (Gabardi 2009, 178). In this case it is clear how much diversification Després had been prepared to embrace in the new economic and cultural circumstances of the 1930s. Similarly, Raymond Templier was seemingly more occupied with the UAM pavilion, presenting himself as an 'artiste décorateur joaillier' even though he was also a vice president of class 55 (Mouillefarine and Ristelhueber 2005, 246). Silversmith Jean Puiforcat had his own pavilion, dedicated to liturgical silverware, which showcased his modern take on traditional forms of silver (Bliss 2003).

As in 1925, the strange and often bizarre assemblages of national, colonial and commercial pavilions, jostling together in a specially designated exhibition zone flanking the Seine in central Paris, certainly suggest an illusory experience (and one to which the contemporary Expo and trade fair is clearly indebted) with all its emphasis on national display and demonstration of cultural achievements. The architectural language of the pavilions of 1937 varied from the traditional to the ultra-modern via the stripped-down classicism favoured by a number of the colonial and totalitarian powers, reflecting the international tensions and political posturing of the late 1930s.

Although later accounts of the exhibition are, inevitably, dominated by discussion of these big themes, the role of the objects on display should not be

underestimated. Furthermore, the manner in which objects were displayed and the nature of the spaces designed to house them are important factors in the way their cultural significance can be assessed. In the case of jewellery (often the smallest objects on show at any exhibition of artefacts) the nature of display is critical to the assessment of the objects by the public. Margaret Cohen, in part of her discussion of Walter Benjamin's appropriation of the term 'phantasmagoria' from Marx's *Capital*, refers to the former's use of the term in relation to the Universal Exhibitions that became popular in the nineteenth century. Benjamin's view on commodity fetishism was that these great national and international displays of objects, cultural achievements, novelties and symbols represented a 'phantasmagoria of capitalist culture' (Cohen 1995, 22). If we extend this idea into the interwar years, the many exhibitions and world fairs of that period can also be characterized in this way.

The popularity of these exhibitions was partly due to the inherent curiosity of the general public but, crucially, they became spaces where looking took the place of buying. Information, edification and novelty were combined and given a similar gloss. Furthermore, as Janet Ward points out in relation to nineteenth-century industrial display, the public 'were encouraged to enter the department store, to attend the world trade fair, to gaze at the display windows' (2001, 192). Gilloch's commentary on Benjamin's work on the Parisian arcades, where the act of looking was the only kind of consumption possible for many, puts things more darkly when he says that 'commodity fetishism is an eroticization of the lifeless artefact, a necrophilial desire to possess dead things' (2002, 127). In terms of the production of phantasmagoria, whether outside or inside the store or at an exhibition, it mattered not whether consumers were always buying, but they had to be always looking. In this context Ward says that 'goods offer themselves as artworks not just for sale but also for use in people's fantasies, in the production of a lifestyle' (2001, 193).

In asking visitors to the 1929 Musée Galliera exhibition to imagine themselves wearing the modern jewels on display (and surely knowing that few visitors would ever buy them) Fortuné d'Andigné was, however unwittingly, reinforcing this idea in his opening speech. Further, Clouzot's suggestion of a potential annual jewellery Salon akin to a motor show, creates the ultimate separation of object and subject in which the former is displayed largely for the purposes of the consumption of its image. The same can be said of the 1935 Goldsmiths' Company exhibition in that the 'consumer' of this show had to be persuaded that what they were looking at represented not only the best work being produced,

but that its display contributed to its appeal as a commodity. In this case, as in other exhibitions of this nature, the display was intended to reassure the public that the quality of the objects on view said something about the success of the industry that created it and a sense of national self-esteem that is, almost as a matter of course, worth buying into either through object or image.

Conclusion

In this account, an examination of the many cultural influences brought to bear on jewellery and accessories have allowed us to go beyond a straightforward description of body adornment. It is hoped that this can be seen as representing something of an alternative way forward in the study of jewellery of the interwar period. At the very least it has represented a renewed effort on the part of this author to reconsider the relationship between jewellery and modernism – two phenomena so often characterized as being estranged from each other. Indeed, we have seen how jewellery objects, accessories and other personal items of ‘vanity’ are connected to some of the major themes of the early modern movement in art and design and how it was possible for jewellery, perhaps more so than fashion, to strike up a direct relationship with both avant-garde and mainstream culture. Understanding the place of jewellery and accessories in modernism can take us beyond the consideration of these items as mere accoutrements in a variety of strategies of personal adornment. It is also the ability of these objects to express ideas about personal, social and economic transformation that makes their study so valuable.

Harry Haller, the misanthropic subject of Hermann Hesse’s 1927 novel *Steppenwolf*, finds himself, after years of self-imposed isolation from the metropolitan social whirl, reintroduced to the pleasures of genuine human interaction by his ‘saviours’ Hermine and Maria. The latter teaches Haller much about generosity and, in particular, the giving of gifts:

Before all else I learned that these playthings were not mere idle trifles invented by manufacturers and dealers for the purpose of gain. They were, on the contrary, a little or, rather, a big world, authoritative and beautiful, many-sided, containing a multiplicity of things, all of which had the one and only aim of serving love, refining the senses, giving life to the dead world around us, endowing it in a magical way with new instruments of love, from powder and scent to the dancing-shoe, from ring to cigarette case, from waist buckle to

hand-bag . . . All were the plastic material of love, of magic and delight. Each was a messenger, a smuggler, a weapon, a battlecry. (Hermann Hesse 1988, 169)

Hesse gives this list of accessories in order to make the point that these objects of vanity, whatever their artistic or material qualities, have the potential to represent a full range of human connections, emotions and possibilities. In one sense Hesse, through the medium of Harry Haller, serves to underscore one of the main themes of this book: that is, of the jewellery object as purveyor of both personal and wider social perspectives in which identities can be created, reinforced and performed, ideas can be contained and disseminated and cultural change expressed.

Although jewellery objects tend to be characterized (often erroneously) as being small in scale, they can, nevertheless, be used to represent big ideas. In *Tender Is the Night*, F. Scott Fitzgerald likens a whole conurbation to pieces of jewellery. Nicole stares down from the terrace of the Caux Palace Hotel: 'She shivered suddenly. Two thousand feet below she saw the necklace and bracelet of lights that were Montreux and Vevey, beyond them a dim pendant of Lausanne' (1998, 171). This is jewellery as a metaphor for connectedness shown by the circles and rows of light that define a town at night. In addition, in the form of the ghostly pendant, it is used as a way of suggesting distance and disconnection. The lights also evoke images of starry constellations, and this works oddly because we are looking *down* on it and not up at it, representing Nicole Diver's struggle with her perceptions of the world following her childhood trauma as a victim of incest. Her world was turned upside down. Thus the striking image of the lakeside conurbation as jewellery plays a role that is more than just that of a dramatic backdrop. Here jewellery, normally an intimate item of adornment, has the potential to be evoked as an image on a colossal scale.

Both these literary excursions serve to indicate the ubiquity of jewellery and accessories in interwar culture. The growing production of items of personal adornment gave opportunities for objects to take on different lives and to play a key part in all levels of cultural activity in the 1920s and 1930s. The place of jewellery as part of the spectacle of modernity, whether as part of a parure, painting, photograph, film, public exhibition or literary device, points to the changes in perceptions of what actually constituted the form and purpose of jewellery. Even when the abundance of the 1920s gave way to the more sober, introspective culture of the 1930s, and the economic fortunes of Europe and America waxed and waned, jewellery was made, worn and consumed in ways

which reflected both the confidence and fragility of the times. Furthermore, the materiality of jewellery changed fundamentally from that of the outward expression of wealth to the absorption of many new forms of jewellery by fashion. The challenge of costume jewellery to the 'old order' is very important because it allowed for a form of adornment that could be accessed by a greater number of consumers than ever before who no longer felt it necessary (or indeed fashionable) to carry their bank accounts with them on an evening out. Coco Chanel's attitude to the wearing of imitation jewellery (in this case, pearls) is worth noting: 'it does not matter if they are real as long as they look like junk', thus decoupling the wearer from the dictates of wealth, taste, privilege and patriarchy in one fell swoop (Howell 1975, 105). Women were freed from these burdens just as much as they had been, in dress, freed from the corset. As I have argued earlier, women were also able to assert themselves in society and be represented as individuals without the presence of any form of adornment or accessory.

The expression of individual identity through adornment was an increasing possibility, and any such attempts were not necessarily considered as signs of eccentricity. The impact of avant-garde culture, and not just in a formal sense, meant that objects were perceived as things to be manipulated and experimented with contextually. Worn in different ways and whether expensive or without any material value, one of the contributions of the interwar jewellery wearers and makers (here exemplified by Charlotte Perriand, Nancy Cunard, Elsa Triolet and Marianne Brandt) was to emphasize adornment as an expression of identity, be it individual, cultural or political. Triolet's utilization of the humblest industrial materials to make anti-fashion statements was a technique born out of necessity, but places her way ahead of the experimental jewellers of the 1970s and 1980s. Although her pieces never constituted an outright rejection of jewellery and adornment, Triolet's contributions continue to provoke considerations of wearability, materiality, ethnicity, value, freedom and social class – themes that are never far from the thoughts of many of today's studio jewellers.

However strong the objections from modernist designers about the value (or otherwise) of jewellery as adornment, this book has shown that some of the key figures in the jewellery industry never wavered from the belief that personal adornment was an important, if not vital, aspect of modern life. In Blaise Cendrars's poetical labours for the Templier firm, we have seen that jewellery was canonized as the epitome of the expression of modern life. Seemingly, nothing other than modern jewellery could present a clearer exemplification of Baudelairean metropolitan modernity, that the past and the

present are contiguous, and that the modern is in a constant state of renewal. While recognizing the obvious impact of aspects of modernist art and design on jewellery of the 1920s and 1930s, it is fascinating to see how modern adornment seeks to combine some of the stylistic traits of the wider modern movement without ever totally departing from the fact that modern life still requires the presence of personal adornment to give it meaning.

The various attempts to represent jewellery and accessories through different media have been a constant underlying theme of this book. Jewellery research has always had recourse to representations of objects in the absence of the presence of the object themselves. In the hands of the experimental and more mainstream photographers of the interwar years, jewellery has been useful because of its scale, materiality and its ability to represent a particular subject-object relation. As we have seen, one of Kiki's de Montparnasse's bracelets in a Man Ray rayograph represents her (and her absence) as well as an opportunity for formal experimentation. It is through the presence of these often intimate and personal items of adornment that added meanings beyond the formal can be explored. The modernist body itself, so often discussed in the context of sports, dance and other increasingly popular physical pastimes in interwar culture, can also reveal itself through personal adornment, and jewellery played a significant role in this. The photographic representation of the modern body (clothed and unclothed) is given additional meaning by the presence of jewellery in its ability to contain, compliment, objectify and eroticise the body. Of interest to this study has been the way that these tendencies are still apparent when modern women turn the camera on both themselves and on other women.

Experiments with the display of jewellery in the interwar years have shown it to be bound to the forces of commerce and yet subject to the experimental and critical practices of the avant-garde. What is interesting here is how modern capitalism created, through the culture of display, a series of connections between commercial and experimental visual practices, often with jewellery and fashion at its heart. Crucial to this relationship was the idea that what we might now call ocular-centric consumption began to take its place alongside actual consumption and, in many ways, share equal importance. Attendance at a jewellery exhibition made the visitor into a *de facto* consumer of the objects on display. Looking and buying share centre-stage in this world. The shop mannequin and the magazine spread demonstrate how jewellery and accessories may be worn, but the exhibition brings together collective statements of intent and representations of industrial and cultural progress. We have seen how the

French jewellery industry, in particular, utilized talent in modern design from a variety of sources to make clear statements about the new role and purpose of modern jewellery. At its height in the late 1920s, the industry could rightly claim to have developed an identity for itself that rivalled any other of the 'luxury trades' for which Paris was still the acknowledged leader. The renowned jewellers who engineered this success did so by harnessing the combined forces of the traditional and the modern to publicly demonstrate that the need for personal adornment and the expression of a modern sensibility need not be mutually exclusive.

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