Critic, Reader, Fan:

Modernism and Textual Poaching in H.D., Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein

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Abstract

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Textual poaching, to use Henry Jenkins' now-famous terminology, is the realm of the nomad. This figure, this potential author, has no voice within the canon in which they are heavily invested, and thus transforms that canon to create a space a space of their own. Although in recent decades, fan culture and studies have found their way into academia, there is nonetheless a sense of the fan as an idle (idol) worshipper, an admirer on the sidelines of genius. Studies have largely focused on the effect these "hysterical" factions of fans have had on the writer-genius; at best, the phenomenon of the literary fan has been considered a matter of curation. But such discussions ignore fan behavior as a culture, a space of extended and organized discussion and intellectual design. And as Jenkins, Hall and others have pointed out, these pockets of discussion dedicated to transformative work have long had direct ties with the far more lucrative professional world, making fan culture, with its challenges to canonicity and

authorial intention, not dissimilar to the communities created and kept by their literary counterparts.

My dissertation argues that the fan/author relationship, with its influence on poaching and on the troubling of the author-function, can be traced through the early twentieth century and modernism's anxious relationship with celebrity. While authors like Lawrence Rainey, Andrea Huyssen, and Loren Glass have all suggested that modernism's best-known authors suffered from a fear of losing control of their own authorial power, I argue that what truly drives the troubled relationship with celebrity shared by so many of the most successful modernists was an anxiety towards the feminized masses, and their own unease at the growing power imbued upon this (perceived) audience by an increasingly globalizing mass market and media culture. Moving away from a more traditional emphasis on the "rock stars" of modernism and their fears, then, I turn towards Modernism's poachers. In doing so I focus on a selection of authors, all women, whose space within modernism's innermost circles were often delegated to that of audience, protégée, and mentee. Cast into a liminal relationship that placed them at arms' length from the tradition and canons that modernism so heavily valued, these authors – Moore, Woolf, H.D., Loy, and Stein -- drew from, curated and transformed canon using everything from the most esoteric of Poundian movements to the most ubiquitous of popular culture to create for themselves a space of their own: a version of modernism that embraced the convolutions of mass culture, with its social and commercial tensions. In the process, they redefined the very notion of canonicity as a means of reading through and understanding their own, often complicated relationship to the movements of which they were part. In this way, my dissertation not only challenges how academia reads and understands transformative work as a literary project, but

builds upon the turn towards celebrity in modernist studies by challenging the naturalizing of a divide between “mass” and “literary” work as a symptom of a fabricated canon.

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Chapter 1: Critic, Reader…Fan

I give the opening words of this dissertation to Virginia Woolf:

> I began idly reading the headlines. A ribbon of very large letters ran across the page. Somebody had made a big score in South Africa. Lesser ribbons announced that Sir Austen Chamberlain was at Geneva. A meat axe with human hair on it had been found in a cellar. Mr justice – commented in the Divorce Courts upon the Shamelessness of Women. Sprinkled about the paper were other pieces of news. A film actress had been lowered from a peak in California and hung suspended in mid-air. The weather was going to be foggy. The most transient visitor to this planet, I thought, who picked up this paper could not fail to be aware, even from this scattered testimony, that England is under the rule of a patriarchy. Nobody in their senses could fail to detect the dominance of the professor. His was the power and the money and the influence. He was the proprietor of the paper and its editor and sub-editor. […] With the exception of the fog he seemed to control everything. Yet he was angry. I knew that he was angry by this token. When I read what he wrote about women – I thought, not of what he was saying, but of himself. When an arguer argues dispassionately he thinks only of the argument; and the reader cannot help thinking of the argument too.[1]

In the above passage, taken from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, we share with the narrator the practice of reading a newspaper. Though Woolf poses herself as a reader and scholar throughout *Room,* this moment stands out for its depiction of the act of reading itself. As she pours over the newspaper in front of her, Woolf is not a passive consumer of the text. Rather, we experience her engagement with each headline as she considers its significance, not only as news, but as a remark upon Anglo-American culture. Looking at the placement and the importance of each headline, she quickly surmises that "the most transient visitor to our planet…could not fail to be aware, even from this scattered testimony, that England is under the rule of a patriarchy." Reading further still, she thinks back upon another piece she has read

recently, a work by a professor entitled "THE MENTAL, MORAL, AND PHYSICAL INFERIORITY OF THE FEMALE SEX." [2] While only the work of a relatively small number of journalists, she realizes, the newspaper in front of her reflects "the dominance of the professor" in its reflection of society's master narrative regarding its treatment of women. It is present in the cool, detached certainty that surrounds the discussion of "female inferiority." It echoes in the "shamelessness of women." And Woolf, reading only a fragment of that society, has handily decoded it.

But what does it mean to be a reader? More to the point, what does it mean to be a female reader in a society that assumes a masculine voice? Despite Woolf's depiction of the reader as engaging critically with the text she consumes, the historical answer to this question has rarely been kind. When *The New York Times* asked the same question in March of 1900, the answer was to compare the "novel-reading woman" to the audience of a comic opera or vaudeville show – a group of people who read for "amusement," enjoying the "lovely style and gentle humor" of their chosen text but lacking the ability or desire to understand its potentially complex literary merit. [3] It is worth noting that the *Times* article specifies that its subject is novel-reading *women*. Male audiences, on the other hand, are rarely "readers." Instead, they are intellectual seekers, consuming art "because their callings in life incline them towards such." [4] Such a distinction is hardly unique to *The New York Times*. According to Andreas Huyssen, the valuing of the masculine over the feminine in art and culture can be traced back into the 19th century, when mass or "low" culture became associated with women, while "real, authentic" culture remained inevitably linked with men. The author, the genius, the critic and taste-maker – such roles were, and are, coded implicitly male, with women representing the uneducated

masses.[5] This gendered division creates along with it an assumption of active and passive textual consumption. Just as the *Times* insists that the average male audience member is not a reader but rather somehow intellectually "incline[d]," the alignment of women with mass, "low" culture assumes passivity. The reader, in contrast to the author or even the informed literary critic, is not interested in "serious works" or the analysis thereof.[6] They are an undiscerning audience, content to absorb the text as it is presented.

In short: they are fans.

Re-thinking the Fan Reader

This project is, on the surface, a strange proposition. It hinges largely on re-evaluating what it means to be a reader, particularly in a literary period as marked by intellectual hierarchy as the early twentieth century. Specifically, I seek to break down the means by which certain woman authors at the turn of the century resisted the masculinist master narrative of modernism and its orbits. I argue that these methods, which rely heavily on the challenging tightly held notions of canonicity via texts of resistance, hold much in common with contemporary fan practices through which often-excluded readers situate themselves within and in relation to texts that would otherwise regard them as invisible. Far from being a passive consumer the fan is an active, critical reader whose presence challenges the notion of a single, autonomous narrative. Thus, I present "case studies" of three authors whose engagement with the canons of modernity echo these practices by poaching from their contemporaries to trouble and undermine institutional assumptions about art, genius, and mass culture.

In doing so, I also question a central divide that still remains in discussion of celebrity within modernist studies. Even now, there is a tendency to preserve the high/low cultural binary

by imagining the relationship between high modernism and its audience as inherently antagonistic. In his breakthrough study, *Reading 1922*, Michael North conceives the importance of mass culture on modernism as a question of "social fact, as part of the lived experience of the reader of *The Waste Land* or *Ulysses*."[7] Even more significantly, he asks "what connections might have been made in the mind of such a reader between literary modernism and the other innovations of the same year," emphasizing that the value of mass culture for modernist literature comes largely from its relationship with the reader.[8] More recent texts have approached the question of modernism and mass culture with a similar sense of disassociation. Loren Glass argues that celebrity "challenged deeply held convictions about authorial inspiration and property," but also describes the relationship between low and high culture as a "collision" of authorial identities once placed on the public market.[9] Similarly, Aaron Jaffe poses his own study as an analysis of modernism's ability to self-fashion an economy of literary prestige within a consumer culture largely disinterested in the tenets of high modernism.[10] The subjects of these studies are overwhelmingly male, their place in the modernist canon long secured, and yet discussion of their engagement with mass culture generally focuses on the response of their audience. Glass, for instance, describes Eliot's *Times* magazine cover as crucial to his writing career because of its influence on his readers, whom from then on associated Eliot's work with his own "gaunt, vampiric pose and high-priestly charisma." [11] In each case, there is a sense of antagonism between reader and author, an anxiety that seemingly stems from the assumption of a sponge-like, passive audience, whose interaction with the vulgarities of low culture have contaminated their readings of high literature.

There are at least two problems with such an assumption. The first, of course, lies in the insistence upon authorial "property" by upholding the sanctity of the author/reader divide. Certainly, as de Certeau reminds us, "to read is to wander through an imposed system." [12] The very act of reading a text is to engage with its master narrative, the network of assumptions, standards, and hierarchal values encoded into it by its author. But it is not, as Woolf demonstrates, to be passive within this system. Despite authorial attempts to distinguish "'true' interpreters" of texts from misreading and "poor" analysis, a text "has a meaning only through its readers; it changes along with them; it is ordered in accord with codes of perception that it does not control." [13] Thus readers are not a passive consumers, nor are they beholden to the meanings encoded into a text by its original author(s). This distinction brings me to my second point. Analyses of modernism and mass culture which pose modernism's "high art" in direct contrast to the "low art" of popular media often do so by assuming that consumers of the latter do so without thought or critical analysis. Fans, in contrast to critics, are "naïve, possibly obsessive, [and] often transferential" in their love of a text.[14] To be considered a fan often means being linked to fanatical obsession with a text, or, historically, to such 18th and 19th century descriptors as "amateurs," "devotees," "maniacs," and "dilettantes." [15] But such depictions all stem from the assumption that to be a reader is to be a passive consumer.

This is where I mount my own challenge to the modernist perception of reading mass culture. In a literary period where the canon is still heavily masculine, where the "masses" are understood as implicitly feminine, assuming the reader is an idle (idol) worshipper is particularly troubling. We should not, however, throw out the idea of the reader as fan; quite the opposite. Rather, I suggest we should look towards contemporary media studies for a more nuanced

understanding of fans and readership. Drawing on de Certeau's definition of the reader, Henry Jenkins describes fans as "textual poachers:" readers, that is, who not only engage with a text's master narrative but manipulate and transform it. Often this transformation takes the form of disruption via inserting ones' own reading into the text in such a way that shifts or even upends entirely the messages intended by the institutions that create and distribute the original works, thereby creating a space for the fan to express their own values and desires. [16] More often still, fans represent an audience for whom the text itself is not explicitly written. The discrepancy can create tension between fan and author, a distinguishing characteristic that runs counter to the depiction of fans as rabid consumers. The long-running television show *Supernatural*, (2005-present), for instance, has become infamous for Warner Bros.' (WB) seemingly willful persistence in disregarding the show's real versus imagined audience – that is to say, a (very real) female fan base versus a (desperately sought) male audience. Having begun its run as a program aimed primarily at young men, the show emphasizes "guns and a cool car and classic rock – all of that […] meant to bring in a male audience." [17] Despite this, the show has found a dedicated and overwhelmingly-female fan base online, drawn in not by the show's action-horror premise but by the show's lead characters, brothers Sam and Dean Winchester, and the angel Castiel. The fandom's divergence from the show's master narrative has become a regular point of conflict between the fans and the network in recent years, as the fans express increasing frustration over WB executive Chad Kennedy's insistence that canonization of "Destiel" (the common fandom term for the unrealized romantic relationship between Dean and Castiel) would have to "serve the story," while the show's current master narrative – of womanizing, gratuitous violence, and casual sexism – are never called into question.[18] For a large portion of the show's

online fans, many of whom identify as queer themselves, Kennedy's comments reaffirmed an unpleasant truth about the show's intentions. Whether or not the pairing had been deliberately cast as romantic in order to generate ratings, neither the writers nor the producers of *Supernatural* have any intention of "making it canon," lest the show lose its perceived hypermasculine appeal.

What's particularly interesting is the ease with which fans question the master narrative of the texts that they read. One of the most significant aspects of fan practice, and one that I wish to press upon here, is the way that fans understand the meaning of "canon." In contrast to their traditionally critical counterparts, fan readers rarely elevate canonicity as an indicator of expertise or quality. Though having a preferred story, romance or narrative "go canon" – that is, becoming part of the master text – is often seen as affirmation of fan work, it is not considered necessary in order for a reading to be considered legitimate. New episodes, films, or books are scrutinized "according to their conformity with the hopes and expectations the reader has for the series potential development," and acknowledged or rejected accordingly.[19] If the "canon" of a story begins to run consistently counter to fan readings, it isn't uncommon for fans to throw it out entirely. Thus, the "program 'tradition' is abstracted from the sum total of available material and yet provides constant criteria for evaluating each new addition" to the text, replacing the idea of a single, impenetrable master narrative with the potential for many readings of equal value. The significance of this reimagining of canonicity cannot be understated. The construction of a canon – that is, of an unquestionable master narrative - offers the dominant culture, generally cisgender heterosexual white men, power by perpetually reaffirming their absolute significance. It serves as what Loren Glass describes as "armor" against the power of the marketplace,

preserving the sanctity of both author and primary text.[20] The assumption most commonly associated with canonicity is that it represents the highest form of literary and artistic achievement. Thus the masculine fan practices are often curatorial, based on acquiring and collecting knowledge, thereby preserving the stories that continue to place them at the forefront of society as history's narrator and primary protagonist.[21] Transformative fandom, in contrast, relies not on ensuring order within a master narrative, but on sites of rupture within it. The very act of writing fanfiction relies on finding potential points of deviation within the stories they derive from, ranging from codas (afterwords or inserts to individual episodes, books, or films) to AUs (alternate universe stories, taking the characters out of their given narrative and inserting them into an entirely new set of circumstances). Rhiannon Bury differentiates these two forms of reading as "horizontal" and "vertical" engagement with the text, with the latter emphasizing readings of the texts that exist outside and beyond the dominant narrative.[22] "Vertical" engagement, she continues, is often a means of "breaking into" texts that are not meant for the audience in question."[23] Each reading reflects the "different reading backgrounds, social experiences, ideological orientations [and] desires" of the readership in question, and draws from (or rejects) the canon of a text correspondingly.[24] Thus the very *act* of fannishness becomes one of resistance. It is to question the master narrative by creating alternatives, often in ways that challenge the sanctity of a text's encoded social and cultural norms. It pulls back the curtain on the assumed masculinity of "stories for boys" and reveals it as a construction, only one of many possible versions of the text in question.

This is the part of the equation so often eschewed in defining a fan: the role that reading, and thus interpreting, takes in disrupting the perception of texts as operating within a single and unified artistic tradition. In the case of *Supernatural,* it means questioning the show's assumptions of the male gaze and compulsory heterosexuality. To look back farther, at Virginia Woolf and her newspaper, it means considering not only the newspaper but the society that prints it. In either case, the very act of reading becomes a method of resistance, the reader "poaching" information that undermines and questions the text. All too often these questions reveal an underlying narrative of strict patriarchal conformity. Judith Fetterley famously observes that "American literature is male:" written by men, for men, and with the assumption of a male audience as the default. Thus, "to read the canon of what is currently considered classic American literature is […] to identify as male." To insert oneself unthinkingly into the master narrative of Anglo-European literature would be to "identify with a selfhood that defines itself in opposition to [women]," and would require the female reader to "identify against herself." [25] The result is a literary space in which women are given no place of their own. Bury describes fandom as a kind of female-identified heterotopia. Neither public nor private, targeted audience or venerated creator, its members are not interested in sanctifying master narratives, but in challenging them – opposing the assumption that these narratives, whatever form they may take, are an explicitly masculine space.

One particularly famous instance of this clash of intent can be found in Lucasfilm Ltd.'s attempts at policing the fan practices surrounding the original *Star Wars* saga (1977-1983) in a memo circulated by the director of the franchise's official fan club. In it, the company demanded that all fan works conform to the "family values associated with the original films," accusing the

unofficial and sometimes-explicit fiction and art created by fans of "darkening the reputation [the] company is so proud of." [26] This demand was met with scorn by the fans who produced both the material in question and the fanzines through which said material was distributed, but what is particularly interesting here is how pointedly these fans, many of them women, reacted to this criticism as an act of explicitly gendered policing of the franchise's audience and image. As an editorial published in the fanzine *Slaysu* decried, Lucasfilm was not merely attempting to retain control of its "image," but was

> saying "you must enjoy the characters of the *Star Wars* universe for male reasons. Your sexuality must be correct and proper by my (male) definition." I am not male. I do not want to be. I refuse to be a poor imitation, or worse, of someone's idiotic ideal of femininity. Lucasfilm has said, in essence, '"This is what we see in the *Star Wars* films and we are telling you that this is what you will see."[27]

Far from meeting the definition of the "fanatic," the fans who responded to Lucasfilm's missive reacted by acknowledging their own liminal position within the film's intended audience. As both an action film and science fiction, *Star Wars* was seemingly targeted at a male audience. As the presence of an official fan club demonstrated, its fans were encouraged to show enthusiasm for the franchise beyond the movie theater – as long as they conformed to the narrative put in place by the film itself. The show's underground fandom, in contrast, presented a threat to that narrative, producing alternative stories that focused on romance, 'what-ifs,' and alternate universes: "explicitly challenging," as Jenkins suggests, "patriarchal assumptions"

regarding the primacy of masculinity, heroism, and heteronormativity inherent in the text itself.[28]

What interests me in this interplay between fans and the texts from which they borrow is this pointed awareness of their own relative invisibility, and the extent to which fan practices are explicitly acknowledged, within fan communities, as a form of resistance against this phenomenon. The Organization of Transformative Works, a nonprofit organization founded in 2007 with the intent of protecting and legitimizing fan work within academic and legal spheres, cites in their mission statement fandom's history as a "predominantly female community with a rich history of creativity and commentary." [29] It is important that we emphasize this aspect of fan practice, because while "fandom" as it is used in a contemporary sense refers most often to the phenomenon of media-based communities, the activities of fan work in and of themselves speak to a much broader form of resistance to patriarchal understanding of texts, canon, and the "right" kind of audience. Far from being adoring consumers, fan analysis of texts "typically [involve] not simply fascination or adoration but also frustration and antagonism," [30] an awareness of and pushing back against narratives that render their own desires, wants and identities irrelevant or invisible. They are uninterested in preserving the notion of the venerated author, with his ability to "neutralize the contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts," [31] but rather, settle themselves in these spaces, producing alternative narratives that question and challenge dominant assumptions of authorship, ownership, and canonicity. In the process, fans create spaces for themselves within texts that do not "belong" to them: a frightening proposition, to a patriarchal culture that values texts, particularly *great* texts, as part of a linear narrative of genius.

Female Fans and Nomadic Modernism

By the broadest description of fan practice, one could suggest that contemporary resistance to a single, patriarchal canon might be traced to any historical tradition of engaged readership. Eric Eisner, for instance, locates in Elizabeth Browning's female readers an "extravagance" that reflects in her own long poem, *Aurora Leigh,* as a "check on Aurora's creative energies." [32] David Brewer uses the term "imaginative expansion" to describe reading practices in eighteenth-century Britain which rejected authorial ownership, treating famous literary characters "as if they were both fundamentally incomplete and the common property of all." [33] But while there is no lack of work done on the supposed historicizing of the phenomenon of the "fan," such scholarship still tends to emphasize idolatry and enshrinement, rather than resistance. Eisner describes fandom itself as a "delirious partisanship," a "mass cultural phenomenon" that "belongs to the space of leisure, consumption, and spectacle; it is ritualized and participatory; it is both highly individual and stereotypical; it involves complex fantasy dynamics of exhibition and shame, desire and sublimation, identification and objectification." [34] While aspects of this description are undoubtedly true, once again we see fan practice pared down to "fantasy dynamics" as a means of becoming closer to the object of a perceived fanatical affection. There is little thought to the idea of fan-as-critic. Rather, as is often the case, the "fan" is feminized and codified as an admirer, a fanatic even when the subject of that admiration is a woman, as well. With this in mind, I seek to situate an understanding of oppositional fan-practice firmly at the beginning of the twentieth century, a move I propose for several reasons. The first, and most evident, is that of the modern marketplace. The turn of the twentieth century saw an unprecedented rise in capitalist consumption in Western culture, as images of the new, publicly-

active "modern woman" created of the "fairer sex" a voracious and ever-growing market for entertainment, leisure and consumer goods.[35] The growing ubiquity of labor-saving technologies, and the increasing freedom of women to move beyond the home – both physically, through the mass production of automobiles, and, civically, with the ratification of women's suffrage in 1920 – created a "new woman" with unprecedented leisure time and spending power, and control over each. A 1930 advertisement for the Frey agency rightly declared this modern woman the "spender of the nation" in a piece of copy aimed at what was rapidly becoming a new American truth: success, or failure, depended on the attentions of the female consumer [Figure 1.1].[36] This in and of itself is not a phenomenon unique to the twentieth century. It is debatable whether Browning, or many of her contemporaries would have had careers and admirers worth writing about if not for the teeming market in "women's literature." So popular was the novel within the female market that by 1900 even the *New York Times* admitted that the male reader had become far fewer in number than "the novel-reading woman." [37] But in contrast to prior decades, which saw women's primary responsibilities within the private sphere of the home and hearth, the new century saw the female consumer increasingly responsible for the pocketbooks of the *entire* household, making decisions from men's clothing and accessories, to luxury goods and entertainment for the entire family.[38]

The rapid rise of the female consumer generated a new form of explicitly modern authorial anxiety. Confronted not only with a market they did not understand but also a rapidly-expanding, increasingly global entertainment industry vying for this market's attention, producers of literature and the arts faced an increasingly marginal position in society. This problem was made especially troubling, Huyssen notes, by the pre-existing identification

between masculinity and innovation.[39] While the feminine masses may have been dismissed in decades past, they were now an inescapable part of the consumer industry. They held control not only over the financial success of material produced for art and leisure but by extension its potential for distribution, notoriety, and commercial success. In response, the early twentieth century also saw a reactionary push-back against commercialization in favor of a kind of cultural elitism, the two-tiered system of "high" and "low" art that came to define the modernist project. Aaron Jaffe suggests that modernist literature as a whole "may best be understood in terms of its struggle for dead cultural authority," a deliberate attempt by what contemporary scholarship still considers to be "high modernists" to retain control of a masculinist literary hierarchy against the mass market by foregrounding the desires and values of expertise and arcane knowledge over the cultural capital offered by the "masses."[40] One form this control took was that of legitimacy, that is to say, the conveyance of a "cultural continuity" in some loose form, be it Arnold's "touchstones," Pound's "paideuma," or a reigning conception of vision and genius meant to codify a legacy by which the author regained a privileged position of cultural power.[41] Such legacies demanded a striation between the "high" and "low" aspects of said culture, but more to the point, they insisted on the role of "high" art as capable of representing a universal experience. Its (implicitly male) authors were granted an almost transcendent ability to perform authentically the voices and experiences of the other. And often, modernism's other was implicitly female, in practice if not in statement. In theorizing the gendering of mass versus "high" culture, Andrea

Huyssen uses as his case study, Flaubert's 1856 novel *Madame Bovary*: a text that was widely praised at the time for its "authentic" female voice, prompting Flaubert himself to famously state of his titular character, "I am Madame Bovary." This is, of course, a lie, and precisely the mentality that Huyssen criticizes. Flaubert is *not* Madame Bovary. He is a man writing from the perspective of a woman, and he is lauded for an "authentic" replication of that voice by a masculine audience, in a masculine high culture that has dismissed the mass culture below it as teeming, unwashed, and implicitly feminine. Huyssen argues that contained in the praise of *Bovary* is the idea that

> woman (Madame Bovary) is positioned as reader of inferior literature - subjective, emotional and passive - while man (Flaubert) emerges as writer of genuine, authentic literature - objective, ironic and in control of his aesthetic means. [42]

By praising Flaubert as having so truthfully captured the feminine voice, (male) critics of *Madame Bovary* effectively silences the novel's female audience – the audience whom, presumably, would be best qualified to determine the authenticity of the novel's "feminine" voice. Instead, Flaubert's insistence that he "is" Madame Bovary enacts the essence of masculine literary privilege, as Rachel Blau DuPlessis describes it. By "separating the feminine from women" the male author ascribes himself the 'burden' of the universal voice while still enjoying the privileges of masculine artistry.[43] It creates a "genuine, authentic literature" that is neither one – it is, however, placed in direct opposition to the masses to whom it will be sold, the *real* "Madame Bovaries," whose "subjective, emotional and passive" constitutions have left them apparently unfit even to write about themselves.

Gendering Modernist Canon(s)

In a period when the rising mass and popular culture was "constantly and obsessively" gendered as feminine, while the high arts (be they traditional or modernist) were still coded as a masculine realm, the idea that a (male) author might reach beyond the veil to grasp at and even understand the former was considered an achievement worthy of praise and critical analysis, evidence of a development within the higher art form.[44] What is interesting to me, however, is that while this critical reception of Flaubert took place at the turn of the twentieth century, contemporary celebrity scholarship around modernism still suggests that, while we may be intellectually aware of the extent to which the high/low divide and its gendering is a construct, we still cling to the canonization of the modernists as they understood themselves: erudite, disassociated, and above all, nearly exclusively masculine. Michael North's *Reading 1922*, one of the earliest tomes to take up the question of modernism and popular culture, contains echoes of high modernist culture shock in his discussion of T.S. Eliot's publication of the modernist staple *The Waste Land* in mainstream magazines *The Dial* and *The Nation*, despite his own scathing criticism of all things related to mass culture. North begins his discussion of the topic by acknowledging that "it now seems somewhat remarkable that the same person who made American popular culture a legitimate object of criticism also played a central role in formulating the public definition of literary modernism, and that he should have done these two things at exactly the same time." [45] Of course, Eliot was nowhere near the only modernist in wide circulation – in the years surrounding 1922, Woolf edited for *Vanity Fair*, and Gertrude Stein published there in 1923. And yet even now it is only Eliot that we find surprising. Contemporary scholarship has continued to propagate, at least subconsciously, the same binary

that created that canon in the first place. "High" modernism is something that by its nature is the domain of men, and that mass culture, the encroaching feminine threat, is something that needs to be "responded" to, rather than something that was there all along. In doing so, however, we ignore that the supposed threat of mass culture is part of a larger gender issue in modernism, a problem of space and authorship and control of literature's master narrative.

Much celebrity scholarship around modernism ignores the fact that the current modernist canon did not appear in retrospect but was carefully constructed by the very artists who appear in it. To that end, a reconfiguring of celebrity studies to consider the female modernists would entail considering mass culture not as an "other," but as a key component of modernism, something that I would argue modernism would likely be unrecognizable without. In his book *Authors, Inc.*, Loren Glass traces what he considers to be masculine modernism's "stubborn fascination" with celebrity and control over authorial name and celebrity.[46] In his argument, the male modernists took up celebrity as a way of preserving the cultural capital of their own work within the increasingly growing mass market. In this way high modernism's authors asserted themselves against the rise of popular media and its consumers, whom they saw as a direct threat to their own positioning as a dominant elite. Building on Huyssen's example, Glass asserts that the female gendering of the mass market caused a kind of Freudian anxiety among the modernist authors, for whom literature – specifically, high literature – had become an arena "in which manhood could be forged and affirmed" by granting them a space that could not be reached by the 'unwashed masses,' so to speak. [47] This space, of course, had begun to fall apart when mass culture began to blur the boundaries between producer and consumer; "the national mass public came to consist of potential authors and cultural producers; readers became theoretically

interchangeable with the famous authors whose texts they read." [48] But the fascinating if disturbing thing about this reading, which Glass fails to account for, is with *whom,* exactly, these authors feared they might become "interchangeable." [49]

Huyssen argues that, even beyond the high/low culture divide, modernism relies heavily on something of a two-tiered hierarchy of quality in its work. This assumption is at the core of *why* the masses are coded as feminine: women's art, and artistic abilities, must always be inferior to those of their male counterparts. In part, this stratification is the result of the assertion of a masculinist notion of authorial agency. If the author-genius is coded male, then women represent an inferior audience to be engaged with, to be woven, ultimately, into the universal narrative from which true literature speaks. They are the muse, according to Jed Rasula, who asserts that the classical figure represents not only inspiration, but the ability to control, to assert potency and dominance over the "agents of otherness" represented by creativity embodied in female form.[50] But such iconography comes with its own set of limitations. As Michael Gilkes explains, the role of muse is inherently secondary. She exists to nurture her masculine counterpart, remaining "elemental," a "'container' or 'vessel'" that ultimately becomes "woman contained, enclosed or otherwise in confinement." [51] The muse figure creates between the masculine and feminine another binary, associating the feminine with groundedness, with *re*production. It is her masculine counterparts, nurtured and inspired by these fixed and earthly agents, who innovate. Thus, while women may serve as inspiration, or even reflections of greatness, they will never eclipse their male counterparts, a mentality reflected in the high modernist treatment of even the most oft-canonized of twentieth century women authors.

We don't have to go far to see this behavior in action. Marianne Moore's first collected book of poetry features an introduction by TS Eliot that does much to demonstrate exactly how even the most well-received of the women modernists were viewed by their peers, as Eliot dedicates more time to lauding the brilliance of his perceived *actual* contemporary, Ezra Pound, than he does introducing the poet who wrote this particular book. Though Eliot lauds Moore for being one of the few poets in his lifetime to have "done the language some service," it becomes immediately clear that he attributes this, not to her own genius, but to the study of her betters a praise that comes off as infantilizing:

> Looking at Miss Moore's poems of a slightly later period, I should say that she had taken to heart the repeated reminder of Mr. Pound: that poetry should be as well written as prose. She seems to have saturated her mind in the perfections of prose, in its precision rather than its purple; and to have found her rhythm, her poetry, her appreciation of the individual word, for herself.[52]

Eliot's "praise" of Moore is not as a peer, but rather, as a reader: she has "taken to heart" the work of another, better (male) writer, and in doing so, elevated herself to the state of an almost – *almost* brilliant, *almost* as good, *almost* a true artist. His praise of her poetry emphasizes the superficial, emphasizing her "amused and affectionate attention to animals" and the lyrical, rhythmic nature of her "unusual awareness of visual patterns," selling Moore's poetry based on the strength of its supposed beauty and whimsy, a ghostly call-back to the *New York Times'* question of women readers and their final missive that such consumers will, ultimately, take enjoyment not in existential truths but in the "lovely style and gentle humor" of women's literature.[53] Thus while Eliot's name on the preface to her book may have helped sell copies, the

language he uses places her below himself, Pound, and their male modernist peers, ensuring the perpetuation of a canon wherein she remains, at best, a protégé. When Glass suggests that these male modernists experienced a crisis upon realizing that, in an era of mass markets and public opinion, their readers may eventually become "theoretically interchangeable with the famous authors whose texts they read," it is difficult not to consider the thought that it is not only the 'masses' who gave them anxiety but also the breakdown of the carefully-crafted canon that had placed them at the top of an imagined index of quality.

Significantly, in describing Moore's work within the language of "women's literature," Eliot ignores what is essentially a form of subversion against the very hierarchy that defines her as such. Eliot ends his "Introduction" by letting the reader know that, despite his praise for the collected poems, his original suggestion, that "I should make a selection, from both previously published and more recent poems," did not come to pass – rather, Moore herself retained editorial control of her own collected tome, with Eliot doing "hardly more than [settling] over the order of contents." [54] Thus it is worth considering the work that made it into Moore's *Selected Poems*. In her essay, "The 'Feminine' Language of Marianne Moore," Bonnie Costello takes to task the notion suggested by Eliot's introduction, of Moore herself as a passive audience and thus as a humble and restrained author and poet. In particular, Costello considers Moore's "humility" – a trait assumed in her thanking Eliot for the "armor" afforded her by his introduction to her poems, and one supposedly reflected in her works such as "To a Snail," "The Plumet Basilisk," and "The Frigate Pelican," animals whose strengths seemingly represent the stable, feminine traits for which she is lauded.[55] "To a Snail," for instance, elevates transgression as much as it does reflection –

If ‘compression is the first grace of style’,
You have it. Contractility is a virtue
As modesty is a virtue.
It is not acquisition of any one thing
That is able to adorn,
Or the incidental quality that occurs
As a concomitant of something well said,
That we value in style,
But the principle that is hid:
In the absence of feet, ‘a method of conclusions’;
‘a knowledge of principles’,
In the curious phenomenon of your occipital horn.[56]

While Eliot emphasizes the “affectionate attention” to the visual subjects of her poems, contained in Moore’s language is a sharp critique of the very adornment that supposedly marks her as a successful example of literary mimesis. “The Snail” begins by questioning the quintessentially high modernist notion that “compression is the first grace of style,” be it the elegance of form, of precise language, or the literal compact body. Instead, as Elisabeth Joyce notes, the poem makes use of “compression” to “[excise] the connectives in her poetry so that she can disrupt logical narrative and embrace the abstraction of the cubists and Dadaists,” making use of two masculine modernist forms of artistic expression to emphasize the value of said abstraction, of keeping ones’ true form (so to speak) close to ones’ shell.[57] Art, like style, is “not the acquisition of any one thing / that is able to adorn,” to name or to label, but “the principle that is hid,” which threatens to rupture through the surface.

In the case of “The Snail,” as with many of Moore’s poems, what threatens to rupture through to the surface is a different image of Moore than that of a dedicated reader, the loyal fan

and mentee for Pound's modern genius. Where Eliot saw in Moore's work evidence of careful study of a modernist master, Moore herself credited a far more feminine-coded inspiration. Marie Borroff notes, in compiling her *Complete Poem,* the poet points to inspiration not in the words of her male compatriots, but in the tight language and vivid imagery of advertisements and motion pictures, a piecemeal style that Borroff refers to as "promotional prose." [58] The dramatization created by "heightening of contrast and incongruities latent in the subject matter," Moore's insertion of – and credit to – the world of advertisement and its feminized masses create a very different image of this seemingly-humble, rapt audience for the lessons of masculine modernism. [59] It is clear that Moore had by this point achieved "style." She had even earned respect for it, however tempered by modernism's hierarchy it may be. But the "method of conclusions," the "knowledge of principles" by which she has been welcomed into the modernist project functions seemingly without knowledge of her own personal desire to wed high and low, to enshrine in high modernism the principles of low art, of the imagery of contemporary popular culture. Artistry, like modesty, like style, for Moore, is not merely a matter of reading and repetition. Rather it becomes a matter of subversion, of enshrining the language of "promotional prose" in the halls of high art.

In "the acquisition of hidden principles," Moore was not alone. Having been relegated to the sidelines of modernism as readers and talented mimics, at best, the mass market is one area that that an increasing number of women writers began to work to understand in detail. In her book *Hollywood Ambition*, Marsha Orgeron provides a study of Gertrude Stein and celebrity that is remarkable precisely because it does *not* approach Stein's understanding of celebrity as 'just another (male) modernist,' instead attempting to consider Stein's relationship to fame within the

context of the women of modernism and their always precarious position between mass culture and high art. Returning to the harsh fact of the difficulty female modernists had in being taken as seriously as their male counterparts, Orgeron replicates a 1934 piece in *The New Republic* that is, in many ways, indicative of the very same kind of sidelining that Eliot was guilty of in his description of Moore, as T.S. Matthews proclaimed of Stein's work,

> we are here because we are curious – not so much about her writing, which we have never read, and probably never shall, as about herself – an apparently sensible, perhaps really sane woman who has spent most of her life writing absolute balderdash, and then, by gum, a year ago published a book that was perfectly plain sailing, and got her on the bestseller lists. We want to see what this creature looks like, we want to hear what she has to say for herself.[60]

Stein is an interesting case because while she was deeply fascinated by celebrity, her own work rarely seemed to reflect this interest –throughout her life, her writing maintained its high-modern complexity, remaining closer in style to Joyce or Pound than it ever was to Anita Loos or Dorothy Parker. Nonetheless, copy surrounding her visit to the states insisted on treating her as part of the masses instead of affording her respect as a member of the literary elite. This particular piece is blunt in its (probably accurate) insistence that the majority of her American audience is simply there "to see what this creature looks like," curious as to how someone who had written "absolute balderdash" produced a work that has become a best-seller. Though Stein had by now become something of a subject of fascination to American audiences, it is worth noting that (despite the author's own insistence) there is no mention of genius or literary merit in the discussion of either the author or her work. Instead, she is presented in the language of the

"woman writer," producing either "balderdash" or the "perfectly plain," with an eye towards the voyeuristic curiosity that fame evokes, in any case. The message here, despite coming from "the masses," is remarkably similar to Eliot's vaguely paternalistic summation of Moore's literary talents, with an emphasis placed on the "curiosity" of the work, on its potential interest outside of a broader literary canon. For Moore in particular, this means casting her as a voracious student of the modernist project, but stops short of assuming her in the canon itself. As Jaffe notes, Eliot's grandest gestures towards the literary canon, that of "the greatness of work of contemporaries" and "the genuineness of poetry," rely on outside influence from an imagined, future generation of scholars – and on Eliot himself, to alert us to this historical tradition.[61]

Towards a Modernist-Feminist Fan Critic

How can a "sane woman" be content to produce "absolute balderdash?" How can a poet such as Marianne Moore be made palatable to the masses, except through the whimsical lens of 'women's literature?' The responses to Stein and Moore, like that of so many of their contemporaries, situate these authors in a kind of heterotopic position within modernist literature. Modernism itself might be said to operate on the notion of exclusivity – Jaffe himself goes on to argue that the culture cache of Pound, Eliot and the "men of 1914" was not a matter of formal concern but rather "a historically circumscribed mode of presenting value and prescribing frameworks of expectations": a master narrative, or canon. [62] Given the extent to which this "historical circumscription" is also often largely male-coded, modernism's woman authors faced an exclusion from canon. Perhaps nowhere is this better or more famously illustrated than in Virginia Woolf's novella, *A Room of One's Own*, in which the author relays a fictionalized

account of her time at Trinity College in Cambridge, of physically occupying space there but being, nonetheless, an explicit outsider to the traditions it represents:

> As chance would have it, some stray memory of some old essay about revisiting Oxbridge in the long vacation brought Charles Lamb to mind – Saint Charles, said Thackeray, putting a letter of Lamb's to his forehead. Indeed, among all the dead (I give you my thoughts as they came to me), Lamb is one of the most congenial; one to whom one would have liked to say, Tell me how you wrote your essays? […] It then occurred to me that the very manuscript itself which Lamb had looked at was only a few hundred yards away, so that one could follow Lamb's footsteps across the quadrangle to that famous library where the treasure is kept. Moreover, I recollected, as I put this plan into execution, it is in this famous library that the manuscript of Thackeray's *Esmond* is also preserved […] but here I was actually at the door which leads to the library itself. I must have opened it, for instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a depreciating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction.[63]

Woolf begins her narrative as, above all else, a lover of literature: she is a reader, and a fan. Her journey to the library at "Oxbridge" begins due to her own knowledge of the Anglo-European literary canon – a literary history steeped in masculine "genius," which she traces from Lamb, to Milton to Thackery in her mind as she seeks the "treasure" of increasing nearness to this canon. It is only when she attempts to enter the library – to access this canon, to gain knowledge of it first-hand – that she is stopped, informed that "ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow."

What Woolf discovers in the Oxbridge library is that she has been, quite literally, shut out of a canon in which she herself has developed some stake. Like her male counterparts, Woolf has steeped herself in moments of literary heritage, a term Andrea Zemgulys describes as representing "a visibly and even ostentatiously mediated past." [64] Like literary canon, or tradition, this term reflects a sense of literary history as a single, uninterrupted narrative of genius: of great authors (men) whose work has somehow built upon itself, and within itself, creating a lineage contemporary artists may hope to extend. Woolf's own description of the library's contents suggest she has bought into this notion in full. At the very least, she certainly expects that the shrine of a library has, describing even the librarian as a fluttering "guardian angel," as if the canon contained in the library were sanctified by God himself. But while the Oxbridge library may house a canon to which Woolf feels connected, as an author and an Englishwoman, it is still one from which she has been physically and institutionally shut out. Reflecting on her dismissal from the library, Woolf is quick to understand what this means for her own place as both an author and a reader: "venerable and calm, with all its treasures safe locked within its breast, it sleeps complacently and will, so far as I am concerned, so sleep forever." [65] In making this statement, Woolf can be seen as deferring to the chauvinist requirements of Oxbridge. But one might suggest an alternative reading. Woolf follows by asserting her intention that she will "never again wake those echoes, never will I ask for that hospitality again." [66] She is driven by anger as she leaves, but more importantly by the desire to alter how she considers the canon of which she is clearly so fond – to never again "ask," before seeking its nearness. Woolf's anger creates in her a desire to disregard the traditions constructed

and imposed by the library and its academic norms, to separate the texts she has loved from those who have canonized them, who preside over their narratives.

Woolf has become a poacher.

*

As I have already discussed, to be a woman and a writer in the broad spectrum of literature that constitutes modernism is, almost by definition, to be placed at the margins. It is to be afforded a position within the cultural hierarchy of literati but denied access to its highest point, to be afforded knowledge of the canon but not recognized or acknowledged by the institutions that define the canon itself. Woolf's experience in the libraries of "Oxbridge" only serves to drive home the reality which she and her peers faced in seeking recognition as producers of "authentic" literature. Her academic knowledge, no matter how vast, cannot overcome the persistence of feminine invisibility. The exclusion of women within modernism's master narrative as Libby Rifkin suggests, can be viewed as one of the movement's "structural function[s]," producing the metaphorical library in which a heritage of genius is preserved and maintained.[67] With this in mind I posit that the women who remained outside of that canon were in a position of what Henry Jenkins refers to as "poachers," drawing from, challenging, and transforming the works of a master narrative that seeks to shut them out of the modernist project. "Poaching," as defined by Jenkins, builds off of de Certeau's notion of the reader-as-poacher to suggest a kind of interactive engagement with texts that do not provide a recognizable space for the reader who draws from them. In contrast to de Certeau, however, Jenkins considers this form of reading as an active fan-practice, a method of developing an alternative canon. Like Jenkins, I

find it useful here to acknowledge a bleed between the notions of "reader" and "author." [68] This is particularly important when considering modernist literature, with its connections to classical antiquity and aims of erudition, but it is especially salient given the regularity with which the women of modernism were placed in positions associated with the reader, for example mentees, protégés, and creative "mothers" to their better-known male counterparts. Because of this lack of separation, Jenkins notes, poachers are not "constrained by permanent property ownership," that is to say by the preservation of a master narrative or a singular canon.[69] As Marianne Moore was able to pull from advertisements and "low culture" to produce work (likely willfully) mistaken for that of a dutiful Poundian, so too is the 'poacher' able to collect, shed, or keep what is necessary for their own narrative: in this case, a resistant alternative to modernism's machismo.

This study focuses on three white, Anglo-American female modernists and their relationship as readers to the master narratives that shaped both modernism and the twentieth century. More specifically, it looks at the ways in which each author reads against a canon that attempts to silence confine or manufacture womanhood. I began in Chapter 2 by examining how the poet H.D. challenges the primacy of masculine genius in the modernist canon by way of focusing on her relationship with Ezra Pound as he constructs his intellectual "paideuma."[70] Building off of the work of Guy Davenport, I argue that Pound's *Cantos* represent a master narrative of cultural genius that assumes masculinity as a pre-requisite for "genius." By using Homeric mythology – specifically, the figure of Odysseus – in the early *Cantos*, Pound builds into his opus an assumption of male primacy in both history and mythology as the poem demands its reader take on the role of the wandering narrator. For female readers this means

"identifying against themselves" by taking on a masculine subject position in a narrative where women often represent distraction and ruin, an image reflected by the figure of Helen of Troy.[71] H.D. works against this narrative in her own retelling of the Hellenic myth by giving a Helen a voice through which she challenges the primacy of Homer's epic, troubling the notion of a single linear canon of genius in favor of the suggestion that there is no one "simple answer" to questions of history and culture.[72] Moreover, I posit that H.D.'s growing interest in and anxiety regarding the creation of such a confining master narrative regarding women and their place in modern society is what drives her interest toward Hollywood, where she sees in the creation of celebrity the development of a new and dangerous mythos.

The question of canon within early twentieth century society is further developed in Chapter 3, where Mina Loy takes on the master narrative of beauty and the modern woman. Here, I consider Loy's background in futurism, where the disdain for women as "earthly" beings unsuited for a mechanized future gives way to the image of the "girl machine," a sterilized version of feminine beauty that has been disassembled, objectified and commodified for the pleasure of a (male) audience. By comparing this avant garde image to changing norms regarding cosmetics and dress, I consider the extent to which this dehumanized figure of ideal femininity echoes in the way turn of the century cinema constructed and popularized the woman-as-object. With this in mind, I read Loy's work as resisting the breaking down and sterilizing of the female body as she creates in her poems a woman who cannot be made into an aesthetic figure but rather visibly demonstrates the violence of her disassembly.

The image of the "girl machine" is one that lacks identity or agency. Loy's work acknowledges this, and brings it to the forefront, but stops short of putting the pieces back together. Rather, Chapter 4 moves from acknowledgement to engagement via Gertrude Stein, whose pursuit of celebrity demonstrates an awareness and reading of celebrity and fame that acknowledges the gender inequality inherent in both. Having spent her career in pursuit of celebrity, Stein demonstrated a keen knowledge of its ability to reduce a person's identity to a series of pre-existing expectations and assumptions. Working from assumptions regarding her own "gossipy" best-seller, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein uses the narrative of celebrity and the image of her constructed by the public and subverts it via the "portraits" that make up the bulk of her lecture tours. By focusing on a genre that, like autobiography, operates on the expectation of transparency, Stein subverts the assumption that one can "know" a public figure via outside knowledge. In doing so she attempts to reclaim her own identity from a mass market that has created of her not a literary genius, but a gossipy "women's writer," a conduit for insider information regarding the men of high modernism and the Parisian avant garde.

In executing this study, I have attempted to clarify several points. The first is an awareness that readers *are* fans. As I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, the term "fan" still carries with it connotations of passivity not unlike the dismissal of readers that drives the antagonism at the root of modernism's high/low divide. Instead of attempting to argue that the authors I have chosen belong to a particular side of this binary I reject it altogether. As I attempt to prove in each chapter, to be cognizant of the problems surrounding the preservation of a single canon *is* to be a reader in the sense that Jenkins uses the term, that is, to actively engage with, challenge, and reimagine social, cultural and ideological norms held up by those in power.

Thus, for my purposes, I have retained the term "reader," albeit in an expanded sense, to represent a more active form of engagement with both text and material. As is often the case when time and space are limited, so too is the scope of this study. The authors I have chosen, I have done so for their similarities. Stein, Loy, and H.D. are all poets who, at one point or other, expressed a pointed interest in the mechanisms of celebrity; they are all authors who resisted conventional understandings of "women's literature," and for whom canonicity came later on, even within the academy. My goal here is not to plot a direct line between contemporary fan practice and early twentieth century literature. However, for those who consider the idea with skepticism, it is very much my intention to challenge the idea that the two forms of discourse are inherently incompatible. At the core of "poaching" is the notion of breaking down a stringent set of highly-conformist and exclusionary canons – a concept that applies as readily to *Supernatural* and *Star Wars* as the *Cantos* and *The Waste Land*.

Notes

[1] Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own," *A Room of One's Own & The Voyage Out,* (London: Wordsworth, 2012), 51.

[2] Woolf, 49.

[3] *The New York Times,* "Women And Literature," (10 March 1900), BR8.

[4] Ibid, BR8.

[5] Andreas Huyssen, *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1986), 47.

[6] *The New York Times,* "Women And Literature," (10 March 1900), BR8.

[7] Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern,* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 6.

[8] Ibid., 6.

[9] Loren Glass, *Authors Inc: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980,* (New York: New York UP, 2004), 8.

[10] Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity,* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 2-3.

[11] Glass, 6.

[12] de Certeau, Michel, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 69.

[13] Ibid., 170.

[14] Eric Eisner, "Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the Energies of Fandom," *Victorian Review* 33.2 (Fall 2007), 85.

[15] Ibid., 54.

[16] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poaching: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 33-34.

[17] Mark Strauss, "Why Does Supernatural Have So Many Female Fans," *io9* (5 May 2014), Web.

[18] Aja Romano, "WB executive deletes Twitter account after angering Supernatural fans," *DailyDot* (24 October 2013), Web. The term "Destiel," in fandom parlance, refers to the unrealized romantic relationship between the characters of Dean Winchester and Castiel. In recent years the show's online fans, many of whom identify as queer themselves, feel the pairing

has been deliberately cast as romantic in order to generate ratings, with no real intention of "making it canon" lest the show lose its perceived hypermasculine appeal.

[19] Jenkins, 96.

[20] Loren Glass, *Authors, Inc: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980*, (New York: New York UP, 2004), 18.

[21] While difficult to trace back to a single individual, as much fandom discussion often is, I am indebted to fandom itself, particularly Tumblr's incarnation of such, for its ongoing critique of curative versus transformative fandom, and its gendered apparatuses.

[22] Rhiannon Bury, *Cyberspaces of Their Own: Female Fandoms Online,* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), 42.

[23] Ibid., 42.

[24] Ibid., 97.

[25] Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction,* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1978), XII.

[26] Qtd. in Jenkins, 31.

[27] Ibid., 31.

[28] Ibid., 31.

[29] "Our Values," *The Organization of Transformative Works*, accessed 29 May 2015, Web.

[30] Jenkins, 23.

[31] Michel Foucault, "What Is An Author?," *The Foucault Reader,* ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 111.

[32] Eric Eisner, "Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the Energies of Fandom," *Victorian Review* 33.2 (Fall 2007), 88.

[33] David Brewer, *The Afterlife of Character, 1726-1825,* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, 2.

[34] Eisner, 87.

[35] Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, Dan Malleck, *Consuming Modernity: Gendered Behavior and Consumerism Before the Baby Boom*, (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2013), 2-3.

[36] Daniel Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman, 1900-1999,* (Columbus, OH: 2002), 11.

[37] "Women And Literature," *The New York Times,* (10 March 1900), BR8.

[38] Ibid., 11.

[39] Huyssen, 45.

[40] Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity,* (New York: Cambridge, 2005), 12.

[41] Ibid., 12.

[42] Huyssen, 46.

[43] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Purple Passages: Pound, Eliot, Zukofsky, Olson, Creeley, and the Ends of Patriarchal Poetry,* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2012), 6.

[44] Huyssen, 47.

[45] Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return To the Scene of the Modern,* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 141.

[46] Glass, 8.

[47] Ibid., 19.

[48] Ibid., 11.

[49] While overall Glass's study is an invaluable work in celebrity and modernism, it, like many works in the field, focuses explicitly on male authors. More similar still, the sole exception in his work is that of Gertrude Stein, who he includes under the argument that her age and sexuality somehow excludes her from facing any anxiety regarding celebrity (an optimistic, but slightly ridiculous thought)

[50] Jed Rasula, "Gendering the Muse," *Sulfur* 35 (Fall 1994), 159.

[51] Michael Gilkes, "The Madonna Pool: Woman as 'Muse of Identity,'" *Journal of West Indian Literature* 1.2 (June 1987), 2.

[52] T.S. Eliot, "Introduction," in Marianne Moore, *Selected Poems*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), ix-x.

[53] "Women and Literature," *The New York Times*, (10 March 1900), BR8.

[54] T.S. Eliot, "Introduction," xiv.

[55] Kristin Hotelling Zona, *Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop and May Swenson: The Feminist Poetics of Self-Restraint,* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 14; Bonnie Costello, "The 'Feminine' Language of Marianne Moore," *Marianne Moore: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 92-93.

[56] Marianne Moore, "To a Snail," *Selected Poems*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), 99.

[57] Elisabeth W. Joyce, *Cultural Critique and Abstraction: Marianne Moore and the Avant-Garde,* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1998), 25-26.

[58] Marie Borroff, "Marianne Moore's Promotional Prose," *Marianne Moore: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom, (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 44-45.

[59] Ibid., 48.

[60] Martha Orgeron, *Hollywood Ambitions: Celebrity in the Movie Age,* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2008), 150.

[61] Jaffe, 119. It is also worth noting here that by comparing Moore to Pound in his introduction, Eliot is already assuming, on at least some level, Pound's own place among the future great men of letters, creating of him a kind of ballast by which to measure Moore's merits in the future, as well as the present. Such a move places both authors in a position of authority over Moore herself, and lends their own authorial imprints a level of assumed literary credibility, which is then (in theory) passed to the authors whose work they championed.

[62] Ibid., 12.

[63] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own & The Voyage Out*, (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2012), 31-32.

[64] Andrea Zemgulys, *Modernism and the Locations of Literary Heritage,* (London: Cambridge UP, 2008), 2.

[65] Woolf, 32.

[66] Ibid., 32.

[67] Libby Rifkin, *Career Moves: Olson, Creeley, Zukofsky, Berrigan, and the American Avant-Garde*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 7.

[68] Jenkins, 45.

[69] Jenkins, 36.

[70] For a detailed definition of the term "paideuma" as Pound uses and understands it, see *The Ezra Pound Encyclopedia*, eds. Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos & Stephen J. Adams, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 211-12.

[71] Fetterly, XII.

[72] H.D., *Helen in Egypt*, 47.

Figure 1.1

IN THE HOLLOW OF HER HAND

. . . . . SHE is 16; she is 30; she is 65. She sells eggs in the country, notions in a department store, bonds on Wall Street. She is a graduate of the fourth grade, high school, or occasionally Smith. She wears $15 frocks, home-sewn dresses, Chanel gowns. She is a drudge, a heyden, a help-mate, a lady; she is the aggregate American woman . . . and, in her various ways, she is the spender of the nation. Deciding how the bulk of her family's money shall be divided, she controls the profits of many manufacturers. Extravagant, frugal; wise, foolish; fickle, dependable; she holds your business, in all likelihood, in the hollow of her hand . . . . The successful advertising of many of our clients talks a woman's language: color in kitchens and bathrooms for Crane Plumbing; interior decoration for Karpen Furniture; smartness for Marshall Field and Company, Retail; home movies for Filmo Cameras; bright attractive jackets for Capitol Boilers; and even Wilson Brothers advertising, directed to men, has invariably invited women, who buy 65% of men's haberdashery, to read between the lines.

CHARLES DANIEL FREY COMPANY • GENERAL ADVERTISING AGENCY

333 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago . . . . . Magazine, Newspaper, Outdoor, Radio, Direct Mail

"In The Hollow Of Her Hand"
c. 1930, the Frey Agency

Chapter 2:

H.D., Garbo and Wandering Modernism

There is some irony in beginning a study on the absence of feminine space in Modernism with Ezra Pound. Modernism's A-lister, the quintessential high-brow literary "celebrity," his was the name Hugh Kenner once attached to the whole of the era, making his work and tastes synonymous with the twentieth century's dominant canon. Even now, after decades of oppositional readings of Pound's canon, he still stands as an imposing figure, necessitating "attendant diligence" in a way that only a seemingly true "genius" can. [1] And certainly, Pound has been held up as one of the modernism's geniuses. As Kenner reminds us in the process of canonizing (one might argue, deifying) Pound, "fantastic old great men loom in time's mists; as we edit and annotate them...we funnel time's romance through the very printing houses whence newspapers issue." [2] Kenner, of course, does exactly that with *The Pound Era*, placing Pound in a kind of literary pedigree from Homer, Donne and Keats, to Henry James and Joseph Conrad.[3] Each of these authors, Kenner argues, has something in common: a command of that misty, greying past and the ability to pull it into the present, to make it both simultaneous to the author and authentic to the reader. This "perfect" artist (to borrow Eliot's term) will act as a kind of catalyst, allowing their own work to merge with the brilliant works of the past. [4] They will bring forward formerly ancient stories and myths and they will make them part of the present, immediate and real.

Though Pound disagreed with Eliot's assessment of tradition, considering him, as Christopher Beach argues, too reliant on "culturally formed 'taste'" rather than seeking out a broader set of myths from which to draw out a canon, both authors and self-styled taste-makers agreed on the importance of said canon, and for the supposed "true" artist, the importance of

finding his place within it.[5] For Eliot, that meant understanding oneself in relation to those who came before. For Pound, it meant absorbing the past in order to augment it, to build and develop.[6] Though Pound's understanding of artistry may have ultimately been less linear than Eliot's, both agree on "true economy" as a necessity of genius, in both subject and execution.[7] That is to say, the "true" artist will have the ability to separate one's individual facilities in favor of immersing oneself in the immortality of prior genius. Pound in particular, it seems, valued the ability to move beyond the overtly personal, the dramatics of "sentiment and generalization" (to quote Pound) or pointless erudition and "pedantry" (Eliot, in a rare moment of greater bluntness than his collaborator).[8,9] Rather, both Eliot and Pound valued the ability of a "true" artist to immerse himself in the work of the past to create something immediate and present; to remove extraneous sentimentality and ornamentation in favor of precision in his contribution to a lineage of genius, an inheritance for which the greatest of artists are now held responsible.

Such responsibility is by its very nature exclusionary. Fearing, as Huyssen notes, the contamination of the (feminized) masses, masculinist modernism held tightly to veneration of genius as a construct: a hierarchy created to preserve the very literary heritage to which Pound has become beholden.[10] "As a figure," Wills notes, the genius – whose gender is always unquestionably male – embodies energy, creativity, originality, inspiration, and the capacity to bring meaning to matter […] it is marked by transcendence, by the breaking of rules and laws."[11] For Pound, Eliot, and others, "genius" meant the ability to step beyond the self, but also, the right to function as a gatekeeper, ensuring modernism's network of high-brow magazines and circulation through insider connections preserved the cultural currency of "high" art. This becomes particularly stark in both Eliot and Pound's call for the sublimation of the self into the

canon, for exactly the reason Hugh Kenner described. The "canon," the tradition and histories which both men claim themselves in service of, are a lineage of "fantastic, old great men." These are figures in which the men of modernism could see themselves reflected, whose existence in the canon has been normalized to the point of invisibility. It is easy, to metaphorically 'disappear' into a tradition in which one recognizes oneself. Both Eliot and Pound are responsible for multiple works that "depersonalize" their own experience by grafting themselves onto a fictionalized, often mythical or historical figure, merging past and present to create the immediacy and presence each associates with some level of genius.[12] Though the indecisive, anxious narrator of Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is perhaps the best-known example of this, we see a similar conflation in *The Wasteland,* as well as Pound's *Cantos III-VII*, which blur Greco-Roman mythology and Pound's own past, casting himself in shades of Ovid and Odysseus. More deliberate still is the quasi-autobiographical "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly," which casts the poet once again as a wanderer, seeking art instead of home:

> His true Penelope was Flaubert,
> He fished by obstinate isles;
> Observed the elegance of Circe's hair
> Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials.[13]

Though cast in the third person, "Mauberly" echoes the *Cantos* in its casting of genius as an Odyssean quest, the protagonist seeking "home" in the form of a recognizable lineage of literary greats. In each case, the poet seeks to merge myth, history and biography, allowing the author to become 'transparent' while still maintaining a heady presence in the text via an identifiable protagonist.

The problem here - and the reason I choose to begin with Pound, that old, great editor of the twentieth century - comes when considering those for whom this grafting is not and cannot be transparent; for those who are not able to see themselves in the "simultaneous order" of art and artist through the ages. "There are no genderless subjects in...literary culture," notes Rachel Blau DuPlessis, not in "production, dissemination, or reception." [14,15] Echoing the work of Huyssen, Glass and others, Blau DuPlessis points out once again the role of gender in creating the class hierarchy on which modernism defined itself. Specifically, because masculinity is "neutral," it is also understood as the universal experience. Thus, it is the men of modernism who are situated to take on the roles of true artists and geniuses, to catalyze the work of the canonized (male) genius to which they see themselves both heir and keeper. While Kenner's list of great artists gives away the trouble with canonicity, the rest of his argument seems to explain its continued appeal, explaining that, "as we edit and annotate [old works] (for the Early English Texts Society perhaps) we funnel time's romance through the very printing houses whence newspapers issue. And meaning gives way to glamour. Our effort is not to understand but to respond." [16] For Pound as an editor, this meant developing the "romance" of the past into a present-day collection of literary greatness. Correspondingly, it also meant the power to determine who was (and was not) represented by that collection. In the case of modernism, as we will see, this lineage becomes increasingly narrow in scope, lending itself to the development of a canon in which the only people who *can* see themselves in this "neutral" hierarchy are the "old, great men" who continue to dominate it.

To illuminate the classics, to make them *present*, is to insert oneself into the myth -- to become enshrouded alongside the graying, misty geniuses. It is to create "glamor," a construct.

To interject into the parade of great, old men is to continue the veneration of their works and name. It is for Pound to place himself alongside Ovid and Homer or to imagine himself as Odysseus, struggling through his own heroic epic. But while these stories may have seemed universal - the best of knowledge "in the air" for any willing to commit himself wholly to the study of its Art - this transparency, too, is a construction, one enabled only by the privilege of orientation as the canon's dominant audience. In this case, a new generation of poets who will take up and bear the artistic flame. [17] In the process, they create a hierarchy. As high modernism has already often been gendered as male, the cultured, elite genius to the teeming, popular and feminized masses, the canonization and lionizing of a literary tradition that equates genius with maleness seems to create a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, forever placing the women of modernism outside of the gates.[18] The result is a convenient source of protégés to reflect the genius of their male counterparts – "poetesses," runners-up, the intelligent minds who fall just short of the venerated state Pound describes of the greats.

It is here that I really begin, then, in the first and largest of the libraries from which "feminine" modernism was shut out. For Pound's legacy is not just that of translation, poetics or revival. It is that of canonization, of marketing and dissemination. From Eliot to Joyce, Pound's mentorships were a near-ubiquitous fact of publication at the turn of the century. Though he dismisses his own pull as a "certain amount of flimsy notoriety" in an early letter to Eliot's father, he was nonetheless and quite purposefully the century's tastemaker, a head-hunter and agent, for his acolytes. [19] But as Blau DuPlessis notes, the relationship between mentor and protégé is far more complex than mere marketing. Among the hyper-masculine circles of modernism represented by Hemingway, Pound, Joyce, Lewis and others, such relationships

create tension as they bring with them a struggle between intimacy and dominance. They can be "manipulative, deceptive, cruel, one-sided, painfully renegotiated, and thoroughly unsettling." [20] The power dynamics inherent in such relationships, Blau DuPlessis notes, can pose a threat to the conventional masculinity that props up the artistic hierarchy, "feminizing" the protégé by placing him in a role of subservience, coded in terms of empathy, sensitivity, and the ability to mimic. [21] These traits combined place the mentee in a role considered *lesser*, by the created hierarchy of modernist canon. Thus, as Eliot lauds emptily of Moore, the role of the acolyte seems to be offered up as a kind of consolation, the position available to those who lacked genius, but not enthusiasm. The protégé becomes the reflection against which the "genius" of modernism measures itself. Inherently feminized, the position is forever that of an attentive audience, the rarified, learned mass who are intelligent enough to absorb art or intellect through a truly great teacher (of course), but not "perfect" enough, as Eliot would have suggested, to provide a direct catalyst between their own work, and that of the greats.

The result of this is an author without space: without a history in which to place oneself, not as Pound was able to see himself in fractals through the kaleidoscope of European history and classical mythology. In this chapter, I look at the way in which the "Pound tradition" affected those for whom there was no lineage, who were locked out of a tradition that did not allow for their immediate participation. In order to do that, I will be looking specifically at Pound's perhaps best-known, long-ongoing collaborator, H.D. (nee, Hilda Doolittle) -- a figure whose very identity has become almost inexorably interwoven with Pound's legacy. In particular, I am interested in the ways in which H.D.'s temptuous relationship with this legacy and the traditions within it. H.D.'s positioning at the nexus between "high" modernism (given

her involvement with Pound, and the androgynous ambiguity that marked her own initial appearance on the literary scene), and the liminal spaces populated, largely, by those authors for whom the exclusionary and vaguely patronizing title of "poetess." [22] If art truly is "the opportunity for time travel," -- a moment where the past and present exist simultaneously in the life and work of the artistic genius, the man who has oriented himself in relation to "the dead poets and artists" who came before -- then to be denied a position within this lineage was to be shut out of an artistic heritage, a canon and identity upon which the tenets of modernism, with its call to take its own past and create the new, are built. [23,24] I argue that, faced with such exclusion, H.D. consciously develops her own, oppositional reading of Pound's traditions -- a mythopoeia that deliberately disrupts high modernism's masculinist literary narrative in favor of a heritage that belongs to her and others shut out of modernism's dominant texts. Moreover, H.D.'s awareness of the power of both tradition and "genius" created her fascination with film and the Hollywood system, as she grafted her own version of Pound's lived mythos onto herself, the "modern woman."

The Old Great Men of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*

"I have tried to clear up a certain messy place in the history of literature," writes Pound in a series of articles published in *The New Age* between 1911 and 1912, later edited and republished as the essay, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris." "I have tried to make our sentiment of it more accurate." [25] Here, Pound attempts a kind of treatise for his "luminous details," the "accuracy of sentiment" he views as central to the modernist poetic project (and art as a whole). Certainly, he does not shy away from his own value in this project, insisting that "clearing up"

history – transforming it into narrative, gathering its pieces and returning them to a sort of continuous 'life' in the present – will not only make literature more accessible to those intelligent enough to understand it, but will "make more accurate the sentiment of the growth of literature as a whole, and of the Art of poetry." [26] In this sense Pound was hardly alone. Coming out of the nineteenth century's fascination with science, spirituality and the occult, modernist writers developed a powerful historical consciousness – an awareness of the constructed nature of reality, both mundane and phenomenal. Myth, as Michael Bell notes, served a goal not dissimilar to the hyper-realism of authors such as Woolf and Joyce, whose stream-of-conscious writing both attempts to capture an "authentic" lived experience, and call attention to the inevitable artifice of a single, perceived reality. The "luminous details" serve not to create as fact a single, ur-history, but rather to develop with conviction the "sentiment" of the Artist – that is, the perceived reality of those with the intelligence and skill to interpret it, to produce "cultural reflector[s]" by which Europeans could recognize their own world view as "ultimately relative," their relationship to it a living, shifting experience. [27]

For Pound's part, his dedication to living myth placed him in the role of curator, critiquing, revising, and often rewriting entirely, translations of classical texts which fail to capture, in Pound's view, the immediacy of the stories they transcribe.[28] In light of what Pound viewed as a tragic dearth of well-constructed translation, he viewed his own project as one necessary to the continuation of a literary lineage. His continued pawing over the ancients and semi-ancients has been one struggle to find out what has been done, once and for *all*, better than it can ever be done again, and to find out what remains for us to do, and plenty does remain, for if we still feel the same emotions as those which launched the thousand ships, it is quite certain

that we come on those feelings differently, through different nuances, by different intellectual gradations.[29]

Evoking Homer for neither the first nor last time (the "emotions…which launched the thousand ships"), Pound situates himself as an archivist of necessity, as a figure possessing the "intellectual gradation" necessary to cut through the "sentiment and generalization" that clutters the work and minds of lesser artists. [30] By placing himself in the role of curator, Pound also positions himself among the masters in which he has become so absorbed. Even the title of his essay, "I Gather The Limbs of Osiris," suggests extraordinarily lofty aims, as the (masculine) genius takes on the role of the Egyptian goddess, Isis, collecting disparate pieces of the body of human experience and returning them to a whole. Taking full advantage of the "male-imperial potential for ranging across and deploying a variety of sex-gender stances," Pound absorbs his own identity into that of Egyptian myth, both masculine and feminine. [31] Here, he ascribes to himself a dual role in the production and dissemination of literary tradition. Not only is he Isis, "birthing" a new, living mythopoeia, but in taking on the role he also assumes control of the (literary) phallus, producing a text that attaches to his sense of tradition and genius a "correct" form of reading and analysis. It is not enough, then, to put the pieces together. He is Osiris in the library, controlling the ability to give and ascribe power to the stories he has collected.

The suggestion of control over the lineage of literature is modernism at its masculinist peak. It represents the creation of an intellectual archive – and a set of guidelines as to who possesses the ability to develop it further. For while Pound may not, as Bell argues, share Eliot's insistence that the true Artist surrender the intimate present to the lineage of tradition, he

nonetheless links his own self-styled "genius" to the ability to cohere myth and history into a single, new narrative – specifically, a narrative in which he, as a man in possession of the greatest of gifts, "intellectual gradation," is easily reflected. [32] In the case of the provocatively-titled "Osiris" essay, this sublimation takes the form of Pound positioning himself in a role both male and female: an explicitly masculine privilege, as the assumption of masculinity, of manhood as transparent, brings with it the assumption of the male artist as an unencumbered vessel, capable of capturing the universal experience through quality of thought alone.[33] Nonetheless, it is this perceived ability to assume the legacies, and stories, of past genius upon oneself (and improve upon them, if necessary) that Pound believed to be the "unbridgeable difference between genius and talent." [34]

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The Cantos have been written on by countless scholars as Pound's own attempt at a modern epic, one which places its subject in the shifting role of countless great, old men before him. Infamous in its opacity, the poem is in constant flux. As its subject matter shifts, so too does its protagonist, creating an epic that seemingly deliberately obfuscates, demanding of its reader a seemingly endless breadth of knowledge in order to unravel the folded in-upon cross-stitching of myth, history and language that Pound has created. The *Cantos* themselves exist as a testament to Pound's belief in the elevation of genius, both intra- and extratextually. Narratively, the disparate tales weave themselves around the importance of minds, particularly great ones: Confucius, Dante, Homer, Malatesta.[35] While Pound's relationship with these figures is not universally laudatory, they are nonetheless linked by their relationship to greatness. Guy

Davenport goes so far as to read the first fifty *Cantos* as "a cycle of studies arguing that cultures have attained excellence largely through the efforts of artistic and political genius, and have declined by exhausting the impetus of that genius." [36] On some level, the *Cantos* are perhaps the most outstanding of masculine modernism's high-brow texts. Borne of Pound's frustration at the perceived "growing inability of the public to read extraordinarily imaginative literature," the *Cantos* are nothing if not a veneration of canonicity, a manning of the guard at the library gate. [37] Pound places "emphasis upon the education of every faculty to its utmost power. The imagination must be at peak creativity, reason honed, will obstructed and, to use the poem's term, "clean." [38] Moreover, the text's complexity insists of a potential reader the same lofty (perhaps impossible) expectations. At times it seems as though the only "true" intended audience for the *Cantos,* the only reader intelligent enough to understand its complexities, according to Pound, is Pound himself.

Canto XI, for instance – part of the so-called "Malatesta Cantos," named as such for its subject, Sigismondo Malatesta – imagines a meeting between the Italian Renaissance humanist and historian Bartolomeo Platina:[39]

> And they want to know what we talked about?
> "*de litteris et de armis, praestantibusque ingeniis,*
> Both of ancient times and our own; books, arms,
> And of men of unusual genius,
> Both of ancient times and our own, in short the usual subjects
> Of conversation between intelligent men. [40]

Quoting Platina himself (*de litteris et de armis, praestantibusque ingeniis*), Pound here provides justification for his own theories of genius – now canonized in the form of "the usual subjects /

of conversation between intelligent men:" in this case, one of the gray, ghostly figures that come to meet the shifting traveler of Pound's narration. Here, as elsewhere, the dominant conceit is that of an odyssey both literal and figurative, as travel (an odyssey) becomes a theme throughout the *Cantos*, but more significantly, in Pound's attempts to 'make new' Homer's own mythic hero.[41] If the subject of the *Cantos* has any coherency it is through the story of the traveler, "Odysseus in many guises," both ancient and modern.[42] Even as the poem invokes the great, old genius of Homer, Confucius, Ovid and others, the narration remains elusive, shifting in and out of first-person as the subject seemingly embodies and then releases the voices of the past. Nonetheless, there remains a sense in which our subject, the modern-day traveler ascending through the underworld, claims ownership of the legacy through which he passes. *Canto II*, for instance, begins with the exclamation --

> Hang it all, Robert Browning,
> There can be but one "Sordello."
> But Sordello, and my Sordello? [43]

For neither the first, nor last time, the *Cantos'* traveler takes on the voice of the first-person, here engaging in a frustrated and one-sided debate over canon with the poet Robert Browning, himself once an avid student of myth and Homer in particular. In this, we see perhaps the most significant element of Pound's (re)vision of the epic: the claiming of the stories it tells in the name of its subject. As Pound suggests all good art should do, the *Cantos* provide a nameless figure for the worthy (male) reader to identify with. In the process of engaging with the "great, old men" of history and myth, now ensconced in the timeless netherworld of allusion and intertextuality, he becomes a part of that tradition, moving through centuries of thought and deed organized, at least broadly, into a cycle of political and cultural surges and defeats, owing to

genius and a lack thereof. The result is a text that, however difficult, seeks to make for its reader an unruptured narrative, one that places the "intelligent man" – the true artist, the genius, or simply the gifted scholar – in a dominant and uninterrupted lineage of artistic tradition and historical foundation.

Canto XI's assertion that its brief but intricate lattice of references to history and philosophy represent the "usual" level of discourse in "both ancient times and our own" is perhaps optimistic. It is most certainly stratifying, linking intelligence with a thorough degree of classical education and training. Pound, with his self-styled (to quote Wyndham Lewis) "admirable flair for 'genius,'" creates in the *Cantos* a masterpiece of masculinist modernism, a text that leads even later critics like Davenport to assert that readers who are unable to slog through its challenges must "therefore defend *his* literacy."[44, 45] It is telling that, even decades after the first *Cantos* were put to paper, such assumptions remain. Even now, the weight lies on the reader to defend their own education, their intelligence, by understanding the poem. It stands to reason that the reader who would even *begin* to place themselves in the role of Pound's Odyssean subject would be the classically-educated male. Davenport goes on to suggest that Pound was aware even in writing the *Cantos*, of the inevitability of his audience's failing. Pound, he argues, in creating the piece, "had to create both poem and an audience to read it."[46]

And attempt to create an audience, Pound did. It is one of the paradoxes of masculine modernism that the existence of "high culture" relies, by its very name, on the continued presence of the low and middlebrow. Without them, there would be nothing to stand in contrast to the greats, no one to appreciate, or elevate, masculine genius. To this end, Pound took a great

interest in the discovery and distribution of the works of his acolytes. These authors, poets, and (occasionally) "poetesses," whose work – while rarely, in his eyes, achieving genius, were at the very least serviceable, capable of being shown in the imagined intellectual haven of continental Europe "without being ridiculed."[47] The role that Pound occupied in the modernist movement – not just as an editor, but as a man of some means, whose assistance could offer opportunity for authors who may not otherwise have it - gave Pound near-ultimate power over the hierarchy of talent he himself had such a hand in creating. It allowed him to preserve and reiterate his own genius in the "discovery," and limiting, of the genius of those whom he took on as protégés. It is for this reason that Pound may have taken an early interest in the creation of "H.D., *imagiste*," in particular. By creating a figure shrouded in ambiguity and marked, both in name and practice, as his creation, Pound ensured the continued striation of the modernist hierarchy, imagining in H.D. a subject capable of reflecting his own artistic aims, but not of exceeding them.

H.D., Untethered

> Drifting. Drifting. Meeting with him alone or with others at the Museum tea room. We all read in the British Museum reading room. Dark walls and statues that looked dingy […] I had my own allowance now. Drifting? "But Dryad," (in the Museum tea room), "this is poetry." He slashed with a pencil. "Cut this out, shorten this line." 'Hermes of the Ways' is a good title. I'll send this to Harriet Monroe of *Poetry*. Have you a copy? Yes? Then we can send this, or I'll type it when I get back. Will this do?" And he scrawled "H.D., Imagiste" at the bottom of the page.[48]

The story of H.D.'s *nomme de plume* has, by this point, become something of legend – helped in no small part by H.D. herself. Years later, writing her memoir *End to Torment*, H.D. reconstructs the story in terms of the legendary.[49] The tea-rooms of H.D.'s Paris echo, "dingy"

and filled with "dark walls" and "statues" as though ensconced in a Grecian temple; H.D. imagines herself to be "drifting, drifting," as Pound recasts her poetry and herself, Helen at sea, destination unclear. But while the H.D. who wrote *End to Torment* was by then thoroughly immersed in Helenic myth, the Hilda Doolittle of Pound's early tearoom was still a work in progress. Early criticisms of H.D.'s work, particularly those put forward by second-wave feminists, argue that in effectively "rebranding" H.D., Pound stripped her of her identity; that to transform Hilda into "H.D." was to "empty the name of history," to re-inscribe it in the image of those who shaped her. [50,51] While Pound made good on his word to get H.D.'s work published in *Poetry*, sending "Hermes of the Ways" to *Poetry* editor Harriet Monroe in 1912, he is quick to retain his role as modernist taste-maker in the process, writing in the accompanying letter:

> I've had luck again, and am sending you some *modern* stuff by an American, I say modern, for it is in the laconic speech of the Imagistes, even if the subject is classic. […] This is the sort of American stuff that I can show here and in Paris without its being ridiculed.[52]

Poetry magazine, according to a notice sent out by Monroe upon its inception that same year, was conceived

> as a chance [for poets] to be heard in their own place, without the limitations imposed by the popular magazine. In other words, while the ordinary magazines must minister to a large public little interested in poetry, this magazine will appeal to, and it may be hoped, will develop, a public primarily interested in poetry as art, as the highest, most complete expression of truth and beauty. [53]

Seeming to share Pound's lofty aims of a new and particularly high-intellect audience, *Poetry* proved a difficult journal to publish in without connections: connections like Pound, who traded

in on his own contacts in exchange for the chance to claim an expertise over the highest tenets of modernism. In the case of the newly-minted "H.D.," he is quick to insist his own role in the poet's work. "I've had luck again," he tells Monroe, immediately claiming H.D.'s talent not as a trait of her own, but rather, as second to his own skill as an editor and kind of literary agent. His actual evaluation of H.D.'s talent is scarce. Rather he offers only the promise that this is the "sort of American stuff" he can show abroad without fear of ridicule – hardly effusive praise, even for the laconic Pound. Even his one true praise of H.D. is striking. Of the poem's subject matter, he tells Monroe that "H.D. has lived with these things since childhood, and knew them before she had any book knowledge of them." [54]

Pound's assessment of H.D.'s talent as the result of lived experience is in and of itself a significant caveat, placing subtly gendered limits on the new poet's perceived genius. H.D., he insists, draws from lived experience, her personal history rather than a larger tradition of classical education or mythology. The suggestion grounds her, embodies her – it creates of her a fixed presence, in effect the opposite of the malleable intellect of the male genius. Such grounding of the feminine is not without precedent. As Elizabeth Spelman notes, the encoding of the body as female in contrast to the masculinized intellect is as old as the valuation of genius itself. Women, she argues, have "been portrayed as essentially a bodily being, and this image has been used to deny her full status as a human being wherever and whenever mental activity as over against bodily activity has been thought to be the most human activity of all." [55] This excessive embodiment – women as soul over body, Id over Ego – created for women authors a particular challenge, as their expected place in the highbrow culture of modernist literature was not that of genius, but of midwife: the muse, or mentee, or reader.[56] For H.D., this also meant

negotiating her relationship to her own pen name, with its almost inescapable connection to Pound's embodiment of it. Even the "D.," to Pound, did not stand for "Doolittle" (he found this name inappropriate for an author), but for "Dryad" – a tree spirit, often bound to tree that carried them, a nymph *literally* and forcefully embodied, tethered in place by the very object of its mythos. [57] Despite Pound's continued patronage of H.D.'s work, his valuation of her actual talent seems variable, at best. In a 1915 letter to Monroe discussing at length the literary merit of her magazine's now-regular contributors, Pound dismisses H.D. as "less important" than her male peers, "in this vol., certainly," minimizing her in the face of male modernists like T.S. Eliot, Orrick Johns, and Edgar Masters. [58] Not long after, in a letter to William Carlos Williams, Pound is even more critical of H.D.'s growing interest in classical antiquity. Seemingly dissatisfied with *how* she is interpreting it, he dismisses her interest in "Alexandrine Greek bunk" as the ramblings of a "refined, charming, and utterly narrow-minded she-bard." [59]

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Writing decades after her initial "branding" – as poet, and reader, to what Richard Arlington would later call the "advertising bull-dust" of "Ezra's imagism," H.D. finds herself in the parlor of Sigmund Freud, considering her own literary merit. [60] "It must be Penelope's web I'm weaving," she decides, evoking another Homeric figure, the loyal wife and fixed end to the trials of the heroic Odysseus. [61] At first glance we may take this as H.D. accepting her role in modernism's masculine stranglehold: that of the muse, the loyal but sedate feminine force to the active epics of her male contemporaries. But as Friedman notes, Penelope is a trickster, herself a figure representing the subversion of masculine dominance. [62] In myth, she offers up a double

image: that of the "good" woman, in the masculinist narrative of Odysseus' journey home to a loyal wife, but also, that of the deceiver, perpetually weaving and dismantling her work as a means of rendering effectively impotent her would-be suitors, the men who seek to control her under the confines of patriarchal law. Forever in fragments, Penelope exhibits "genius" in a way likely far more striking to H.D. than the cloistering of history promoted by Pound. Working away at her endless loom, she represents subversion from inside the very constructs that hold her captive.

For H.D., the first and perhaps most important part of this subversion was a dismantling of the constraints placed on her by her position as a woman, a "poetess" among the masculine ideals of high modernism. In this sense, Pound's rebranding proved of some benefit. Anonymous, ambiguous, and wholly androgynous, H.D.'s pen name was devoid of identity, unshackling her from the associations inherent in the title of "poetess." As H.D., Hilda Doolittle became as unencumbered a vessel as her male contemporaries – a freedom H.D. fought for, as long as she possibly could. By her own request, no photos accompanied the poet's early work. While Pound embodied her in his insistence that she wrote from personal experience, H.D. herself resisted requests for biographical detail, denying requests from Amy Lowell for a "slight biog" and "some anecdotes" for *Some Tendencies in American Literature* (1917), considering each to be an "attack…on [her] anonymity." [63] When a photo of the poet was finally published, in Louis Untermeyer's *American Poetry Since 1900* (1923), H.D. was horrified at what she considered to be her own transformation from subject to object. "It's not that picture, but any picture!," she wrote at the time. "The initials, H.D., had no identity attached; they could have been pure spirit. But with this I'm embodied!" [64]

It is clear in H.D.'s anxiety that the poet was, by this point, acutely aware of the confines placed on her by dint of her gender. By the early 1920s, H.D. had largely broken with Pound's Imagist movement, becoming instead increasingly fascinated by Greco-Egyptian myth and mysticism.[65] In contrast to Pound, who measured the worth of "intelligent men" by the ability to synthesize the threads of history, tradition and cultural mythopoeia into a single, unruptured narrative, H.D. was starkly aware of her own artistic lineage as a series of disjointed parts. Particularly, as H.D.'s interest in Grecian myth and history grew, so too did her interest in its others. Increasingly, she began to see herself as part of a kind of alternate heritage, a tradition that stood in opposition to that of Pound's masculinist mythopoeia. Reflecting on this change in her own work, decades later, H.D. postulates that "it all began with the Greek fragments:" the writings of Sappho, or the sewn-together narratives of Penelope and Helen, taken piecemeal from stories of heroic men. It was these narratives, she insists, that stirred her own artistic spirit in a way that Pound's master narrative could not, instilling in her a sense of her own fragmentation. For despite the classical education of learned men producing an ur-history that saw themselves reflected in the old, great men before them, H.D. was rapidly becoming far more interested in finding an alternate story, one that allowed for her own inclusion. The refusal of those before her to do so seemed, to her, an absurd oversight -- for it is the mother who is "the Muse, the Creator."[66]

In his instructive tome, *ABC of Reading* – meant, according to the author, to teach the "proper METHOD for studying poetry and good letters" – Pound demonstrates, once again, the masculinist slant of modernist criticism, offering forth a "textbook" (in his own words) that does not hesitate to engender his version of art.[67] Literature, he argues, "has been created by the

following classes of persons:" the "inventors," "the masters," "the diluters," "good writers without salient qualities," "writers of belles-lettres," and "the starters of crazes." [68] All of these types, of course, are men, and all are followed with examples of masculine genius, from Homer and Dante, to Flaubert and Yeats. Tellingly, Pound spares little thought to the women of literature, offering a brief reference to "Miss Austen" and only slightly more on the Greek poet, Sappho, whose presence he considers something of a charitable inclusion. Her name is included in his list of geniuses, he notes, "because of antiquity and because there is really so little left that one may as well read it as omit it" – a recommendation tempered further by his immediate suggestion that "Catullus was in some ways a better writer." [69,70] But while Pound includes only scraps of the feminine to fill a gap in his master narrative, H.D. revels in these ruptured spaces, coming to define her own work, in Sapphic terms, as "scraps" outside of literary tradition. [71] H.D. came to revel in the very fissures that masculine modernism sought to erase. Her unpublished essay, "The Wise Sappho," demonstrates this gleefully, positing Sappho's fragmentation as a kind of freedom from canonization and its corresponding entrapments. Sappho's legacy makes of the poet

> an island, a country, a continent, a planet, a world of emotion, differing entirely from any present day imaginable world of emotion; a world of emotion that could only be imagined by the greatest of her own countrymen in the greatest period of that country's glamour, who themselves confessed her beyond their reach, beyond their song, not a woman, not a goddess even, but a song or the spirit of a song. [72]

What appeals to H.D. in Sappho's legacy is its resistance to containment. It resists the high-modernist desire to codify and transpose the past onto the present work of great (male) artists. Page DuBois goes so far as to describe Sappho herself as a figure of resistance against this

narrative, arguing that the poet, as we understand her, "is not a person, not even a character in a drama or a fiction, but a set of texts gathered in her name."[73] Rather, not unlike H.D.'s assertion that Sappho has become "not a woman, not a goddess even, but a song or the spirit of a song," the figure of Sappho comes to function as the disembodied idol of an alternative history, one which includes the women authors that modernism's master narrative so often neglects. Though she may be "invoked to authorize a female poetic tradition," the fragmentation of her own poetry leaves it, and her, beyond the classifications most often ascribed to women within historical tradition.[74] Sappho is neither muse nor goddess. She cannot be dismissed as a "poetess," left outside of history by her status as a woman. Even at the height of Grecian culture, Sappho's legacy is ineffable. She is indefinable, existing entirely in the realm of language.

And yet, so too does Sappho becomes a victim of masculinist modernism. Even as she moved further away from the classical traditions that marked high modernism and its masculinist tendencies, H.D. retained her own anxieties towards the perils of female embodiment within the context of literary genius. As high modernism ensured its own exclusivity by elevating refined intellect over a mass culture increasingly associated with the fleeting pleasures of consumption, to be embodied was to be associated with a lowered capacity for art and its appreciation. For women, who have long been associated with the body and its functions, this becomes increasingly troublesome, providing seeming justification for their exclusion from the lineage of the modernist canon.[75] H.D. is keenly aware of this even in regards to Sappho herself, who, despite existing almost entirely through fragments of poetry, "is embodied – terribly a human being, a woman, a personality as the most impersonal become when they confront their fellow beings."[76] It could well be argued that H.D. sees something of herself in this fear – the

suggestion that, for all of the intellectual contributions a "poetess" may make, she will inevitably fall victim to her own embodiment, her status as a woman; a perpetual other. If maleness is perceived to be the default, transparent, then femininity remains situated as an outlier, its presence supplemental. In the case of Sappho, this means inclusion in high modernism's elitist canon only as a means to a (masculine) ends; for the subjects of the mythopoeia that both H.D. and Pound had come, separately, to particular affinity, it proved more significant still.

Of particular interest to H.D., as many scholars have noted, is the Homeric myth that had become almost allegorical for the journey of the wandering (masculine) artist that arises in the work of self-styled high modernists such as Yeats, Joyce, and Pound himself. [77] Having journeyed to Egypt in 1920, H.D. developed an increasing fascination with Helen of Troy, a figure that Pound himself had touched upon in his own *Cantos* as a kind of composite *femme fatale*:

> "Eleanor, ἑλέναυς and ἑλέπτολις!"
> And poor old Homer blind, blind, as a bat,
> Ear, ear for the sea-surge, murmur of old men's voices:
> "Let her go back to the ships,
> Back among Grecian faces, lest evil come on our own,
> Evil and further evil, and a curse cursed on our children,
> Moves, yes she moves like a goddess
> And has the face of a god
> and the voice of Schoeney's daughters,
> And doom goes with her in walking." [78]

The Helen of Pound's text – fused here, in a common move within the *Cantos*, with Eleanor of Aquitaine – is explicitly embodied. In fact, it may well be argued that she is nothing *but*. Described by Homer, that great, old genius, as both "evil" and a "curse," Helen is voiceless, stripped of identity outside of her famous, ruinous form. And the text reminds us, what a form it is. She "moves like a goddess / and has the face of a god," described in the language befitting the typified muse but for the "doom" that "goes with her in walking." She is not a character in Pound's text at all, but rather an object; a catalyst, at best, providing the origins of his weary wanderer, with his quest for tales of civilizations risen and crushed by the cycle of genius. In a narrative that privileges the role of genius, Helen of Troy is a reminder of the dangers of lust and brutality, a figure whose fixed physicality, on the ramparts of Troy, brought a great civilization to ruin. But more specifically, Helen herself is a warning. The myth of Helen of Troy, at least, from a masculine perspective, is a reflection of anxiety regarding feminine power. Helen's ability to bring Greece to ruin represents a fear of uncontrolled womanhood, of the destruction of a heroic (masculine) narrative by the mere presence of female influence.[79] In this, Helen represents the trouble of the *Cantos* – and of masculinist modernism as a whole. For the women attempting to write within it, there was no hope of true impersonality, of giving oneself over to the world of the mind. There is always the looming trouble of embodiment, of becoming a figure in the narrative of another.

It is here that we begin to see H.D.'s true challenge to the linear, hierarchical narrative of masculine modernism. For although H.D.'s early involvement with Pound certainly marks her as a reader, it does not, as no doubt Pound had hoped, create in her an ideal audience to uphold the tenets of high modernism. In H.D.'s own mythologizing of Helen of Troy, we see not the oft-

upheld lionizing of the Odyssean traveler, but rather, an excavation of sorts, an examination of "moments of simultaneous forgetting and remembering." [80] Even as masculine modernism held up intellect and reason as the tenets of genius, it remains haunted by the specters of the unconscious, manifesting in the spectral form of its feminine double. These "fault lines," as Benstock describes them, where high modernism's narrative of great, old men is ruptured by the presence of their silenced other, is a space of resistance. It offers, and is taken up as, a place for opposition to modernism's dominant, masculinist narrative.

Writing on the phenomenon of textual poaching, Henry Jenkins refers in-depth to the practice of derivative fiction. Used most often to describe contemporary fan works created in response to media aimed at a largely-male audience, Jenkins argues for the importance of this "fan" practice as an oppositional act, one that effectively challenges the dominant narrative of masculinity-as-neutrality by restaging its subjects in ways that allow for the imagining of alternate readings – in particular, readings that challenge or trouble assumptions regarding what is central to the text itself.[81] Given the regularity with which women writers were relegated to the sidelines of modernism as, themselves, conscientious readers – protégés, "poetesses," their own contributions minimized as acts of (as Eliot suggests of Marianne Moore) clever mimicry – Jenkins' theories of reception and revision provide an apt, if unexpected, mode of understanding feminist response to modernism's "high art." The act of reinscribing a text's narrative is itself often heavily engendered, becoming a way for an audience made otherwise invisible to 'write' themselves into a text. To become naturalized, in effect, in the way that the great, old men of Eliot and Pound's classical tradition creates for them a lineage of genius that into which they can easily write themselves as subject.

For H.D., this act of resistance carried a particular weight. Having herself been "branded" early on as Pound's fanciful muse – embodied against her will, both in image and name – the figure of Helen took on personal meaning as she came to associate the figure with the silencing of women in storytelling at large. One of H.D.'s earliest efforts at re-envisioning the myth of Helen of Troy takes directly to task the master narrative of Helen as the ultimate figure of the female form's excess, bringing "evil and further evil," a "curse cursed on our children." Pound's Helen is a siren-like seductress, luring men to their deaths through the basest of desires, the carnality of the body. She represents decay and downfall in the *Cantos'* narrative of the rise and fall of genius. In this masculinist vision of the Homeric tale, Helen represents the looming threat of the feminine to the self-sufficiency of masculine genius, creating destruction against the better wisdom of men. But Helen herself – at least, as Homer imagines her – is, too, a creation of men, a mythical temptress upon whom a narrative of war and destruction wholly masculine in nature is foisted upon and blamed. H.D.'s eponymous "Helen" (1924) takes on this paradox, imagining Helen in effigy, castigated by her home country as a scapegoat for its sins:

> All Greece hates
> the still eyes in the white face,
> the lustre as of olives
> where she stands,
> and the white hands.
> All Greece reviles
> the wan face when she smiles,
> hating it deeper still
> when it grows wan and white,
> remembering past enchantments

and past ills.[82]

As in the much later (and longer) *Helen in Egypt*, "H.D.'s version of [the Helenic myth] exonerates Helen from blame for the war."[83] Instead H.D. focuses on the humanity of Helen. In contrast to Pound, who creates of Helen an unknowable being – radiant, god-like, capable of reigning pure evil and destruction as though a force of nature herself – H.D. emphasizes Helen-as-woman. Her "wan face" and "white hands," her "still eyes" and silence reveal regret and guilt, the weight of "past enchantments / and past ills." Her critique of Helen's castigation is, too, pointedly gendered. Her people resent her beauty, but so too do they resent the loss of it, hatred growing "deeper still" as H.D.'s Helen, now human, falls victim to the ravages of time or guilt, face growing still more "wan and white." There is a certain cinematic quality to H.D.'s description, as, in contrast to Pound's "luminous detail," H.D.'s own gaze lingers on Helen now trapped on her pedestal, a figure trapped in interplay between subject and object. Gazed upon by "all [of] Greece" with vitriol, Helen's white skin and hands are suggestive of a statue, a temple, her image frozen in time and the myth that has developed around it. But by focusing on Helen's "still eyes" and wan smile, H.D. reminds her reader that so, too, was Helen a woman – a living, breathing being. She has been forced into stillness by the gaze of others, a masculine vision that remains "unmoved" to the fact she is still human, still

God's daughter, born of love,
the beauty of cool feet
and slenderest knees,
could love indeed the maid,
only if she were laid,
white ash amid funereal cypresses.[84]

Encased forever in the death-shroud of myth, Helen is unable to reclaim her humanity, to be recognized as more than the wan, white face responsible for the destruction of Troy. She exists, instead, in a kind of purgatory. Kept alive by the eyes that both fix on and revile her, she is unable to find her freedom in a funeral pyre. Reduced to her beauty and its effect on the masculine heroes of an equally masculine mythopoeia, she will never be freed to step from her pedestal.

Helen Through the Mirror: H.D., Hollywood, and the Little Magazine

> *The Dreams? The Veil? Obviously, Helen has walked through time into another dimension. But the timeless, hieratic symbols can be paralleled with symbols in-time. Helen herself had realized this, on her first meeting with Achilles, "the shape of this bird is a letter, they call it the hieroglyph." There are other hieroglyphs, Thetis has reminded her, a grasshopper, a flying fish, an octopus – these are Greek symbols of a Greek sea-goddess – "Helen – come home."* [85]

Written several decades after H.D.'s first experimentations in revising the Homeric myth, *Helen in Egypt* stands as further testament to the poet's continued desire to reinscribe the narrative of the mythological seductress as standing in opposition to the legacy of masculine genius. In this envisioning of Helen of Troy, Rachel Connor notes that H.D.'s framing of her subject is, by now, explicitly cinematic. Shifting between Helen as subject and the vision of her, as object, "with the eyes of Achilles," Helen both eludes and remains the subject of an explicitly male gaze. [86] She is both Helen on the ramparts, and Helen in Egypt, a figure of ruin for heroic men and an image of the folly of masculine ego left bewildered by her own presence in a narrative in which she ultimately plays no part. Above all, the Helen of H.D.'s later text, like that of her earlier work, is a figure of fragmentation. Her body is secondary, her beauty

subsumed by bewilderment and fear. Helen of Egypt exists not as a single, master narrative but rather as a series of potential alternatives to it, "re-tell[ing] a story that may still be in the future." [87]

In *Helen in Egypt,* H.D. creates a response to Pound's narrative of genius that challenges the very possibility of such a project, re-configuring his Odyssean self-insert as only one possibility in a story explicitly defined by the voices of others. Recalling the origins of her long poem, decades later, H.D. would speak of it as a direct response to the *Cantos*. "Perhaps," she writes in *End to Torment*, "there was always a challenge in his creative power…perhaps, even…there was an unconscious – really unconscious – rivalry."[88] Reading further still, Jeffrey Twitchell-Wass goes so far as to call *Helen in Egypt* the *Cantos*' "textual unconscious," existing to explore "those spaces of personal and psychological which tend to be repressed in the *Cantos*."[89] But while such a bold statement may do too much to subsume *Helen* within the *Cantos'* project, one thing that is immediately clear is the extent to which *Helen in Egypt* functions as an alternative mythos to Pound's prescriptivism, the need to produce a single narrative of intellectual Enlightenment that fits both himself and his poem into "the trend of contemporary history." [90] While the *Cantos* is a text defined by its persistent struggle for both history and control, editing, "even deform[ing]" sources to maintain its ur-narrative, H.D.'s *Helen* hands itself over to the absence of both.[91] "Mysteriously transposed to Egypt," H.D.'s Helen "is both phantom and reality," occupying a space which is simultaneously mythic and historical, and paradoxically, neither at all. [92]

Even as Pound, like Joyce and so many other poets before them, take up the figure of Odysseus as the quintessentially modern wanderer after the point of the Trojan War, H.D.'s *Helen in Egypt* returns the story both to Homer's *Illiad* and to war's beginning. In doing so, the poem splits and challenges this key narrative of masculine heroics at its origins. Was the Trojan War an act of heroism, or machismo? Was such death and destruction necessary at all? And is such a story possible to rework into narrative, into a single, heroic myth that leaves no room for question? A key point of H.D.'s *Helen* is the impossibility of producing these impossible answers. Here, in a space beyond time, only vaguely of place, Helen concerns herself "with the past, with the anathema or curse. But to the Greeks who perished on the long voyage out, or who died imprecating her, beneath the Walls, she says, 'you are forgiven.' They did not understand what she can only dimly apprehend. She may perceive the truth, but how explain it?" [93] By offering the possibility that Helen, iconoclast of the Greeks, whose very presence brings "doom," can only grasp at the circumstances surrounding her situation, H.D. upends the origins of the Hellenic myth. Even the title of the poem, the conceit on which it's built, is a challenge to the Trojan War as a symbol of dynamic heroism. In this version of the story, Helen resides not in Troy but in Egypt, for the duration of the war, transforming an epic battle of masculine dominance into one of futile egoism, as

> they fought, forgetting women,
> Hero to hero, sworn brother and lover,
> And cursing Helen through eternity.[94]

The suggestion once again, made almost immediately, is that Helen herself is nothing but a scapegoat, an excuse for violence borne of hypermachismo: men who "forget women,"

presumably not only Helen, but the feminine influence on their own existence. This reading is further supported by the poem's repeated calls to the sea, both in literal form and in the sea goddess Thetis, both of which are "identified with the mother, but implying memory, dissolution of the ego, expansiveness, sensuality, risk, vulnerability, uncertainty – that is, the surrender of an ethos of control and power" - but also, a reminder that these elements of instability are inescapable elements of the story being told. [95] Helen, like the narrative which surrounds her, cannot and should not be remembered through assumption. As a response to the *Cantos*, then, *Helen in Egypt* functions as a reminder of the impossibility of absolute control both within the poem and out of it. It rejects Pound's attempts to produce a single, linear vision of history, populated by great, old men, and in the process it breaks down the very possibility of telling such histories from a distance, unaffected. For, as Helen reminds us early on, with distance comes not only perspective but a loss of knowledge, the possibility of mistaking runes for historical markers. "Alas," she weeps from her temple,

> My brothers,
> Helen did not walk
> Upon the ramparts,
> She whom you cursed
> Was but the phantom and the shadow thrown
> Of a reflection. [96]

*

Certainly, *Helen in Egypt* offers a pointed alternative to Pound's vision of the creation of a literary narrative of historical and artistic genius. But while H.D.'s critique of the Odyssean wanderer is pointed, it by no means represents her only attempt at revising modernism's

masculine focus. By the mid-20s, H.D. had become explicitly interested in the "retelling of stories," most notably in the form of cinema. She was a regular contributor to *Close Up*, a "little magazine" funded by Kenneth Macpherson, and edited by H.D.'s long-time partner Bryher. Though literary magazines were a tenet of modernism, drawing editors and contributors both male and female, there nonetheless remained a gender bias in their consumption. Publisher Robert McAlmon reflects this well in his insistence that "it is some kind of commentary on the [modern] period that Joyce's work and acclaim should have been fostered mainly by high-minded ladies, rather than by men," a statement which represents the prevailing sentiment surrounding both literature and publication in modernist art. For all that women may have been editing the canon of modernism, it was still men who "operated from an assumption of power and capability," with "ladies," no matter how "high-minded," reduced to an outlier, an unexpected footnote in the publication history of their male peers.[97] Even contemporary critics often attribute the successful management of "little" magazines like *The Egoist* (once a feminist publication entitled *The New Freewoman*) to Pound's takeover and superior management, relegating women to a role of subservience, their importance predicated on the men whose works they served to bring into the public eye.[98] Nonetheless, despite misunderstandings regarding the nature of these magazines, publications like *Poetry,* the *Little Review, The Dial* and others provided an important outlet for modernist publication. For authors like Amy Lowell, Marianne Moore, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield, all of whom took a turn at editing various publications, these little magazines afforded them the chance to showcase their skills as critics and literary curators alike. And for H.D., in the case of *Close Up*, the magazine's emphasis on the still-developing world of film and celebrity offered the chance to engage with a medium

seemingly already slanted towards the re-imagining of existing narrative took a turn at editing for various publications, an opportunity that afforded them the chance to not only showcase the work of themselves and their peers, but to highlight their skills as critics and curators of literature, as well.

In any case, of particular significance in little magazines was the fostering of individual personas. One of the defining characteristics of these small publications, Jayne Marek notes, is the centrality of the editor's personalities and tastes. Given the tendency even now to reduce the contributions of modernist publications to that of "'vessels' that carried the 'creations' of male writers," the primacy of the female voice in these journals became an invaluable part of their presence in the literary world.[99] More significantly, however, is the space that they afforded for new discourse surrounding culture and text, outside of the realm of masculine modernism. The development and execution of the "little" magazine is in many ways quite similar to what Jenkins (borrowing from de Certeau) describes as "writing within the margins:" that is, working within an existing system of cultural and economic power in a way that undermines and ruptures that power, that retells its ur-narratives in a way that recognizes, and includes, the marginalized reader.[100] While Jenkins uses the term to describe the more contemporary fan-practices of "meta" (critical commentary on a text) and "fanfiction" (stories meant to expand, revise, and reimagine a story beyond the circumstances envisioned in its text), he situates all of these practices within the locus of the "fanzine." These small, self-published magazines "may run from small newsletters and letterzines commenting on aired episodes to full-length novels, comic books, songbooks, cookbooks, program guides, and collections of essays; most commonly, however, the zines are photocopied anthologies of short stories, poems, and artwork centering on

one or more media "universes" and written by multiple authors." [101] I reference this mode of contemporary discourse because its lineage seems almost inescapable. Confronted with a text that has been claimed and commoditized, each represents a subversion of what is meant initially, to be a one-way dialog. It is the shifting of a single master narrative into the potential for limitless fragmentation, the transformation from masculine notions of authority and structure to feminine conceptions of negotiation and collaboration. Little magazines engaged in similar discourse with the work on which they focused, refusing to focus exclusively on curation and opting instead for a method of editing that was "visibly confrontational, juxtaposing editorials, reviews and articles in order to highlight critical controversies, and including their own parenthetical responses to articles and to letters in the 'Reader Critic' and 'Comment' sections." [102] The key, of course, was voice. In a literary structure that shifted women into secondary, often silent or supportive roles, little magazines offered the chance to 'talk back,' even against the texts they published: to take it to task, and to question its predilections.

Film, for H.D., offered a similar inversion. Associated as it was with what Huyssen describes as the feminized masses, film operates in a space resistant to the master narratives of masculinist modernism. On-screen, the single, heroic image is replaced by that of celebrity. A "ghostly and empty space…that frames impossible desire," celebrity is defined by the ability to transform, to transpose, to shift identity and position. [103] Judith Brown goes so far as to argue that for H.D., cinema and its subjects became her own alternative mythos, pointing to a scene from H.D.'s 1927 novel *Bid Me To Live* in which the protagonist, Julia Ashton, goes to the movies. "This was the answer to everything, then. Beauty, for surprisingly, a goddess-woman stepped forward. She released from the screen the first (to Julia) intimation of screen beauty.

Screen? This was a veil, curiously embroidered, the veil before the temple."[104] For H.D., the "veil" of the screen represented an aura in Benjamin's sense of the term. A form of glamor in and of itself, it elevated both cinema and the subjects on-screen to that of the more-than-human. Like Helen in her temple, cinema represented classical beauty in its most divine sense. But unlike Helen, trapped on the ramparts or encased in marble, the subjects of film remained untouchable, resisting the constraints of mortal desire. Of particular fascination to H.D. was the infamously inscrutable Greta Garbo, a Swiss expatriate whose form, Roland Barthes once wrote, "belongs to that moment in cinema when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy…when the face represented a kind of absolute state of the flesh, which could be neither reached nor renounced." [105] Garbo's story might well be romanticized into a modern-day Hellenic mythos. Discovered as a working-class sales girl and mannequin in Stockholm, Garbo featured in several small European films before starring in her first American role, the 1926 silent film *The Torrent*. Described subsequently by both fans and critics as "the Divine," "the Incomparable," "the mysterious [and] inscrutable," Garbo's fame rose not from her expressiveness but from her seeming impenetrability. [106] Judith Brown notes that the classic image of Garbo is statuesque, stylized, nearly deco in nature. Glamor photography from the 20s and 30s emphasized the severity of her face in sharp definition, "hair pulled tightly back, the background dark, emphasizing the lines and contours that made her of this world and beyond it." [107]

Garbo's arrival on American screens brought with it a narrative to accompany the actress. Playing on Garbo's seemingly otherworldly beauty, magazines were quick to define the actress by type, creating of the reclusive figure a woman who, on screen at least, "lived gallantly and

dangerously," "unconventional on both the sexual and moral plane." [108] The accuracy of such statements was irrelevant. Their significance, for H.D. at least, came in their very existence, in the transformation of a young Greta Louisa Gustafson into Hollywood's image of the *femme fatale*. As a young actress, Garbo represented to H.D. a form of resistance to the dominant narratives surrounding both storytelling and femininity in modern culture. Garbo's beauty, in "its Hellenic sense" (to quote H.D. herself), could not be confined to a single type. [109] Her very appeal "depended on competing visions of characters and personalities," a multiplicity of narratives, "not exaggerated in any particular," which resisted any one image of the female form. The agony of post-war Vienna, the fall of Babylon, the beauty of Helen. [110] Before Hollywood, before *Torrent*, each of these tropes existed in the same figure, all while resisting the same singular prescriptivism that Pound and his acolytes ascribed to the female form. To H.D., this continually-shifting image was genius in its purest sense. To this end, she viewed Garbo's rise to American fame as a betrayal of sorts, as her transformation into a "languorous-eyed" vixen represented the impossibility of escaping the narrative of commodified femininity. [111]

In her recent study on Helen of Troy, Ruby Blondell describes the myth, quite bluntly, as a matter of control. In particular, over "female sexuality and of women's sexual power over men."[112] To define the terms of a story is to define its narrative, but perhaps more significant, it means the ability to control the identity of those involved. In the case of Garbo, the rapidly-growing market for cinema created its own confinement in the form of commercialism: the necessity of an audience for this new form of narrative, and the subjects that contain it. And while beauty, in H.D.'s eyes, should resist a master narrative – it should "endure, in men, in flowers, in hearts, in spirits," retaining aura and authenticity against attempts to mold and market

it -- the "Censor," the symbol of another patriarchal structure, threatened this, too. [113] For while H.D. saw the potential of film to create a new space outside of high-modernist canon, one with the potential for resistance to a single, prescriptive myth, so too did she increasingly fear and loathe the Hollywood machine's development of a new kind of entrapment: that of the male gaze, directed through the lens and creating, in her eyes, "an odd unbelievable parody of life," a vision of beauty so singular and scripted as to transform her self-constructed goddesses back into statues. [114]

The (American) cinematic market does not understand the complexities of beauty. They are, rather, dependent on the packaging: a "totem," a repeated image that has in turn created an audience, the ideal consumer not all that unlike Pound's ideal learned man. But while high modernism demanded intellect, the popular apparatus prefers agreement. To be told a star is beautiful is enough to make it so. "She is beautiful. We take that for granted…the lump really wants beauty or this totem of beauty would not be set up by its astute leaders…This time "she" is a northern girl, a "Nordic," another word they fall for. A Nordic beauty has been acclaimed and we all want to see her." [115] In Garbo's transformation from cinematic artist to Hollywood star, a shift has taken place. No more is she a vessel, an unencumbered subject capable of taking on the identities of any potential character. Now, she has become embodied and thus pinned down. Like Helen, the figure who herself had become H.D.'s avatar in her resistance to modernism's masculine ur-narrative, Garbo has been placed on a pedestal and created by desire. "Deflowered, deracinated, devitalized," she is distorted into a figure better understood by contemporary film viewers as a Hollywood "type," in this case, the very *femme fatale* figure that H.D. resisted so

thoroughly in her revision of the Hellenic mythos. "Inspired," no doubt, by the exoticization of her status as foreigner, the Hollywood apparatus re-casts her to suit a single image:

> …a vamp, an evil woman, and an evil woman, in spite of all or any observation to the contrary, must be black-eyed, must be dark even if it is a Nordic ice-flower. […] Beauty is what the lump and the Lump and the Leaven alike demand. So 'beauty, here it is, says the Ogre. The Ogre knows that the world will not be sustained, will not exist without the classic, ancient beauty. [116]

This then becomes the struggle that H.D., and others, face in their engagement with reinvisioning mass culture as its own form of artistry. For while H.D. sees the opportunity for an alternate modernism in the fragmentation and complexity of independent cinema, the Hollywood apparatus still functions within its own masculinist system. And Garbo, like so many other women held to its standards, is placed within a cultural expectation of "beauty," one that, like cinema itself, becomes increasingly dependent on Hollywood's own dominant narrative. In this, too, there is no neutral. Women's bodies play roles as immediate and present as their characters on-screen. H.D. describes the fate of the foreigner – another Other – as the perpetual "vamp," a hypersexualized figure whose body is plucked, groomed and styled to fit a single narrative of the "evil woman." But as we will see, it is not only Hollywood, nor is it the stars, who are held to this developing narrative. The cinematic (re)telling of typecast beauty moves beyond the screen, bringing with it the expectation of "beauty" not as subject but as object – and creating in the process a "new woman," one for whom embodiment becomes itself a kind of casting, an attempt to produce an ideal, without the inconvenience of fragmentation, of inconsistency – in effect, agency.

The fact that the Hellenic myth transposes itself onto Garbo and Hollywood cannot be understated in its larger significance. In the "deracination" of Garbo, H.D. acknowledges the extent to which literary canon reflects cultural narratives, helping to normalize particular ideologies, expectations and social conventions. In this case, what H.D. rails against in the creation of Hollywood's image of "beauty" is the reduction of the female form from a fully-realized human being into an icon. The Garbo of H.D.'s memory, however idealized that memory may be, is important to her because she reflects a fully realized person, "a beautiful and young woman not exaggerated in any particular" manner. [117] Her transformation into a Hollywood icon, on the other hand, is nothing if not an act of exaggeration, as she moves from living being to a cultural icon sanctified on the silver screen. In recognizing this change as an act of forced embodiment, and by linking it to her own interest in Hellenic myth, H.D. has effectively created what Jenkins calls a "meta-text" by combining a pre-existing narrative with her own knowledge, and using it to "read" another text: in this case, the growing cultural phenomenon of Hollywood stardom.[118] Moreover, H.D. uses this knowledge in true meta form, applying it in such a way that questions the male-centric discourse of the culture surrounding the celebrity system.[119] Such critiques of cultural norms – canons, if you will – are, as both Jenkins and Bury note, a key aspect of fan practice.[120] This critical eye is what makes such readers more than mere "fanatics."

It is with this in mind that I move to my next chapter.

Notes

[1] Guy Davenport, *Cities on Hills: A Study of I-XXX of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983) xviii.

[2] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, (Los Angeles: UC Press, 1971), 24.

[3] Ibid., 24-27.

[4] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *Selected Essays*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 7.

[5] Christopher Beach, *ABC of Influence*, (Berkeley: UC Press, 1992), 18.

[6] Ibid, 18.

[7] Ezra Pound, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, (New York: New Directions, 1973), 37.

[8] Ibid, 21.

[9] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *Selected Essays*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 6.

[10] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1986), vii.

[11] Barbara Wills, *Gertrude Stein, Modernism and the Problem of "Genius"* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000), 3.

[12] See, for instance, Pound's *Cantos III-VII*, which blur Greco-Roman mythology and Pound's own past, casting himself in shades of Ovid and Odysseus, or more deliberately, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." Similarly, Eliot's *Wasteland* and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" merge myth, history and biography in a similar fashion, allowing the author to become 'transparent' while still maintaining a heady presence in the text via an identifiable protagonist.

[13] Ezra Pound, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly," *Modernism: An Anthology,* ed. Lawrence Rainey, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 49.

[14] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *Selected Essays*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 4.

[15] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Purple Passages: Pound, Eliot, Zukofsky, Olsen, Creely, and the Ends of Patriarchal Poetry*, (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2012), 3.

[16] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era*, (Los Angeles: UC Press, 1971), 24.

[17] Ezra Pound, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," *Selected Prose, 1909-1965*, (New York: New Directions, 1973). 23.

[18] This is, as Dowsen, Wills, and others point out, an objectively untrue statement, as movements like imagism and automatic writing were popularized by female authors. Nonetheless, the fact remains that with few and narrow exceptions (Pound's translation of Sappho, and the brief inclusion of both she and Austen in the *ABCs of Reading*, for instance), the literary tradition both he and Eliot idolized was often largely, and pointedly, masculine.

[19] Ezra Pound, Letter to Henry Ware Eliot, 28 June 1915, *The Letters of T.S. Eliot., Volume 1, 1898-1922, Revised Edition*, Ed. H. Haughton, (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2001), 108.

[20] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Purple Passages: Pound, Eliot, Zukofsky, Olsen, Creely, and the Ends of Patriarchal Poetry*, (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2012), 30.

[21] Ibid., 30-31.

[22] Susan Friedman, *The Gender of Modernism*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1990), 86.

[23] Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era,* (Los Angeles: UC Press, 1971), 25.

[24] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *Selected Essays*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014), 4.

[25] Ezra Pound, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. W. Cookson, (New York: New Directions, 1973), 23.

[26] Ibid., 23.

[27] Michael Bell. *Literature, Modernism and Myth: Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1997), 12.

[28] One particularly scathing example of this can be found in Pound's essay "Early Translations of Homer," which takes to task, among others, Robert Browning's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, deriding it for the "imbecility" of its language and chosen focus.

[29] Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound,* ed. T.S. Eliot, (New York: New Directions, 1968), 11.

[30] Ezra Pound, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. W. Cookson, (New York: New Directions, 1973), 21.

[31] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Purple Passages: Pound, Eliot, Zukofsky, Olsen, Creely, and the Ends of Patriarchal Poetry*, (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2012), 6.

[32] Michael Bell. *Literature, Modernism and Myth: Belief and Responsibility in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1997), 136-142.

[33] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1986), 45; Barbara Johnson, *The Feminist Difference: Literature, Psychoanalysis, Race and Gender* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998), 127.

[34] Ezra Pound, "The Later Yeats," *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot (Norfolk, Conn: New Directions, 1954), 380.

[35] Guy Davenport, *Cities On Hills: A Study of I-XXX of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), 10.

[36] Ibid., 16.

[37] Ibid., 99.

[38] Ibid., 9.

[39] Lawrence Rainey, *Ezra Pound and the Monument of Culture: Text, History and the Malatesta* Cantos, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 307-308.

[40] Ezra Pound, "Canto XI," *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, (New York: New Directions, 1993), 52.

[41] I've chosen Canto XI for particular emphasis, in part, because of its structure: the piece begins with a listing of "chiefs" and the number of men in each squadron, not unlike a Homeric epic, or Biblical tale.

[42] Guy Davenport, *Cities On Hills: A Study of I-XXX of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), 107.

[43] Ezra Pound, "Canto II," *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, (New York: New Directions, 1993), 6.

[44] Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*.

[45] Guy Davenport, *Cities On Hills: A Study of I-XXX of Ezra Pound's Cantos*, (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), 99; emphasis mine.

[46] Ibid., 99.

[47] Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters 1907-1941,* ed. D.D. Paige, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971), 45.

[48] H.D., *End to Torment*, (New York: New Directions, 1979), 18.

[49] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction,* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990), 36.

[50] See Friedman (1990) and Collecott (1999) for specific examples.

[51] G. Singh, *Ezra Pound as Critic,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 73-74.

[52] Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters 1907-1941,* ed. D.D. Paige, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971), 45.

[53] Harriet Monroe, *Poetry* Vol 11-12, (Chicago: The Poetry Foundation, 1918), 37.

[54] Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters 1907-1941,* ed. D.D. Paige, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971), 45.

[55] Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Women as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views," *Feminist Studies* 8.1 (Spring 1982), 123.

[56] Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: "Little Magazines & Literary History,"* (Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 1993), 61.

[57] G. Singh, *Ezra Pound as Critic,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 73-74. The tree nymph known specifically for its link to the tree that houses it is called a "hamadryad;" according to Singh, Pound's eventual step-mother, Olivia Shakespear, came to (somewhat suspiciously) consider this her own private name for H.D.

[58] Ezra Pound, *The Selected Letters 1907-1941,* ed. D.D. Paige, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1971), 109.

[59] Ibid., 157.

[60] Barbara Guest, *Herself, Defined: H.D. and Her World,* (Tucson, Arizona: Schaffner Press, Inc, 2003), 41.

[61] H.D., "Advent," *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 1974), 153.

[62] Friedman, 1.

[63] Ibid., 47.

[64] qtd. in Ibid., 47.

[65] Guest, 120-125.

[66] H.D., *End to Torment*, (New York: New Directions, 1979), 41.

[67] Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading,* (Boston, MA: Faber and Faber, 1934), 17.

[68] Ibid., 39-40.

[69] Ibid., 47.

[70] Ibid., 48.

[71] Diana Collecott, *H.D. and Sapphic Modernism,* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1999), 4-15.

[72] H.D., "The Wise Sappho," *Notes on Thought and Vision,* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1982), 58.

[73] Page duBois, *Sappho is Burning,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 3.

[74] Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho,* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999), 7.

[75] Spelman, 110.

[76] H.D., "The Wise Sappho," *Notes on Thought and Vision,* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1982), 58-59.

[77] See Collecott, 1999; Connor, 2004; Friedman, 1990; and Twitchell-Waas, 1998, for various readings of H.D.'s engagement with Pound's Homeric mythos, and the *Cantos* in particular, as re-read through her works on Helen of Troy. This particular connection is hardly a unique thread in modernist scholarship and, indeed, I do not seek to reinvent the wheel. My interest lies rather in understanding how this revisionist work of Homer's epic – and particularly, of the ways in which it has been co-opted by masculinist modernism as a kind of touchstone image of the seeker of knowledge – becomes part of a larger oppositional narrative, one that ultimately drives H.D.'s interest in cinema and the rapidly-developing Hollywood machine.

[78] Ezra Pound, "Canto II," *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, (New York: New Directions, 1993), 6.

[79] For a more in-depth analysis of Helen as a figure of masculine anxiety regarding feminine beauty and its potential power, see Chapter 1 of Ruby Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, (New York: Oxford, 2013).

[80] Shari Benstock, "Expatriate Sapphic Modernism: Entering Literary History," *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revision*, ed. Karla Jay, Joanne Glasgow, (New York: NYU Press, 1990), 193.

[81] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture,* (London: Routledge, 1992), 122.

[82] H.D., "Helen," *Collected Poems, 1912-1944,* ed. Louis L. Martz, (New York: New Directions, 1986), 154-155.

[83] Rachel Connor, *H.D. and the Image,* (New York: Manchester UP, 2004), 71.

[84] H.D., *Collected Poems, 1912-1944,* ed. Louis L. Martz, (New York: New Directions, 1986), 155.

[85] H.D., *Helen in Egypt*, (New York: New Directions, 1961), 107.

[86] Ibid., 49.

[87] Ibid., 70.

[88] H.D., *End to Torment,* 41.

[89] Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas, "Seaward: H.D.'s Helen in Egypt as a Response to Pound's Cantos," *Twentieth Century Literature* 44.4 (Winter 1998), 466.

[90] Ibid., 467.

[91] Ibid., 468-69.

[92] H.D., *Helen in Egypt*, 3.

[93] Ibid., 5.

[94] Ibid., 4.

[95] Twitchell-Wass, 470.

[96] H.D., *Helen in Egypt,* 5.

[97] Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines and Literary History,* (Louisville, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1995), 1; 2.

[98] Ibid., 9.

[99] Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines and Literary History,* (Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 1995), 9.

[100] Jenkins, 155.

[101] Ibid, 157.

[102] Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines and Literary History,* (Lexington, KY: UP of Kentucky, 1995), 61.

[103] Judith Brown, *Glamor In Six Dimensions: Modernism and the Radiance of Form,* (Ithica, NY: Cornell UP, 2009), 103.

[104] qtd. in Brown, 105.

[105] Roland Barthes, "The Face of Garbo," *Mythologies*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 56.

[106] John Bainbridge, *Garbo*, (London: Galahad Books, 1975), 5.

[107] Brown, 102.

[108] Lucy Fischer, "Greta Garbo and Silent Cinema: The Actress as Art Deco Icon," *Camera Obscura 48* (16.3, 2001), 91.

[109] H.D., "Beauty," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 35.1 (1996), 252.

[110] Ibid, 255.

[111] Qtd. in Fischer, 91.

[112] Ruby Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation,* (New York: Oxford UP, 2013), ix.

[113] H.D., "Beauty," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 35.1 (1996), 255.

[114] Ibid., 253.

[115] Ibid., 253.

[116] Ibid., 255.

[117] Ibid., 255.

[118] Jenkins, 101.

[119] For further discussion of fan practice as a cultural critique of heteronormative, patriarchal culture, see Bury, 11.

[120] Bury, 7-14; Jenkins, 28-33.

Chapter 3:

Mina Loy and the Sterilized Face

H.D., like so many others, saw the icons, the silent muses of both traditional art and the rapidly-expanding Hollywood system, not as glamorous but as a glamor, that is, a spell: an obfuscation, the stripping away of individual humanity in favor of image. "Beauty," she decries in a 1927 essay in the film journal *Close Up,* "she is beautiful. This time 'she' is a northern girl, a 'Nordic,' another word they fall for."[1] In the age of the Hollywood star, H.D. decries that "beauty" has become interchangeable, constructed. It can be "sewed-in," "black-dyed," entirely constructed, and the identity of the person (woman) behind the face is entirely inconsequential. What matters is that she is visible. What matters is that she is consumed.

Though H.D.'s essay, focusing largely on early twentieth-century actress Greta Garbo, is not without its hyperbole, the poet does not write without context. As I described in the last chapter, H.D. writes with an understanding of the dehumanizing of the icon, the muse broken into parts. Perhaps nowhere is this more clear than in Barthes' admiration for Garbo's "face-object" as portrayed in her later film, *Queen Christina*, a turn of phrase which makes quite blunt the extent to which Garbo, like many of her peers, had been stripped of all but her gaussian-blurred image, reduced to a series of (beautiful but nonetheless) disassembled parts. Garbo's face is not that of a woman, but instead

> an archetype of the human face...a sort of Platonic Idea of the human creature, which explains why her face is almost sexually undefined, without however leaning one in doubt. Not she, however; the essence was not to be degraded, her face was not to have any reality except that of its perfection, which was intellectual even more than

> formal...the name given to her, *the Divine,* probably aimed to convey less a superlative state of beauty than the essence of her corporeal person, descended from a heaven where all things are formed and perfected in the clearest light.[2]

Barthes idealizes the "face-object" of the enigmatic Greta Garbo, elevating her beyond humanity. She becomes *"the divine*," or even a "Platonic ideal" of humanity. She becomes, as Laura Mulvey describes, an "alien presence" in her own film, a presence that disrupts the organic flow of narrative and dialog that calls attention to itself as a spectacle, as object. Garbo moves from actress to object, and more specifically, to an object of the imagined (male) audience's gaze. When "the man controls the film phantasy and the look of the spectator," [3] the female body becomes the spectacle. It is broken apart, as Barthes demonstrates, into a series of pleasing, disembodied, heavenly (and thus conveniently incorporeal) objects.[4] As Garbo is made into an icon she is fetishized, which is in essence what Barthes is doing here, reducing her to a series of parts for consumption, a body disassembled, denaturalized and made ideal.

In this chapter I argue for the power of what I will be calling the *sterilized face* as a means of patriarchal control over (largely white, middle-class) feminine identity. The screen idol, the ideal woman whose fantasy became inescapable at the turn of the twentieth century, was one increasingly constructed, sewn-in and painted via clean lines and markings. She is the muse: not just to H.D.'s "lump," but to the movements that shook the seemingly high-brow world of literature and art. The "face-object," that carefully controlled form, is transformed into what Alex Goody calls the "girl-machine," modernism's troubled, dehumanized image of an acceptable woman. This is the "modern woman:" sewn-up and fully-constructed – but as an object, not as a subject herself – which becomes the focus of poet and artist Mina Loy's work.

Having begun her career touting the ideals of the Futurist movement, Loy went on to take many of its beliefs into her own oeuvre. In the process, and almost by necessity, Loy expresses a shrewd awareness of the way in which that "modern woman" has been marketed, packaged and sold to a public suddenly so fascinated with the seemingly perfect image of Hollywood glamor: the untouchable "face-object," the silent and sterile muse. Not unlike H.D., I argue that Loy works within the hypermachismo present in many of modernism's avant-garde movements and their consequent dismissal of women as stepping stones and muses for masculine genius. But in contrast to H.D.'s fear of destruction-through-embodiment, Loy's work engages directly with the mechanisms through which the female body is made into an object of voyeuristic pleasure, as the mass market begins to create a narrative surrounding the "modern woman" that emphasizes the importance of the male gaze. In her re-appraisal of the "girl machine" and the redefining of beauty via the "modern woman," Loy effectively reads and challenges modern culture's image of womanhood. Thus, this chapter builds on the ways in which white middle-brow modernism both draws from (poaches) and opposes the master narrative of masculinity-as-genius by addressing the ways in which Loy's work engages directly with the toxicity of masculinist modernism and its creation of the "modern woman." She opposes it for what it is: a means of silencing, shrinking, and minimizing women by reducing them to an object, a sterilized face.

Marinetti's Muse: The New Woman, F-1911

Written in 1911, F.T. Marinetti's *Le Futurisme* (*The Futurist Manifesto*) makes clear that there is, at best, a limited role for women in what he sees as a revolution towards a violent, mechanical, perpetual-motion-machine of a future. Lacking, he perceives, the intellect necessary

for inclusion in his movement, Marinetti describes women as an "intoxicating spectacle," "purely animal and absolutely devoid of usefulness." They are, like mythology and history, trappings of the past: "too earthly, or better yet…a symbol of the earth that we ought to abandon." [5] So thorough is the futurist's revulsion of women as a whole that he dreams of sexless reproduction, of "one day of being able to create a mechanical son, the fruit of pure will, synthesis of all the laws that science is on the brink of discovering." [6] But until such a "discovery" is made, the futurists, like so many of modernism's avant-garde movements, were left to construct their own, suitable alternative. Thus the female "form" stripped down and remolded in the artists' fantasy image, an ideal that would long outlive Marinetti's movement. From Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (Large Glass)*(1915-23) [Figure 3.1] to Picabia's *Fille née sans mer̓e* (Girl Born Without a Mother)(1915) [Figure 3.2], modernist artists who shared the anxieties of their literary modern counterparts regarding their dependence on the dull and "earthly" female by creating the "girl-machine," an object like that portrayed in Picabia's *Girl* with seemingly mechanical features like springs and hooks linked alongside organic circles and shadows that seem to recall breasts, buttocks, and eyes on this new, strange figure. [7]

This is platonic fantasy in its most literal sense: an abstraction, something that could never walk the earth (quite certainly, as it appears to have no feet). Rather, for a movement that so viciously mourns its inability to reproduce itself without the aid of an otherwise thoroughly useless gender, the "girl-machine" offered the Futurists and their fellow art-world travelers a chance for control, to reposition the muse as their own, and to possess her completely. In this case, once again does the female form become an object of the gaze, while the (male) artist becomes the creator and sole owner of his fantasy. It's no mistake, then, that so many of

modernism's avant-garde movements, typified by the kind of machismo seen in Futurism's beliefs, created a chasm between the sexes. Even linguistically, the *Manifesto* itself makes clear what roles will be active and passive in the coming revolution, insisting that even the oldest of them (only thirty!) will race like "hurdling watchdogs," "unresting," against the barriers that "blocked his desires to express fully his dream?" [8] This, in sharp comparison to women who, as "'reproducers of the race,'"…were to embody traditional values, being stoic, silent, and fervid": traits of the still, the unmoving; the object, rather than a subject of power. [9] Indeed, the power of the active form is one taken away from the mechanized muse. It is no mistake that Picabia's *Girl* has been born, as the title imagines, "without a mother," a dream articulated by Marinetti multiple times in his own manifesto. As is clear by looking at the image, the *Girl* herself is an abstraction, meant to serve as both fantasy and muse for their male counterparts but lacking identifying features on its own. The image is a creation to which we might ascribe elements of "womanhood," but who lacks a real identity or personal history. It is, as the title says, a "girl without a mother," a futurist fantasy, creation without the need for incubation. But the construction of this ideal has meant an abrupt detachment from the reality of the human body, of its carnal realities and physical limits. The insistence upon a muse that operates beyond the limits of biology, in this case, has a significant consequence - the creation of what, following Donna Haraway, we can call a cyborg.

The cyborg, Donna Haraway famously put it, is a chimera. "A hybrid of machine and organism, [the cyborg is] a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction."[10] The cyborg is neither wholly organic nor wholly machine, real nor invented. It exists in the liminal space between and as such does not exist as fully feminine or masculine, physical or ethereal. Its

consciousness is constructed, the product of fiction. No woman at all, the cyborg is, on the surface, the ideal Futurist "woman." As Goody notes, Picabia returns to this odd, near-masturbatory fantasy again and again in his work, recreating images of the mechanical and labeling them with themes of female eroticism. *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Portrait of a Young American Girl in the State of Nudity)(1915), for instance, recreates the image of an engine's spark-plug, emblazoned with the text *FOR-EVER* along its shaft [Figure 3.4]. Named not only for a naked girl but an American one at that (and at the turn of the century, the "modern" American woman abroad had been given the reputation as more sexually liberated than her European counterparts), *Portrait* offers up a peculiar juxtaposition: the perpetual machine, emblazoned with a female identity (the name, of course, is irrelevant), recalling the constant stop and start of a motor engine.[11] And yet, despite its name, the plug itself is unquestionably phallic. Despite the "nudity" promised of the American girl, it is the male body that is suggested. At any rate, it is certainly the Futurists' view of women that is represented in the image's final, lingering label, *FOR-EVER*, etched onto the side of a spark-plug - an item which, like most small parts that make up an engine, will of course, eventually, wear out and need replacement.

The fantasy of a self-sustaining masculinity, free from the necessity of the "earthly" woman and her imperfect body, is demonstrated in the disjointed, mechanized cyborg-woman of their writing and art. So reduced is the female form that she ceases altogether. She is so sterilized that she becomes a machine, so disassembled that she detaches into a series of customized and ball-joint parts. But the trouble for the futurist lies in the assumption that the cyborg, the Perfect Woman, can be drawn up and constructed in the first place – because

cyborgs, as Haraway continues, will always be haunted by the specter of their own duality and the impossibility of reconciliation. Despite the insistence of artists like Marinetti, the "girl-machine" could not be constructed in such a way that allowed for a wholly masculinist fantasy of a violent, mechanized future. Quite the opposite, in fact, as the cyborg proves notoriously hard to control. Marinetti's aggression towards the "reproducers of the race" might well be seen as anxiety concerning the feminine. Women persist as an ongoing problem for Marinetti, who imagines his futurist movement as one that will have to "repopulate the world" in its own image. For all that their minds may be "occupied with a thousand frivolities," the female body still maintains reproductive control – an element of Marinetti's heavily-masculinist movement that cannot be transformed or shifted. [12] No amount of mechanization will truly alieve this anxiety, either. As Haraway goes on to write, "illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential." [13]

The Face of Evil: Hollywood, Consumption, Reconstruction

Transforming the "girl-machine" into an object of masculine fantasy fails to rid it, then, of the specter of its once-human subject. But this disassembly of the modern woman created the expectation that bodies were modifiable – not necessarily piecemeal works, but certainly a collection of parts, each part potentially modified and transformed, a made-to-order identity. While it would no doubt be exaggerating the significance of modernism's avant-garde movements to suggest that their fantasized "girl-machine" had influence within mainstream culture, the rapid rise in technology and consumerism, and the many attendant images of modernity that followed, most certainly did. In viewing Garbo's aforementioned *Torrent* [1926], it becomes clear early on exactly what kinds of assumptions regarding the female form were

concerning H.D., and why. While wigs and costuming may be part of setting a scene, the film itself obscures Garbo's humanity largely through soft lenses and close-ups that give her skin an unnatural, almost inhuman quality. The makeup that contours her face is smoky and unnatural, meant to emphasize the face as a canvas and downplay it as a vehicle for the "natural" expression of human emotion. Above all, she is beautiful in the same way her costuming is beautiful, in the same way that the glistening lights of the orchards and the opulently-staged scenes around her are beautiful. Garbo is meant to be seen, to be gazed upon, viewed in the same way that Barthes does when he dubs her a perfect "face-object." But this opulence, with the awareness of the self as a set of parts to be primped and perfected, not only created a beautiful girl-machine. It also constructed the true image of the "modern woman:" not a single image at all, but rather, the awareness of femininity as existing underneath the gaze of another, or the self as one's own voyeur. The composite image of "beauty" in Hollywood represented an entire industry built around producing a desire to be watched, satisfying "a primordial wish for pleasurable looking […] developing scopophilia," a narcissistic desire to see its own fantasies, played out onscreen.[14] Just as Marinetti fantasized about his sons of mechanical, sterilized mothers, the masculine gaze of early Hollywood imagined women to be immaculate, still and passive. Mulvey goes so far as to describe Hollywood cinema itself as a "satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure" designed to titillate and pacify the male gaze through "formal beauty and its play on [the viewer's] own formative obsessions."[15] More significantly, it taught women to view this form of beauty as an ideal. Central to these "formative obsessions" is the image of woman as the object of pliable fantasy. No longer human, she is moldable and constructed. Her unlined and inhuman face match the tidy parts of the advertisements for

women's beautifying products. This ideal becomes increasingly troubling when we consider the extent to which early cinema then links this ability to transform and transmute the female body – that is, of a woman controlling the appearance of her own features – to morality, with the rise of the ultra-modified and falsified *femme fatale*, in many ways the purest example of this drive for (co)modifiable, transmutable beauty. There is something to be said for the prescience of H.D.'s critique of Garbo in *Torrent*, her horror at the once-natural appearance of the starlet having been overtaken by "sewed-in, black eyelashes," "waist-lined, svelte, obvious contours," and "black-dyed wig[s]." In his book *Heavenly Bodies*, Richard Dyer articulates the fascination with celebrity as one that both reflects and generates larger wants and desires: that is, they express the particular notion we hold of the person, of the 'individual.' They do so complexly, variously. They are not straightforward affirmations of individualism. On the contrary, they articulate both the promise and the difficulty that the notion of the individuality presents for all of us who live by it.[16] This is to say, H.D. was onto something when she argued that Garbo – the image, deracinated, mutilated – existed because the "lump" wanted beauty, regardless of its origins.

There are two interesting things going on here, in the shift in how beauty was sold to consumers and its alliance with the Hollywood woman. The first – and perhaps this is more telling in retrospect, given as we are to a culture that asks us both for carefully-primped beauty and the concealment of the effort – is the lack of fear or concern for others being "aware" of the presence of makeup. Like the visibly rouged and shadowed women of the "smart" Parisian advertisements, cosmetic corporations, instead of emphasizing "natural" beauty, chose to focus on how the "modern woman" stood out by pointing out the control they now held over their features, with cosmetics functioning as either an artistic tool or a product of science. "The

modern, active life you are living calls for this particular face powder," insisted Armand Cold Cream in 1928.[17] Less subtle still, a 1936 add for Milkweed Cream suggested a transformation to the body to be the equivalent of "a recipe for holding a husband!" – the final product, of course, "something easy to look at."[18] But these advertisements weren't just introducing women to the idea that their bodies were slates to be modified at their own desire. They were also breaking the body into increasingly smaller and more specific parts. Suddenly, it was not enough just to have soap. You needed soap, shampoo, conditioner, and hair cream. Advertisements marketed eyes, lips, and hands floating in a void as the new and modern image of beauty. The modern woman herself became an abstraction: a "unique aesthetic that emphasized an elongated body and abstracted facial features" dependent on a very specific, explicitly Eurocentric form of beauty, replicating the Hollywood ideal of the ideal (idol) form and encouraging young women to view themselves through the masculine gaze, as objects to be primped, primed and prepared for visual consumption.[19] The pressure for such a specific image of perfection created not only a new market but also consumers who were eager, even desperate, to purchase the cures to their perceived imperfections.

And when makeup failed, the growing field of plastic surgery offered an entirely new way to wield control over one's appearance. In 1937, *Popular Science Monthly* reported that surgeons could "create a new nose in forty minutes," complete with a two-page spread of photographs of this surgery, and before and after photos documenting this seemingly fantastical task.[20] Contained in this spread seemed the ultimate promise generated by the Hollywood starlet: the realization of the face as a mask, of beauty as transmutable, capable of being instilled via will (and money) alone. Only four years later the film *A Woman's Face* [1941] exploited this

relatively new medical technology in telling the story of Anna Holm (Joan Crawford), a woman who, in the course of facing down murder charges, relays her own tragic story of disfigurement and reconstructive surgery. The figure of Anna is, in some ways, an embodiment for the kind of de- and re-constructing offered to the contemporary woman in technologies and cosmetics that promise a more beautiful, gaze-appropriate, as it were, façade. Disfigured in a fire as a young girl, Anna spends the first portion of the movie broken into pieces by camera angles, lighting, and wardrobe choices. She is shown in dark-lit sets, or only shot from one side, with an emphasis on only one part of her body at a time: her shadow (08:05), her profile (24:20), or even her hair and clothing (28:05). Her perceived imperfection disfigures her, yes, but it also breaks her into pieces, until the very point of tension in the film becomes the moment when her fractured body, re-assembled, will be inevitably revealed.

As a character, Anna is sympathetic to the audience because of the reaction these revelations cause – moments of mocking or horror that seem somehow to justify her own bitterness, and even her own sins as a blackmailer and thief, as she attempts to steal from a woman who turns a light on her torn and segmented face, revealing (and then reveling in) her disfigurement. When Anna is finally given the chance, via cosmetic surgery, to regain the beauty that was taken from her in youth, it similarly reveals a heretofore obscured inward beauty. It is revealed she that while truly did commit the murder for which she is on trial she did so out of love and the desire to protect an innocent child. The subtext is a powerful one, particularly when considered alongside the simultaneously developing plastic surgery industry. A fractured body can only house a fractured soul, no matter how good the potential inside it might be. Anna's potential to be good, be loved, and to be not just regular-people beautiful, but *Joan*

Crawford beautiful – is revealed only once she undergoes the transformation necessary to put her face back "together," so to speak. Once Anna has undergone the surgery, the film has its great reveal. She removes the hat that has been splitting up her features into a series of parts, and from that point on, is allowed a wholeness to her presence that was heretofore denied.

The link between beauty and agency is a powerful one, but it is extraordinarily problematic, even more so when it becomes a tightrope that cannot possibly be walked. Crawford's Anna gains humanity on taking control of her appearance and making it acceptable to the outside male gaze - however, it is a detail of the film that cannot be overlooked that while Anna agrees to the surgery she is not the one who suggests it. Rather, Gustav, the doctor who ultimately becomes her love interest, both suggests and performs the surgery. Thus while Anna may desire transformation and the ability to become "appropriately" beautiful (a desire reflected in ubiquity in advertising for women's products at the time, both surgical and cosmetic), *A Woman's Face* places limits on the control that "a woman" herself has over this transformation in order to maintain Anna's place as a sympathetic character in the eyes of the viewer. Despite her original, "shocking" form and her unusual life as a recluse (spinster), Anna is coded as the protagonist because she is revealed to have the heart of any true woman. She desires to be loved, and she desires her beloved. Her physical transformation is rooted in this desire for acceptance. Dyer notes that while women are meant to be beautiful, this beauty is not really meant for them. Instead, female beauty, particularly cinematic female beauty, serves "as a vehicle for male sexuality."[21] Regardless of the amount of transformation Anna goes through, and however beautiful she may become, she has nonetheless done so for the delectation of others. She remains a collection of parts to be viewed. Thus we seem to return again to Mulvey's assertion

that the cinematic audience is implicitly male, and that while women ought to be beautiful – primped, carved, and created as canvases for any fantasy – their control of that canvas must not be so complete as to be threatening, lest it alienate (male) viewers. While the "modern woman" may have been one with more control over her appearance than ever before, the underlying imperative was still acquiescence: be "very easy on the eyes (as any beauty knows)."[22] To be otherwise was to be dangerous – and thus, according to the rules of classic Hollywood cinema, to be punished severely.

I'm especially interested in this impulse to punish. Judging from the images being fed to the market, it seems increasingly as though the greatest transgression the "modern woman" could commit was to display an awareness of and control over her own identity outside of the gaze of others. Films like *Red-headed Woman* (1932) and *Jezebel* (1938) present, for instance, unfaithful and otherwise somehow deceitful women who use their sexuality to ensnare and trap men – which then serves as the pretext for their demise. I wish to focus here on two films in particular, *Niagara* (1953) and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), for their use of the female form – the girl-machines they construct – as a means of moralizing about gender and sexuality. In particular, these films emphasize the dangers of vanity, equating a woman's awareness of and use of her own physical assets with peril, immorality, and ultimately death. The *femme fatale* figure represents the modern woman taken to her final, most feared conclusion, namely, a figure that is both reconstructed and autonomous. She is aware of her own body and her charms. She is a disloyal cyborg who seeks the satisfaction of no one but herself. Thus, she becomes dangerous, turning the narcissistic gaze of the audience against them. Each of these films' female antagonists become the inevitable victims of violent retribution as a result of

lustful indiscretions, as both Rose (Marilyn Monroe) in *Niagara* and Cora (Lana Turner) meet their ends at the films' conclusions, "neutralizing" these dangerous women in the only way possible, that is, by turning them back into beautiful discrete parts.

Both Cora and Rose present interesting paradoxes to the movie-going audiences. On the one hand, the actress that portrays each character was given top billing, displayed prominently on billboards and posters with an emphasis on their beauty as a selling point of the film. In the case of *Niagara* in particular, Monroe's sex appeal was used to sell the film, with copy for the movie portraying Monroe herself amid the falls, with a caption ambivalently calling either the starlet or her character "a raging torrent of emotion that even nature can't control!" [Figure 3.7] It's clear immediately that it is the beauty of these women – the body, the sex appeal, and above all, the iconic, carefully-crafted, soft-focus *face* – that is drawing audiences into the theaters, promising more of the same on the silver screen. Monroe in particular was, by this point in her career, nearly synonymous with sex, having posed nude for *Playboy* and having earned the nickname, "The Body."[23] On the other hand, though, as each of the film's femme fatales, these women are by their very nature a danger – both to the characters in the film and to the audiences themselves, who are, both in copy and in cinema, engaged in a game of falsified seduction. It is for this reason that each of these leading ladies' death scenes are so fascinating. Both Cora (Turner) and Rose (Monroe) meet their fates violently. Rose is murdered at the hands of the husband she herself was trying to kill, and Cora dies in a car crash, having been absolved of murdering her late husband and having run off with her current lover. Each of these deaths offer the reverse of the re-construction of a woman's body we saw in *A Woman's Face*. In Rose's death, for instance, we do not see Rose herself die, but rather, the long shadow cast as she is (presumably)

strangled by her scorned husband, at which point she falls to the floor, face still obscured in shadow [Figure 3.13]. Cora does not fare any better. Her death is devoid of *her* entirely – instead, the camera pans to just below her body, where we see a plasticine hand fall into the frame, dropping a tube of lipstick [Figure 3.14].

The violent death of each of these women – in the case of Rose, at the hands of a domestic partner, no less – is in and of itself a vivid and upsetting detail. But the way in which their bodies are posed in death is a reassurance both of the artificiality of the Hollywood image and the perception of the women's bodies themselves must ultimately still prove to be beautiful objects, images to be gazed upon. Cora's hand as it falls is soft-lit and alabaster, almost mannequin-like in its staging. There is no blood at the site of the crash, no evidence of violence at all save for the camera's severing of Cora's body. Similarly, when Rose falls it is with a hand dropped, softly and quietly, to the thin beam of light that crosses the ground. Despite being strangled, her body does not exhibit distress, nor does the site around it. She remains beautiful, in spite of (or perhaps because of the fact that) she is now permanently silenced. In both cases, the prominence of lipstick is a significant detail, as it suggests that these women died due to their willfulness as much as their scheming. It is worth noting that in *Niagara,* after Rose's death, her husband and murderer (and, presumably, the character for whom the audience is supposed to have some level of sympathy) steps on a small pile of belongings and picks up a tube of lipstick, holding it in front of him as the camera cuts to a close up of the object. Not only is the emphasis here on the fracturing of the "femme fatale" into the makeup and on the staging that supposedly created her; the focus is on the lipstick specifically, which serves as a symbol of sex and seduction, certainly, but also as an indication of willful control over one's appearance, and of the

ability to modify and take power over one's body. It is no surprise that in the end of each movie, the would-be seductress receives her comeuppance not only in death, but in the loss of this small object of personal agency. Unlike Anna in *A Woman's Face*, both Cora and Rose have made conscious, active, and individual decisions over their own unhappy lives. For Cora, she feels backed into a corner by her husband's decision to move them to live with a relative with whom she fears becoming a caretaker. Rose (apparently accurately) fears her current husband's temper, and she sees no other way out but to leave without telling him. Nonetheless, the lipstick functions in each case as a kind of symbol of falsity.

The fate of the *femme fatale* represents the trap created by Hollywood's beauty standards for the new and "modern woman." There is an expectation of beauty, and there are tools with which to achieve it, but it is beauty meant for others, a purpose other than one's own. This is the "girl machine" of the masses, of the middle-brow: a woman given the freedom of consumption, with the caveat that it must be for the approval of others. The risk of forgetting that, as we are reminded when we are confronted with a figure such as these, is at one's own peril. Ultimately, the "deserved" death of each character ends in a scene of stillness, a body lying prone for the camera's consumption. In death, the *femme fatale* is reduced entirely to objects, the audience – the subject of the camera's gaze – placed in the position of voyeur to these women's now-muted beauty.

A Thoroughly Modern Mannequin

"Who is she, where is she, what is she – this 'modern woman' that people are always talking about?" With that, February 13, 1917's *Evening Sun* attempted to hunt down this

"creature" by seeking out Mina Loy. [24] Not unlike Garbo, standing in soft relief at the helm of her ship, so too is Loy created in a floating mask in the *Sun's* copy. Photographed in profile, Loy's features are striking, made more so by strong brows and pronounced lipstick, and dark rimmed eyes [Figure 3.8]. Loy embodies both the face-object so familiar from the Hollywood image of the female icon and the strange, off-putting aloofness of the artist. A true modernist, "whatever that is." The *Sun's* piece on Loy seems to straddle the line between genuine curiosity and the amused befuddlement shared by the rest of the "lump" in regards to most of modernism's lofty aims. After speaking to Loy in her eccentric apartment for a brief time, the journalist editorializes, "Eureka! At least! Also, this is she!" – the 'modern woman,' presumably, this image he has set out to find as if embarking on some kind of hunt, seeking a being for whom "no natural history contains her habitat." No *natural* history. Again, the "modern woman" is configured as something not quite human: differentiated, a series of peculiar parts. Loy presents a paradox to the average reader. Her lifestyle, steeped in theater, poetry and peculiar fashion, is written about as though it is naturally at odds with her beauty and feminine presentation. Indeed, the heading under her photograph states that "her clothes suggest the smartest shops, but her poems would have puzzled grandma."[25] It's telling that the *Sun* article seems far more interested in the "eccentric" details of Loy as an object of interview than in interviewing her as an authorial subject. The article is more a sketch of Loy's image than it is her art. Her work as both a futurist and a modernist is dismissed quickly, with the note that "she can tell why futurism is and where it came from and who—but that's enough." Instead, the *Sun* concentrates on Loy as a collection of absurdities, including the "odd looking draperies" she wears and her obfuscation, like so many

of her peers, lending the sense that "the whole truth is there if you can get it out of its condensed phrase." [26]

But as enthusiastic as the *Sun* is about finding this rare creature, the "modern woman," it was not futurism, the avant-garde, or even modernism, as Loy suggested, that had created for itself an impossible, paradoxical ideal. Though H.D. may have been dramatizing the "sewn-in," strapped-on face of Garbo, she was in some ways speaking accurately to the expectations placed upon this strange creature, the "modern" or "new woman." The small amount of time spent to minimizing the literary aspect of Loy's career and the much longer amount of time spent on emphasizing her eccentricity leaves the impression that Loy could be a trust-fund socialite. The minimizing of Loy's work in favor of her image – her appearance, her title, her presence as an object – is a familiar tactic even today: the woman on the magazine cover, body displayed for the male gaze, copy secondary to the woman-as-object, the modern day "girl-machine," broken down into a series of eroticized parts. It also recalls the Vaseline-smeared cameras that photographed Garbo, Bacall and Rogers, emphasizing the woman as the object of the gaze, as the inspirational muse, not the inspired. By focusing on Loy as a visual curiosity, a reader is invited to judge her on that basis. She is remade as a commodity intended to appeal to a middle brow audience. A curiosity, a celebrity in the crassest sense of the term. It recapitulates her place as the "modern woman," but reaffirms the limits of this feminine modernity. In this case, to be a 'modern woman' is to be exactly what this brief article demonstrates: an image to inspire – to provide a "eureka!" moment.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, by linking femininity to the "lump" of mindless discourse entertained by the masses, it is immediately devalued as having any value within high culture.[27] The assurance that the "masses" lack the intellect and genius necessary to appreciate art – that they are, as Marinetti suggests, too tied to this earth to ever hope to escape it in via true artistry or genius – assuages the fear of castration that Glass and Jaffe both argue accompanies the inescapable awareness of the mass market's rising power, and what it represents: a driving, inescapable force, with women at the center. But dismissing the masses was not a long-term solution, as Ira Price notes in his 1938 essay, "A Hundred Million Movie Goers Must be Right," on the phenomenon of the 'blockbuster' and high-art's aversion to it. "The poor moron is in the minority," Price writes, soundly dismissing the idea of a "leaven," a cultural elite, or a small coterie of intelligent readers who can lead the "lump" of mass culture to a better sense of taste. Instead,

> millions of mechanics and clerks, stenographers and factory hands are now reading serious books, patronizing worthy plays, going to concerts and art galleries, developing an appreciation of decoration, music and literature. They are becoming art conscious. They are the new masses crying for a higher level of artistic and intellectual expression and this evolution of the greater middle class demands an artistic transition towards better things.[28]

Though Price does not gender the "greater middle class" that is growing before the eyes of he and his peers, he does take to task the suggestion that it can be ignored as an audience of idiots, their tastes somehow unworthy of time or attention. It is an assessment tinged with fear because it suggests a flaw in sales lies not with the masses – heretofore seen as lacking the intellect necessary to keep up with the art, fashions, high film and literature of its time – but rather, with

the creators themselves, who have failed at marketing to an audience that craves "serious books" and "worthy plays."[29] Such a statement shifts the power further toward the mass market. And not only any power, but an explicitly *feminine* power, as a 1930 advertisement for the Frey agency reminds us:

> She is 16, she is 30; she is 65. She sells eggs in the country, notions in a department store, bonds on Wall Street. She is a graduate of the fourth grade, high school, or occasionally Smith. She wears $15 frocks, home-sewn dresses, Chanel gowns. She is a drudge, a hoyden, a help-mate, a lady; she is the aggregate American woman…and, in her various ways, she is the spender of the nation.[30]

The copy here, for an advertising agency no less, is telling, reminding its potential customers that "the successful advertising of many of [its] clients talks a woman's language." This acknowledgement puts those newly-feminized masses at the forefront of every market, from "color in the kitchen" to "Wilson Brothers advertising directed at men." For all of the *Sun*'s seeming befuddlement at this strange, new creature and its series of parts, this, it would appear, is the true modern woman. Not a fussy series of drapes or a strong brow and strange quip but a hand attached to a commodious wallet.

Faced with this threat – a mass audience, implicitly female, whose purchasing power suddenly represents the majority of the buying public, not a niche – the answer, much like that found in the art of futurism, dada and the modernists as a whole, turns to a recollection of power, a question of control within this new, modern market. Confronted with an audience ill-understood by the "genius" that must sell to it, art, both high and low, wastes no time in mass-producing its own audience. In this case, an ideal consumer, a woman created out of a series of parts, each in more need of primping, pampering, slicing and dicing than the next. By the 1920s, advertising for women's products had taken on the same disjointed form as the modernists'

"modern woman," modeling the fashionable "woman of today" as iconographic, quite literally. She was static and cinematographic, reflecting the regal lines and androgynous, disembodied faces of Dietrich and Garbo.[31] If Marinetti and those who came after him had reduced women to earthly parts – intoxicating but ultimately useless to the lofty genius – then popular culture had created yet another way to distort and cut up the modern woman for the masculine gaze, breaking them into impossible pieces.

As the spectacle of the "modern woman" took greater precedence on the consumer stage, the presence, and purpose, of items aimed at this modern creature developed a greater fixation on her malleability. No longer was a woman constrained to the image she presented in the mirror every day. Instead, an increasing number of companies and products promised hair to rival that of "famous movie stars," hands delicate enough to compete with the most glamorous of Parisian women, etc. As the influence of Hollywood grew so did the pressure to construct an image of glamor and poise. Ads for beauty creams and shampoos now depicted women with heavy black eyes and dark, rouged lips primping themselves before the aforementioned products – a far cry from advertisements mere decades before, which opted for an almost universally demure ideal. These women, often presented only in part, as in a 1925 Maybelline ad promising just *"how much more your eyes can say,"* [Figure 3.9] or a 1937 advertisement for nail polish that presents the ideal woman as a literal paper doll, complete with a variety of dresses to choose from, presumably to match the ad's "new, Smoky" shades of polish [Figure 3.12].[32] In each case, despite – as the Frey agency so aptly noted – the importance of capturing a woman's gaze in the marketing of all products, in this, at least, it is clear that the view truly being courted is still masculine: these are women mass-produced to gratify a male gaze. Possessing, above all, "a

heavy, static quality of 'being there,'" these are not women who will be pounding at the gate, or much of anywhere.[33] Rather, in cutting them into beautiful parts, they have been frozen, made unthreatening. The red lips and darkened eyes of the *Vivaudou* glamor girl become, as Angela Carter has argued, signs "of […] symbolic castration," in a "socially sanctioned place": bruised eyes, rouged, wounded lips, all normalized and beatified, all qualities that speak to pacification.[34] Even as the buying power of women expanded, the market itself responded with products that sought to reign in that power, positioning women explicitly within the gaze of others. Again, the "modern woman" is placed in the role of object, picked apart and judged, rather than herself an independent subject. Even her sense of worth is tied to her ability to spend carefully: not for financial reasons, of course, but for the happiness of the audience. "Betty, what have you done to your hair? You look ten years younger!" insists the husband of another woman, equally pleased with his wife's expenditures. But more telling still is the warning offered by *Sage and Sulphur*'s copy: "Smart women never let themselves look old! […] We all know the advantages of a youthful appearance!" [Figure 3.11]

Muses, after all, never get age lines.

Toxic Genius: The Price of Reassembly

The narrative of the "modern woman" encourages both men and women alike to view the feminine body as an object of voyeurism, on constant display for a real or imagined gaze. As Laura Mulvey observes, "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly."[35] Be it the face-object of Garbo or the avant garde's masturbatory girl-machine, the modern woman is a beautiful mannequin, sterile and

plasticine, represented by a poreless face or a disembodied hand. A cyborg image, she is removed from reality, grafted onto paper, canvas or celluloid. In any case, the commodification of the female body is key. The masses beating at the gates have had the gazes turned upon themselves and, in the process, have become products of consumption.

In this way Loy herself functions as something of a cyborg: disloyal to her "father" and lacking, by necessity, a connection to her origins. Though Loy's roots may have been in the futurist movement, with its disjointed and inhuman girl-machine, her art offers a re-reading of the "modern woman" not as a collection of sterile parts, but as a site of explicit and immediate violence, resisting attempts to constrain or conceal it. Certainly, her visual art appears to be the work of a young woman who recognizes the cultural prominence of the disjointed female body. Paintings such as Loy's *Teasing a Butterfly* (1902) [Figure 3.5] and *Consider Your Grandmother's Stays* (1916) [Figure 3.6] each show women's bodies in various states of disassemblage. Twisted and stretched, these are subjects rendered incomplete, made into objects by the extent to which their half-formed status calls attention to their artifice. The earliest piece, *Teasing*, offers perhaps the most shocking example of this, as figures seemingly stretch bony fingers towards the viewer, faces contorted in such a way that, while not artifice on the level of Picabia or Marinetti, nonetheless insists on itself, calling attention to the seemingly anguished face-objects floating suspended on the canvas. *Consider*, painted after Loy had broken with Marinetti and futurism, if not its tenets, features a far more naturalized face, but still one steeped in artifice both in its construction (a half-drawn woman with wobbling limbs and an abstracted form) and in the figure itself, a woman holding a masquerade mask, with a tightly-constricted hairstyle and visibly painted-on lipstick and eyelashes. In this case, it is not only the image of a

woman that emphasizes her as pieces over a whole, but her façade – her face-object – that has been constructed as a series of beautiful parts: the cyborg, equal parts artificial and organic.

Loy's attempts to reconcile the aspects of futurist aesthetic with her own dual positions as an artist and "modern woman" began early. As early as 1914, we see her negotiating the disassembled "girl-machine" via the lived reality of the female form. Her famous poem "Parturition," laments the "superior Inferiority" of the female body, designed for childbirth but nonetheless transforming into "the centre / of a circle of pain." [36] Not unlike her male counterparts, Loy's cyborg woman transcends her body, which has been broken into pieces so disjointed as to "[blur] spatial contours," creating not a figure (as the voice of the narrator herself is quite abstracted) but an explosion of agonized movement and flesh. But in contrast to the mechanized muses of Marinetti and Picabia, the woman of whom Loy writes refuses to be sanitized, to have her parts stripped down and made into an object for the pleasure of others. This woman does not disappear and her flesh does not vanish into a future of springs and pistons. The subject of "Parturition" does not shirk but rather "[exceeds her] boundaries in every direction," "traversing [herself]" as she gives way to the "contents of the universe."[37] Although she remains relatively motionless, her role is to enable the greatest action, that of which Marinetti can only fantasize, namely, the (re)production of life.

In this way, Loy takes to task the avant-garde assumption that women are too "earthly" by their very nature to ascend to the lofty intellectual ideals that (to Marinetti, at least) were necessary for his movement. That same year, Loy published her own "Aphorisms on Futurism,"

in which she suggests an active alternative to Futurism's love of destruction and its masturbatory "girl-machine," imploring the Futurists instead to

> DIE in the past
> Live in the Future
> THE velocity of velocities arrives in starting. [38]

In Loy's "Aphorisms," she reimagines Marinetti's perfect creation – the curve, that "muscular" straight line and the juxtaposing curl that allows it to "become agile, [acquire] consciousness" – as the very thing Marinetti idealized it as so distant from, reminding her reader that "THE straight line and the circle are the parents of design, form of the basis of art" and the elements of the curve. [39] But above all else, Loy revises the idea of the "modern woman" as a silent figure and passive object. The speaker, presumably Loy, calls the reader to action, using the language of the futurists themselves in her call to "Leap" into the future, "only dark from outside." Inside it – and she – "EXPLODES with Light." Uncontainable, like the speaker and subject of "Parturition," Loy's speaker may no longer be a collected integral body, but it is not because she is passive. She is not the profane woman Marinetti fears, nor is she the "girl-machine" of which Picabia fantasized. The speaker of the "Aphorisms" is as lofty as Marinetti ever hoped to be, as far from earth – and its masses – as any of futurism's self-styled geniuses. But while Marinetti's futurism emphasized contempt and exclusion, Loy's challenges "LOVE" and the sublime. "OPEN your arms to the dilapidated; rehabilitate them." Loy's call is a direct threat to Marinetti's elitism. It questions the very notion of select members of futurism, even as it destabilizes the beliefs upon which it's based. Loy's challenge to the "girl-machine" moves far beyond Futurism and even the "high-brow" art for which she herself is known. It is worth noting

that in her own copy of the issue of *Camera Work* in which "Aphorisms" was published, Loy scratched out "future" and "futurism," replacing them with "modern" and "modernism," respectively.[40] Much of Loy's work suggests an unease not only with the modernist literary movement but with the "modern" scene – that is, the images and fashion culled from (and pulled into) Hollywood that created and pushed trends, that developed the very first image of the girl-machine, the soft-glow floating face and wholly sensational collection of parts, in short, the modern woman.

As is suggested in the poems above, Loy's interest was very explicit in *not* retaining some imagined wholeness, the "natural" state of the female body. Rather, Loy's modern woman is not unlike H.D.'s muse: fragmented (though not disembodied), refusing to lend herself to dissecting the male gaze found both throughout popular and high culture. Loy's modern woman is not a series of body parts, bound to the earth, as Marinetti insisted. She is as capable of lofty flight, of genius, as her peers. Loy challenges the image of women as both beautiful and silent in a collection of smooth, detached parts. The flesh and bone of Loy's poems seep and writhe, existing in vivid body-horror. While this is particularly salient when dealing with subjects like that of childbirth in "Parturition," it is no less true in poetry seemingly unrelated to bodily violence. Not long after "Aphorisms on Futurism" (1914) was published, Loy began her "Songs to Joannes," a poem sequence as well-known for its vivid depictions of the body as for its depiction of a romance gone awry:

> The skin-sack
> In which a wanton duality
> Packed

All the completion of my infructuous impulses
Something the shape of a man
To the casual vulgarity of the merely observant
More of a clock-work mechanism
Running down against time
To which I am not paced [41]

Like much of Loy's work, "Songs to Joannes" is via a cutting-and-editing that Alex Goody describes as akin to cinematic montage, disrupting time, space and physical presence "rather than enforcing the temporal and spatial coherence of a narrative, cinematic realism." [42] Though Loy is neither imagist nor especially concerned with avant garde cinema, the use of such "violent juxtapositions" (to borrow again from Goody) to describe the female form creates here, as in "Parturition," a point of resistance: an aggressive "wanton duality" that defies the conventions of the modern woman. [43] Here, as elsewhere, Loy imagines herself, a woman, as a "skin-sack" packed with "infructuous impulses," a "clock-work mechanism / running down" in a time and place in which she does not belong. She is disassembled, torn asunder. This is not the coy configuration of the untouchable modern woman but rather a fleshy, authentic, and very *real* being. Loy's insistence that she, as an artist, is out of place in her time speaks to another, perhaps more troubling image as well. Conjured in Loy's work is her own image of the female muse, a reflection of herself: deteriorated, deracinated, not beautiful but horrific – the antithesis of the Hollywood icon or even modernism's devoted protégé, each marked by their silent presence, their affirmation-by-existence. She challenges the image of the woman both as the beautiful, silent mannequin and as a collection of smooth, detached parts. The flesh and bone of Loy's poems seep and writhe. Thus Loy challenges the calls of both Hollywood and high

modernism for the untainted and unearthly muse, creating instead a figure that exists in pieces as "earthly" as those Marianetti and his colleagues so despised. The disassembled woman of Loy's poetry is vivid and impossible to ignore. No amount of vaseline on a frame or soft light will make her beautiful, nor return her to the realm of the untouchable face.

Instead, Loy presents the violent decomposition of the woman-genius, the figure whose mind is the only part of her not cut, spliced and sold in the continuous search for the ideal "modern woman." Loy's "Apology of Genius," written between 1919 and 1930, for instance, finds her narrator acknowledging the necessity of her own destruction:

> Lepers of the moon
> all magically diseased
> we come among you
> innocent
> of our luminous sores
> unknowing
> how perturbing lights
> our spirit
> on the passion of Man
> until you turn on us your smooth fools' faces
> like buttocks bared in aboriginal mockeries[44]

Although "Apology of Genius" was met with praise from Loy's peers (poet and critic Yvor Winters declared it in and of itself, "a proof of genius"), the poem nonetheless offers a stark, painful portrait of the trials of feminine intellect.[45] Though not explicitly gendered, Loy's referral to the subjects of "Apology" as "lepers of the moon" creates a powerful link between her narrator and femininity. Similarly, the insistence that while temporal matters may ensnare her in

childbirth or marriage ("you may give birth to us / or marry us / [but] the chances of your flesh / are not our destiny"), the matters of the flesh are not the subject's greatest concern seem to stand in direct contradiction to images in both popular and high culture, which pose women as physical creatures, often in opposition to the intellectual male.[46] But while Loy rejects the idea that embodiment is the "destiny" of the modern woman, her relationship to genius is not without its challenges. Given Loy's tenuous relationship with high modernism and its masculinist notions of genius and tradition (the original manuscript of *Lunar Baedeker* was with Bob McAlmon in Paris when he first met Ezra Pound), it is compelling that Loy chooses to describe feminine genius in terms of visible defacement.[47] The "luminous sores" of Loy's speaker, for instance, echo Pound's own call to genius as the distilling of emotion and experience into a series of "luminous details." As Marjorie Perloff notes, Pound himself had provided critique of Loy's work in *The Little Review* not long before the publication of "Apology," declaring of both she and Marianne Moore that "these girls have written a distinctly national product."[48] Given Pound's expatriate status, as well as his own mixed feelings about "American" talent, the extent of this praise is questionable, but notable here is the conflation of Moore and Loy based strictly on gender. "These girls," these poetesses, have produced work worth reading – but solely within a gendered historical tradition.

Loy's woman-genius becomes a figure nearly celebratory in her toxicity – in her inability to be controlled, to conform to the standards of the codified and commoditized "modern woman." For if the "luminous sores" of feminine genius ostracize, then so, too, do they provide solitude, a space of ones' own, if you will. Loy did not shy away from the notion of toxic genius. One of the most famous images of the poet herself is a 1918 photo by Man-Ray of Loy

wearing a pair of mercury thermometers, a kind of "ready-made" fashion in the style of Dada [Figure 3.10]. Once again borrowing from her avant garde beginnings, Loy found in this kind of ready-made fashion (the sort which so vexed the *Evening Sun*) a freedom from boundaries, in the deliberate flouting of origin and construction in favor of embodiment without meaning. Susan E. Dunn refers to Loy's relationship to the image, particularly as it relates to fashion and the "modern woman," as a form of parody: the "imitation of a disguise," challenging detractors of both her work and that of the woman-genius with her excessive, almost inescapable embodiment.[49] For Loy, who saw in fashion a form of barrier-breaking – crossing boundaries of gender, form, and art – the appeal of such absurdities was clear, as they flouted the rising belief that the 'modern woman' should exist as an object of voyeuristic pleasure, her appearance constructed for the appeal of others; presence in excess, the very embodiment of the femme fatale.[50] If masculine modernism had to search for details, then Loy's "sores" are readily apparent, their presence an act of rebellion, willful destruction of the deified beauty and marbleized perfection in a manner that cannot be contained or (re)created in another's image.

This is not to say that Loy wrote herself into an empty space. Loy demonstrates an interest in a narrative counter to that of masculine genius – a tradition which, as outlined in Chapter 2, marginalizes women by codifying them into muses and readers. Written around 1930, Loy's poem "Gertrude Stein," provides a counter-narrative in the form of a poet who failed entirely to fit into the "modern woman" narrative. Self-described (via Adele in *QED*) as "large, abundant, full-busted and joyous," Stein very much embodied everything that fragmented, deferential Hollywood beauty wasn't.[51] And by the 1930s, Stein's infamous eccentricity had made her an imposing figure in name if not in art, her unabashedly difficult texts

and self-proclaimed "genius" "producing an alternative to the masculine literary culture within which she worked." [52] With this in mind, it is unsurprising that Loy chooses Stein as her quintessential woman-genius, the "Curie / of the laboratory / of vocabulary" who

> crushed
> the tonnage
> of consciousness
> congealed to phrases
> to extract
> a radium of the word [53]

The language of Loy's poem is notably active: one might suggest it as masculine, as her subject "crushed," "congealed" and "extract[ed]" language to produce something new. Certainly, it is masculine in the sense that Marinetti and his ilk may have imagined it, as Loy's imagined Stein is not only a genius but a scientist, her presence in the poem entirely intellectual. But while Loy's depiction of Stein's work is laudatory, it is not without skepticism – and, perhaps, with reason. Genius or not, Stein herself struggled against poor reviews and sales, and a public who often regarded her "genius" only in comparison to the men who frequented her parlor: Hemingway, Picasso, and Cezanne, among others. Stein herself was something of a curiosity to the American public – impenetrable, an eccentric at best, who scant years later would be described in print, not unlike Loy, via her eccentricity in comparison to the 'modern woman.' [54] Thus, while Stein is the Marie "Curie / of the laboratory / of language," the name also calls to mind curators and the silent, unseen, and often masculinized presence responsible for procuring and preserving the work of other geniuses. For Stein of course, the idea of curation was itself

tenuous. As we will see in Chapter 4, Stein's own brush with fame brought with it an image of the writer of a kind of matron of modernism, overseeing "true" (masculine) artists like Picasso, Hemmingway and Matisse. Such oversimplification forced her, too, to confront America's celebrity apparatus as a way of retaining control of her own identity.

But so too does Loy offer an alternative to this narrative. Like Curie, Stein controls her own language and laboratory, crushing "the tonnage / of consciousness" "to extract / the radium / of the word." It is worth noting here the similarity between Loy's description of Stein's project – to dissolve language down to its very core – and Pound's own call for a poetry of "luminous detail," an art form he seemingly masculinizes in both the *Cantos* and his own *ABCs of Reading.* Loy, in contrast, has created a tradition rooted in femininity, linking the genius of Stein to that of Curie, the work of science and discovery to that of poetry and linguistics. But while Eliot describes the (masculine) artist as a "catalyst" – capable of transforming artistic tradition without changing or deforming themselves – for Loy, this endeavor, at least for the woman-genius, is toxic, perhaps fatal. It is telling that "Gertrude Stein" uses Curie in its extended metaphor, given the scientist's own death by poisoning through the radium she discovered: toxic genius in its most literal sense, the body in decay and destruction. In this way, even Stein is broken into parts: genius, moderator, matron of the arts. Though hardly meeting the expected image of the "modern woman," in many ways Stein, too, has become just that: neither human nor machine, she produces genius like radium, and very possibly, suffering all the same for it.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Loy's work that for all of her opposition to Marinetti's mechanical muse, she fails to put the female body back together again. This may be

the influence of her avant garde affiliates, or an acknowledgement of the ubiquity of the "modern woman" in developing feminine consciousness. But it is also possible that Loy recognizes in her own work and the work of female artists around her a particular void, a chasm between that of the subject, the genius – the man – and the object, the muse, the disembodied image. In this way, what Loy presents is an image that stands in opposition to the narcissistic fantasy of the ideal woman. If, as I argue in my previous chapter, H.D. uses her poetry to challenge the frozen figure of the muse, then Mina Loy takes this line of criticism a step farther, into the "low" culture so reviled by her literary counterparts. In the texts of both avant garde art and mass consumer culture, she recognizes the narrative surrounding the "modern woman" as that of a passive object of pleasure, rather than an active subject. Loy counters with a heady reminder. The goal of the "girl machine" is to create a woman who can be perfectly molded, in purpose, appearance, and behavior. By taking that machine and exposing its circuitry Loy rewrites the modern woman as someone who has been broken into pieces, and as someone for whom those pieces, far from representing scopophiliac beauty, show the torn and radiated result of it. This is the clockwork woman: the uncanny muse, the Hollywood face-object, rendered living, bleeding, and *human.*

Notes

[1] H.D., "Beauty," 255.

[2] Roland Barthes, "The Face of Garbo," *Mythologies,* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 56-7.

[3] Ibid., 10.

[4] See Dyer, 1998; Brown, 2009; and Connor, 2004, for in-depth discussion on the "empty space" of celebrity and the distancing of celebrity as part of the rising appeal (and untouchability) of the Hollywood star. In the case of "the face of Garbo," which transfixed both Barthes and H.D., the actresses' face became known for its severity, what Brown calls "the perfect, mediated image without the messy implications of human subjectivity" (102). Such images were carefully crafted by the studios that signed these celebrities; indeed, press portraits – dubbed "fuzzygraphs" by Hollywood detractors – were known for their heavy stylization, utilizing tricks such as soft lighting and blurred camera lenses to remove human imperfections and lend an aura of the untouchable, often breaking the female body into a series of disjointed parts (see Figure 3.3).

[5] F.T. Marinetti, "The Futurist Manifesto," *Futurism: An Anthology,* eds. Lawrence Rainey, et. al., (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009), 89.

[6] Ibid., 89.

[7] Alex Goody, *Modernist Articulations: A Cultural Reading of Djuana Barnes, Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 105-06. It is worth noting here that while both Picabia and Duchamp are most often aligned with the Dadaist movement, both Rainey (2009) and Goody (2007) use these works as examples of the influence of Futurism on the avant-garde, no doubt due to their heavy emphasis on the blurring between biological and techno-mechanical. I use these examples with a similar understanding, while maintaining a conscious awareness that both artists (and indeed, many of their contemporaries) are operating by influence of Futurism and larger avant-garde movements, rather than under direct adherence to Marinetti's movement.

[8] F.T. Marianetti, "The Futurist Manifesto," *Futurism: An Anthology*, Eds. Lawrence Rainey, et. al., (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009), 50-51.

[9] F.T. Marinetti, "The Futurist Manifesto," 89; Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945,* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1992), 147.

[10] Donna Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto," *The Cultural Studies Reader,* ed. Simon During (New York: Psychology Press, 1999), 272.

[11] Goody, 108.

[12] F.T. Marinetti, "Manifesto of the Italian Futurist Party," *Futurism: An Anthology,* Eds. Lawrence Rainey, et. al., (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009), 252.

[13] Haraway, 273.

[14] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, eds. George Mast, Marshall Cohen, (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), 807.

[15] Ibid., 805.

[16] Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society,* (London: Psychology Press, 2004), 8.

[17] Daniel Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman, 1900-1999,* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State UP, 2002), 97.

[18] Ibid., 110.

[19] Alys Eve Weinbaum, et. al., "Cosmetics Advertising and the Politics of Race and Style," *The Modern Girl Around the World,* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008), 25.

[20] Elizabeth Haiken, *Venus Envy: A History of Cosmetic Surgery*, (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins UP, 1999), 124-25.

[21] Dyer, 41.

[22] Hill, 97.

[23] Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies,* 23.

[24] "Do You Strive To Capture the Symbols of Your Reactions? If Not You Are Quite Old Fashioned." *The Evening Sun*, (February 18, 1917), 10.

[25] Ibid., 10.

[26] Ibid., 10.

[27] Huyssen, 53.

[28] Ira Price, "A Hundred Million Movie Goers Must Be Right," (Cleveland, OH: Movie Appreciation Press, 1938), 20.

[29] Ibid., 20.

[30] Hill, 11.

[31] Angela Carter, "The Wound in the Face," 143, web.

[32] Hill, 99.

[33] Angela Carter, "The Wound in the Face," 142.

[34] Carter, 144-45.

[35] Mulvey, 808.

[36] Mina Loy, "Parturition," *The Lost Luna Baedeker,* ed. Roger L. Conover, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 4-8.

[37] Ibid., 4-8.

[38] Loy, "Aphorisms on Futurism," *The Lost Luna Baedeker*, 149.

[39] Rainey, *Futurism: An Anthology*, 117; 228.

[40] Sandeep Paramar, *Reading Mina Loy's Autobiographies: The Myth of the Modern Woman*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 23.

[41] Loy, *The Lost Luna Baedeker,* 53-54.

[42] Alex Goody, "Mina Loy and the Hollywood Industry," *Literature and History* 21.1 (Spring 2012), 78.

[43] Ibid., 79.

[44] Loy, *The Lost Luna Baedeker,* 77.

[45] Qtd. in Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 189.

[46] For a more in-depth analysis of the engendering of the mind/body divide, see Spelman (1982).

[47] Burke, 188.

[48] qtd. in Marjorie Perloff, "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," *Mina Loy: Women and Poet*, ed. Maeera Shreiber and Keith Tuma (Orono, ME: National Poetry Foundation, 1996), 131.

[49] Susan E. Dunn, "Fashion Victims: Mina Loy's Travesties," *Stanford Humanities Review 7.1* (1999), web.

[50] Ibid.

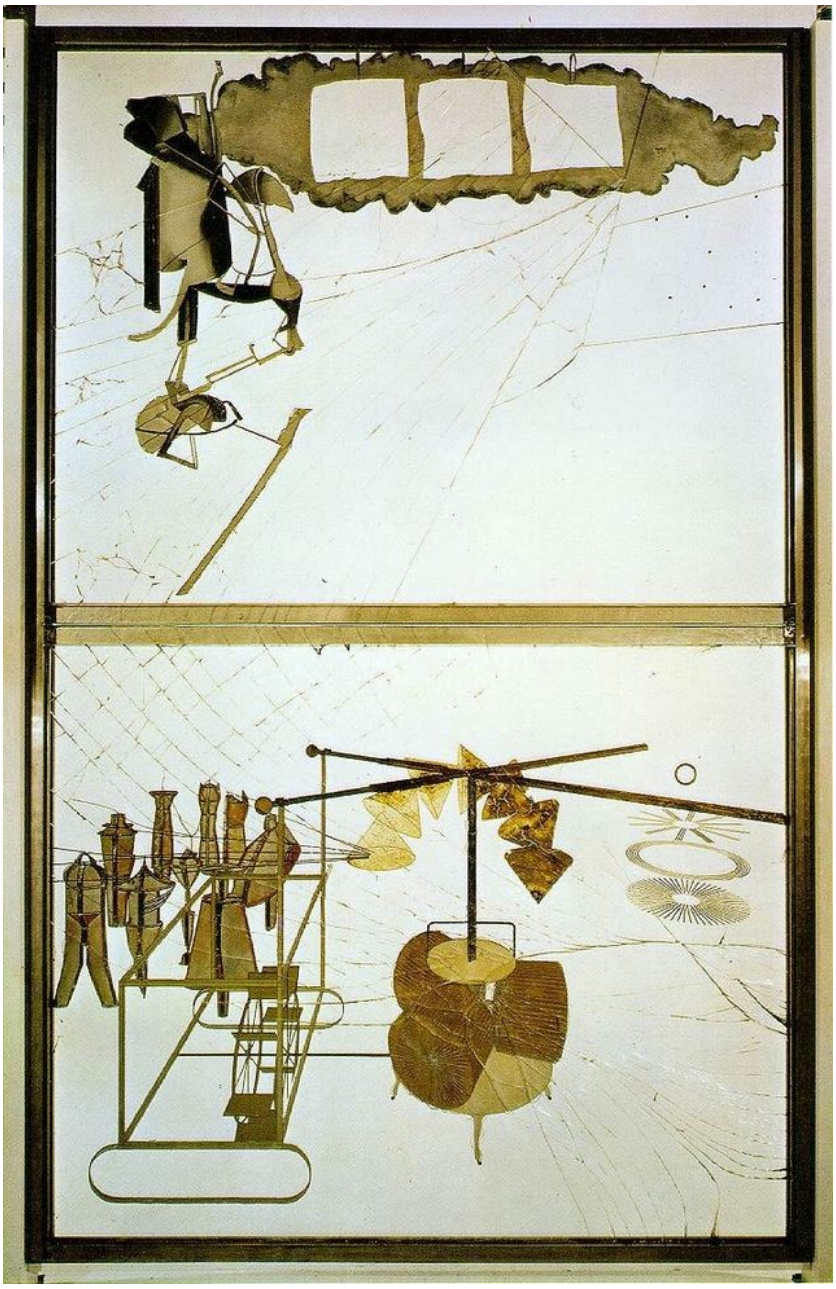
[51] Lucy Daniel, *Gertrude Stein,* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 100.

[52] Ibid., 101.

[53] Loy, "The Lost Luna Baedeker, 94.

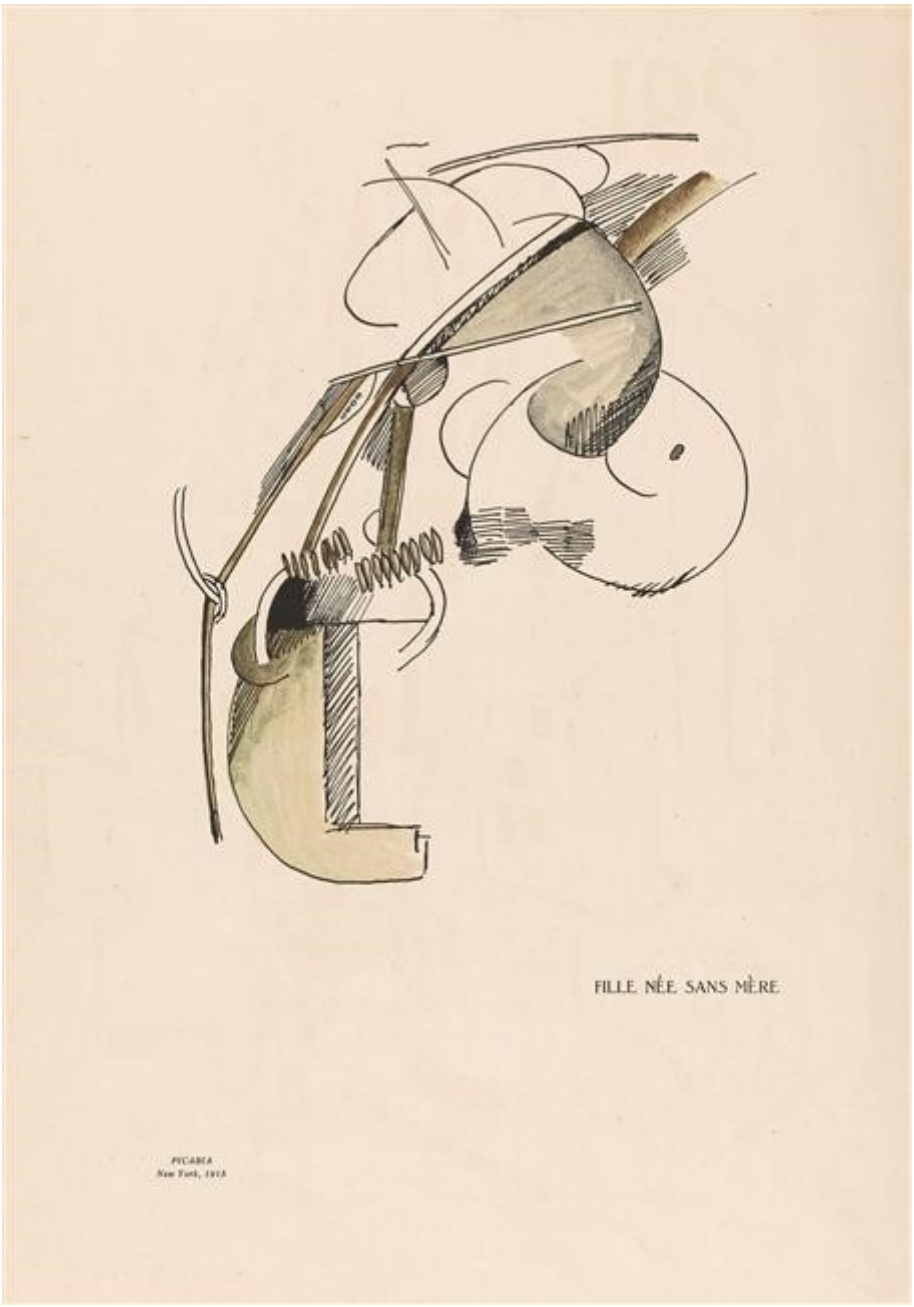
[54] Upon arriving in the United States for the first time in decades, the *New York Times* chose to focus on her style of dress, describing her "round-toed, flat-heeled oxfords," "brownish tweed suit covered in a cerise vest of voluminous proportions," and perhaps most significantly, "a mannish shirt of cream and black stripes." Seemingly at a loss for how to discuss her "literary adventures," the *Times*, like so many other publications covering her lecture tour, emphasized the relatively androgynous Stein in terms of difference – to Americans; to the 'common person;' and seemingly, to the primped and acceptable 'modern woman.'

Figure 3.1



La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même
(The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors)
Marcel Duchamp, 1915-1923 ; mixed media.

Figure 3.2



Fille née sans mère
(Girl Born Without a Mother)
Francis Picabia, 1915, work on paper

Figure 3.3

Greta Garbo, by Everett
Press photo for *The Kiss,* 1929

Figure 3.4

Portrait d'une jeune fille americaine dans l'état de nudité
(Portrait of a Young American Girl in the State of Nudity)
Francis Picabia, 1915, work on paper

Figure 3.5

Teasing a Butterfly, Mina Loy
(oil on canvas, 1902)

Figure 3.6

Consider Your Grandmother's Stays, Mina Loy
(Ink on Paper, 1916)

Figure 3.7

Promotional photo, *Niagara*, 1953

Figure 3.8

Mina Loy, 1917
The Evening Sun

Figure 3.9

Maybelline ad, 1925

Figure 3.10

Mina Loy, by Man Ray
1918

Figure 3.11

Have Dark Hair and Look Young

Smart women never let themselves look old! Gray hair, however handsome, denotes advancing age.

We all know the advantages of a youthful appearance.

Your hair is your charm. It makes or mars the face. When your hair fades, turns gray and looks streaked, just a few applications of Sage Tea and Sulphur enhance its appearance a hundred-fold.

Don't stay gray! Look young! Either prepare the recipe at home or get from any drug store a bottle of Wyeth's Sage and Sulphur Compound, which costs but 75 cents, and is merely the old time recipe improved by the addition of other ingredients.

Thousands of folks rely upon this ready-to-use preparation, because it darkens the hair beautifully; besides, no one can possibly tell, as it darkens so naturally and evenly.

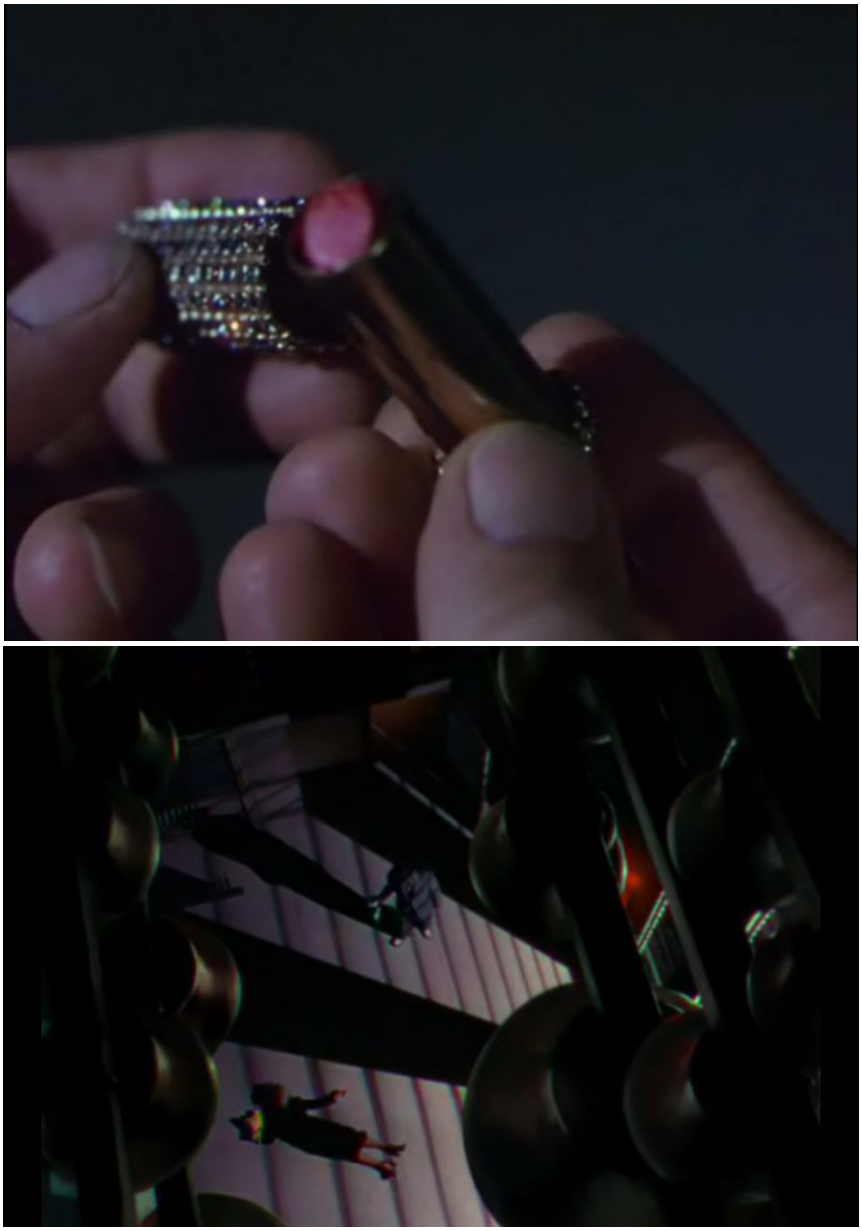
You simply moisten a sponge or soft brush with it, drawing this thru the hair, taking one small strand at a time. By morning the gray hair disappears; after another application or two, its natural color is restored and it becomes thick, glossy and lustrous, and you appear years younger.—Advertisement.

Advertisement, *Sage and Sulphur*
1927

Figure 3.12

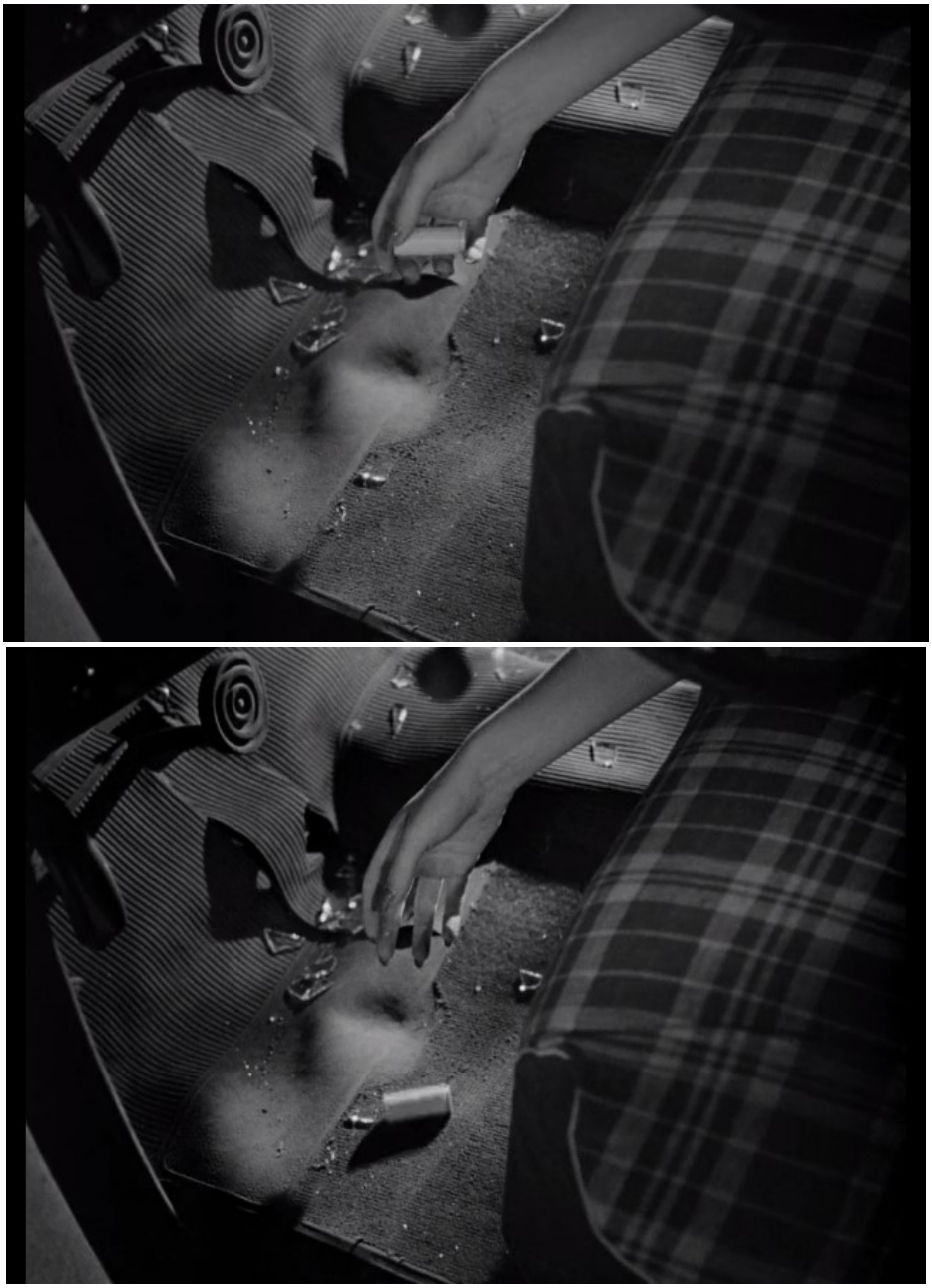
Advertisement for "Smoky" Nail Shades
1937

Figure 3.13



Niagara, 1953.

Figure 3.14



The Postman Always Rings Twice, 1946

Chapter 4:

From Narrative to Knowing: Gertrude Stein's Celebrity

Louis Mayer, co-founder of the movie studio Metro Goldwyn-Mayer, was often fond of saying, "the public makes the stars."[1] To be sure, there is truth in this statement. As Laura Mulvey indicates, cinema itself is built on the viewers' "scopophilic instinct," and thus, the figure of the star is one which provides their audience with a marketable form of visual pleasure, an idealized image of human perfection "hovering over the multiple indignities of life on the ground." [2] The rise of the Hollywood celebrity at the turn of the twentieth century can be read as analogous to the new, "modern woman" which was the central topic of my previous chapter. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the iconography of the "modern woman," and the expectations thereof, owed much to Hollywood's homogenization of standards of beauty. No more was the ideal "look" one of naturalized beauty. Echoing the immaculate, untouchable glamor of the Hollywood starlet, the average woman approached their own appearance with similar deliberation, seeking an identity in line with that of their favorite celebrities. And understandably so, given the increasing ubiquity of these images in Anglo-American culture. Though stars themselves, to draw from Richard Dyer on the subject, are themselves "empty of meaning," their cultural significance is nonetheless unmistakable. Celebrity itself becomes an indicator of value, the star "well-known for his/her well-knownness." [3] This ubiquity makes celebrity a tool of production in cultural narrative. It allows for the marketing of a broadly-determined set of dress, makeup and behaviors indicating "beauty" as something ineffable, rather than individual.

But while the image of stardom – the face of Garbo, the body of Monroe – played a powerful role in transforming the dominant cultural narrative surrounding the "new woman," the construction of celebrity itself proves a more complicated hurdle. Audiences were entranced by the glamorous images presented by Hollywood's "It" girls in particular, but it was not simply emulation, which these viewers sought. While film introduced a celebrity's façade to the viewer, the early twentieth century also saw a growing interest in the personal lives of these seemingly untouchable, larger than life figures known as "celebrities." Magazines such as *Photoplay* offered the chance for readers to ostensibly "reach beyond the visual image and examine and reveal the [star's] 'real' personality – his or her life, loves, and most intimate of thoughts." [4] For the increasingly-devoted filmgoer, it was no longer enough to use makeup or fashion to replicate in their own lives some version of Hollywood's glamor and beauty. Rather, it became increasingly necessary that the audience *know* the actors to whom they had become increasingly devoted, the "real," authentic person behind the celebrity icon. A pithy couplet in *Photoplay* cleverly described the phenomenon that gripped the country:

> "Ten million breakfasts halted—
> Ten million grapefruit waited—
> Ten million voices whispered—
> Ten million breaths were baited.
> The mightiest words of tongue or pen
> Were "Clara Bow's engaged again!" [5]

The public's hunger for a glimpse into the "real" people behind celebrity images cannot be understated, and with good reason. Even as the Hollywood industry helped to create new standards of beauty, wealth and happiness in the modern age, audiences craved authenticity in

the figures they emulated. For all that actors like Garbo may have been lauded for their seeming remoteness, there was then, as today, a strong, almost impenetrable link between fame and the desire for "authenticity" on the part of the celebrity's audience. These types of "parasocial relationships" – that is, relationships formed by absorbing knowledge about a public figure's life, creating a sense of personal knowledge that does not exist in actuality – play a powerful role in a celebrity's continued star-power, or lack thereof. [6] And at the turn of the twentieth century, magazines like *Photoplay* and other "chatty-pars" exploited this interest in the personal lives of stars by purporting to offer it, positing the information they offered as exclusive, insider knowledge. Much like present-day tabloids, fan magazines and gossip rags promised an "escape from the image that Hollywood […] promote[s]." [7] Because of the focus on the personal lives of Hollywood's elite, the information offered by these magazines came across as somehow "more 'authentic,'" pulling back the curtain to grant "a privileged access to the real person of the star." [8] Such 'tell-alls,' however, also carry with them the expectation of behavior befitting a lifestyle. Just as the celebrity had come to function as a barometer of extravagant success, so too did the star represent a set of assumed values and actions, "an idealized concept of how people are supposed to be or to act."[9]

Magazines like *Photoplay* helped to solidify the expectation that public figures were wholly transparent, their identities reduced to "social types."[10] And while the public's need to "know" their object of fixation was best represented in the perpetual motion of the Hollywood machine, the schematics of celebrity nonetheless played into the construction of authorship as well. For figures like Mina Loy, this meant a public which took a greater interest in the poet as a curiosity than as an artist in her own right – but what about authors who actively courted the

popular market? In this chapter, I examine the publication, and publicizing, of Gertrude Stein's best-selling work, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Having become a best-seller in no small part due to its perceived "gossipy" look into the curious, glamorized world of the Parisian art movement, Stein embarked upon her first American lecture tour after having already been identified, and "known" by her audience as something of a curiosity, an inscrutable figure around which the great names of modernism orbited. In some ways, this makes Stein a unique case, even within the scope of my study. While Loy and H.D. provided readings of literature and culture that critiqued the master narratives around them, Stein was actively engaged with and fascinated by celebrity and its underpinnings. Even before the publication of the *Autobiography,* Stein had hired clipping services to send newspaper articles from the States that mentioned her name or work, already fascinated by her own promotional machine.[11] Stein's self-awareness, then, must be taken into consideration when attempting to understand both the existence of the *Autobiography,* and the seemingly-inexorable subject matter of the lecture tour that followed. What I suggest in the following chapter is that both the *Autobiography* and the tour itself reflect Stein's first real direct confrontation with the mechanics of celebrity. The success of *The Autobiography* created a false "knowledge" of Stein among her newly-adoring public. Thus, Stein's lecture tour, with its emphasis on her portraiture and its own insistence on the possibility of "knowing," marks a deliberate, if playful, opposition to the master narrative of identity, stereotypes and transparency on which fame itself is based. More than that, however, Stein's lecture tour reflects the author's belief that such rejection of cultural norms are not limited to a select *literati*, but rather a potential that exists within her audience. Stein's presentation of her portraits to an audience expecting the same descriptive knowledge they received in the

autobiography is not only a subversion of the expectation of "knowing." It is a call to her audience, to enact similar criticism: to become readers, themselves.

Ladies' Gossip: The Appeal of *The Autobiography*

In December of 1932, Gertrude Stein's agent W. A. Bradley sent to the *Atlantic* a manuscript of what would become her most commercially-popular work, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Pitched as a glimpse into Stein's elite circle of Parisian bohemia, the book was warmly received by *Atlantic's* editor in chief Ellery Sedgwick, who praised the manuscript for finally breaking through Stein's literary impenetrability and promising access into the popular market. "There has been a lot of pother about this book of yours," Sedgwick enthused to Stein in his responding letter. "I think you felt my constant hope the time would come when the real Miss Stein would pierce the smoke-screen with which she has always so mischievously surrounded herself." [12] As Barbara Will rightly notes in *Gertrude Stein: Modernism and the Problem of "Genius,"* Sedgwick's insistence that the "real Miss Stein" has made herself apparent does not as much speak to her development as a writer but to her marketability as an author and cultural figure. The text has the earmarks of a best-seller, as "the apparent location of its voice in a unified and coherent "character" (the homespun and gossipy Alice Toklas)" and its "relatively linear "plot" (the travails of a group of *avant-gardistes* in the heyday of modernism)" marked a departure from Stein's recent experimental work in favor of a more straightforward – and commercially viable – narrative text.[13] But more significant, it seems, is the notion that Stein, in writing her "tell-all," has somehow pierced her "smoke-screen" of obfuscation and established her authenticity as a marketable voice, the inscrutable Gertrude Stein speaking freely at last.

Sedgwick's enthusiasm for this new, "real" Stein was very much a reflection of a specific set of cultural assumptions. By the time Stein composed her *Autobiography,* the rapidly-developing role of media had "transformed the relationship between Americans and their public figures," driving interest in the authentic "self" behind the fame, through detailed histories and ghost-authored tell-alls in special-interest magazines like *Screen Book* and *Photoplay*. [14] This was especially true for the public woman, whose presence on the national – or transnational – stage was, as Nancy Bentley argues, came to embody the modern era, the rapid changes in society and status that created the "new woman" of the twentieth century: unimposing, middle-class, and educated, financially stable enough to consider a career pursuing artistry or status, polite enough to express ambiguity should they succeed in achieving it.[15] At the core of this awkward performance lies a constant tension between fame and gender norms. Even as public women eschewed or downplayed their own success, such actions were strategic, bolstering the public's perception of their authenticity. The image of the public woman played heavily upon a larger cultural stereotypes of women as chatty denizens of the domestic sphere, prone to confession, rather than invention. Chad Bennett summarizes the phenomenon, admitting:

> when we put the question of what gossip sounds like to western drama, literature, philosophy, anthropology, or religion, we are likely to hear, for instance, that gossip sounds like a woman. And if we ask, in turn, what ["ladies' voices"] sounds like…the tautological reply will often be "a gossip."[16]

For Stein, who had already made a name for herself in the United States as a fascinating but intimidating purveyor of nonsense, the *Autobiography* humanized the author. It also finally delivered as expected to an audience conditioned to understand the autobiographical genre as a

narrative well-suited to a woman writer. Written as if by Toklas, the *Autobiography* capitalizes upon the tradition of "ladies' gossip" by documenting, as Loren Glass describes, Stein's "central role in the social life and aesthetic philosophy of Parisian expatriate modernism." Stein's 27 Rue de Fleurus, having served as a communal gathering point for modern artists such as Picasso and Matisse, was now the setting for Stein's celebrity "autobiography," a "gossipy testimony to her own genius" which familiarized audiences with not only Stein's art and style, but with Stein herself.[17] Having come to fame as something of a constant enigma, the *Autobiography* offered a glimpse into Gertrude Stein, Domestic, providing an intimate, editorialized look at the minutiae of daily life in Stein's Parisian parlor. The fact that Stein's version of domesticity lay so far outside traditional social and gender roles for the early twentieth century only served to make the gossip more desirable to its audience. This was Gertrude Stein, unmasked, as close to rubbing elbows with the Parisian literati as the average reader was likely to get.

Much of the scholarly focus Stein's own celebrity has thus been on the *Autobiography.* Certainly, the text is the least "Steinian" of her work inasmuch as it is singularly accessible, even commercial. Prior to its publication, Stein was perhaps best-known for her *in*accessibility, as the author of texts which de-emphasize (and reject) the narrative capacity of language in favor of calling attention to it as a series of problematic signs. The term "Steinian" itself might be said to describe the very absence of the kind of descriptive accessibility the *Autobiography* offers. Marianne DeKoven describes the style as "incoherent," representing "an order of meaning which our overwhelming valorization of coherent, referential sense in literature generally prevents us from recognizing."[18] Meaning in quintessentially "Steinian" literature "is present, but it is multiplied, fragmented, unresolved." It is dependent, as John Carlos Rowe notes, upon the

"natural" ability of language to "proliferate, refuse control and form, and exceed the intention of a discrete sender (author) or receiver (reader)."[19] With this in mind it is easy to see how the *Autobiography*, with its apparently straightforward "gossip" about the *avant garde* personalities of Paris, might be taken as a deliberate bow to the popular marketplace. But while the text marks Stein's first success in the realm of celebrity authorship, to accept it as sequestered away from Stein's linguistically experimental work is to fall prey to a false binary. Stein's interest in the marketability of her work held no such distinction. In July of 1927, Stein sent Sedgwick her literary portrait of Cezanne, which she prefaced as being "as short as possible and it is about Cezanne who was one of my big influences."[20] Stein demonstrates a keen knowledge of what constitutes a "successful" sell: in this case, the apt (and somewhat amusing) pitch that her manuscript is "as short as possible." [21] She is also cognizant that success is tied to name recognition, insisting the portrait is "about" Cezanne, the influential impressionist who, Stein assumes, "surely your audience has gotten to."[22] As with the *Autobiography*, Stein asserts the importance of her own presence as well. Cezanne is "one of [her] big influences," and thus of course the combined result is "very good." [23]

But more important than Stein's awareness of commercial viability is the extent to which she flouts the expectations of the market in favor of her more abstract, "inaccessible" work. Stein's literary portraits are, arguably, the pinnacle of obtuse, quintessentially "Steinian" modernism, and the portrait of "Cezanne" is no exception. In contrast to the *Autobiography* (and her insistences to Sedgwick), "Cezanne" is not a conventional character sketch.[24] The portrait provides little to no narrative insight into the public figure of Paul Cezanne. Other than its

borrowed name, "Cezanne" in fact seems to have little to do with the painter at all, offering instead a tribute to Stein's own obscure, inexorable brand of literary "genius:"

> The Irish lady can say, that to-day is every day. Caesar can say that every day is to-day and they say that every day is as they say. In this way we have a place to stay and he was not met because he was settled to stay. When I said settled I meant settled to stay. When I said settled to stay I meant settled to stay Saturday. In this way a mouth is a mouth. In this way if in as a mouth if in as a mouth where, if in as a mouth where and there. Believe they have water too. Believe they have that water too and blue when you see blue, is all blue precious too, is all that that is precious too is all that and they meant to absolve you. In this way Cézanne nearly did nearly in this way. Cézanne nearly did nearly did and nearly did. And was I surprised. Was I very surprised. Was I surprised. I was surprised and in that patient, are you patient when you find bees. Bees in a garden make a specialty of honey and so does honey. Honey and prayer. Honey and there. There where the grad can grow nearly four times yearly.[25]

Rather than provide a look at Cezanne himself, Stein uses his supposed portrait to work out the play of language as sound rather than language as content. Repetition of key phrases ("every day," "to-day," "surprised," "bees," etc.) build on one another without signifying anything, let alone the by then famous artist for whom the piece is titled. This recontextualizing of language into soundscape marks a primary aspect of Stein's portraiture. In using the names of her famous friends and contemporaries to manipulate and toy with the relationship between language and meaning, Stein "puts [the names of her subjects] in 'close range' for readers, making [the name] signify an ordinary person within her text as much as it does an extraordinary person in the extratextual world." [26] The consistent repetition of the artist's name seems not to serve as an indicator of identity but as a means of muddling the connection between name and subject by

placing it alongside equally-repeated words and phrases like “surprise” and “nearly did.” Put to paper, without auditory cues, it becomes difficult to speculate with any certainty at the significance of such repetition. Are we meant, as readers, to take language at its face value? Or does the consistent overuse of the word strip it of its meaning, suggesting the speaker may not, in fact, be “surprised” at all? Though Stein has delivered exactly as promised – a text that is, in fact, about Cezanne – she has done so only in the most literal sense, emptying the word of its content and meaning, and certainly stripping it of what Sedgwick and his audience really desire, the kind of gossipy “fact” that elevates the name into a position of icon, that links ‘Cezanne’ and ‘fame’ among the *Atlantic*’s readers.

Sedgwick, it should be noted, was less than impressed by this bit of overly-literal cleverness. “I have read this 'impression' of Cezanne a dozen times at least,” he grouses in his responding letter, “but the little rhymes which ripple through your picture do not, to my heavy wit, call up the faintest suggestion of the exciting impression of a Cezanne.” [27] Nonetheless, Stein continued to, somewhat playfully, insist upon connecting her literary portraits to the figures they purported to describe. Her university talks focused extensively on the portraits as intimate representations of her familiars, most often public (if not popular) figures. In addition to Cezanne, portraits of Matisse and Picasso were also included in her series, read aloud to an audience most familiar with her writing through the *Autobiography* and its subsequent marketing as a work of literary gossip, and whose expectations of Stein thus rested in the *Autobiography*'s positioning of her at the social center of a “coterie of high modernist geniuses.” [28]

But Stein did not intend to simply confuse her audience. In an earlier exchange with Sedgwick, Stein balked at the idea that the audience for her work need be "*literati,* etc.," in order to understand her.[29] On the contrary, Stein believed her work to be:

> legitimate literature and I amuse and interest myself in words as an expression of feeling as Shakespeare or anyone else writing did. This is entirely in the spirit of all that is first class in American letters whether it's newspapers, Walt Whitman or Henry James, or Poe. [30]

By connecting her own work to that of Whitman, Poe, or even the daily paper, Stein demonstrated a genuine belief in the public's ability to comprehend even her most "impenetrable" work. There is no differentiation between high and low culture, for Stein – the notion seems to frustrate her, as by designating Stein a member of the "literati" Sedgwick excludes her from the well-loved (and well-circulated) American canon. But more significant is how Stein's insistence on her writing's accessibility recontextualizes her use of portraiture. For all of their seeming impenetrability, Stein's 1934 lecture tour focuses heavily on these portraits as examples of the "writing" of identity: of recognition, and memory, and the impossibility of capturing authenticity in a single, master narrative. Her interest in "knowing," coming as it does out of the success of her *Autobiography*, does not exist separate from her larger body of work, nor is it simply a means of vexing her audience now that she has one. Rather, Stein uses the conventions of the celebrity gossip with which she has been associated as a marketing tool, bringing in a narrative-hungry audience and using their fascination with celebrity to challenge the system that creates it. This, then, becomes the purpose of the lectures themselves. While

Stein herself was never above dealing "good gossip," she insisted upon it being produced, and circulated, on her own terms.

Gertrude's Genius: A Difficult Sell in "Your United States"

Stein's engagement with the trappings of celebrity and "knowing" began far before she found commercial success. Much of Stein's problem in achieving commercial success with her work, at least until the publication of the *Autobiography,* was quite simply that her reputation had preceded her. Stately, blunt, and no stranger to self-promoting, Stein stood in stark contrast to the middle-brow's "modern woman." Her work, and she herself, interested a broader audience largely by remaining completely befuddling. Often described as "widely ridiculed and seldom enjoyed," or even "the most publicized but-least read writer" of the twentieth century, Stein both fascinated and vexed her American public by failing to conform to the expectations of modern "women's literature." [31] Her work is not gentle, pleasing or beautiful. Her appearance lacks aesthetic and commercial appeal. Like Loy, Stein was presented to the public as a curiosity, rather than a figure of intellectual merit. Early "reviews" of her American lectures tended to focus more on Stein's "enigmatic countenance" than on her work itself, noting her "square-shoulder[s]" and "mannish" dress as though her physical appearance were as much a part of her so-called eccentricity as her writing itself. [32,33] Even when at her most unquestionably accessible, Stein's reputation remained steadfastly inscrutable in the public imagination. One newspaper announcement, heralding her post-*Autobiography* arrival in New York, exclaimed that "GERTRUDE STEIN ARRIVES AND BAFFLES REPORTERS BY MAKING HERSELF CLEAR," describing the surprise and shock of present reporters when

Stein seemingly broke character to "[speak] a language that every one could understand." [34] As Barbara Wills argues in *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of 'Genius,'* Stein's perceived (and often, very real) obtuseness placed her in the unenviable position of having to justify the circulation of her work: not necessarily due to questions of its literary merit, as Stein's reputation had ensconced her firmly among what Sedgwick refers to early on as the "*literati* or *illuminati*" who make up the readership for 'difficult' literature, but rather, as a marketable product. [35]

By the time the *Autobiography* was published in the 1930s, the image of Gertrude Stein, Genius, had been thoroughly grafted onto the public consciousness, with "Steinian" language appearing in the most seemingly incongruent of places. One advertisement, which ran in *The New York Times* in 1934, used Stein's most famous circular phrase, "a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" to sell women's hats. [36] "A rose is a pose is a rose is a pose," reads the copy for Bergdorf Goodman's department store; the accompanying image mimes the circular manner in which Stein's own sentence is written, the text encircling a stylized female profile adorned with a hat [Figure 4.1]. The Steinian marketing campaign extended to Bergdorf's Fifth Avenue display case, where illuminated letters above a window of men's attire proclaimed to feature "4 Suits in 2 Acts:" a reference to Stein's play, "Four Saints in Three Acts" [Figure 4.2]. But as is so often the case with fame, Stein's celebrity was superficial, focusing more on the "joke" of her inaccessibility than on any genuine interest in unlocking her work. As the *New York Times* speculated in 1935, commenting on the uptick in the American lecture business, the public was far more interested in iconography than content: "we didn't want to understand [the content of the lectures] – we wanted to see Einstein. […] We want to see the great, and rub elbows with

them." [37] For Stein, this fascination held a more troubling undercurrent, as it spoke not only to the public's interest in fame for its own sake, but specifically to their interest in Stein as a key figure in modernism's coterie of (masculine) genius. Having come to her lecture tour by way of the *Autobiography*, Stein's newfound audience was very much interested in the author as a figure of "good gossip" within the literary community. This interest made for a seemingly impenetrable paradox, as while her "genius" identity had been thoroughly, and enthusiastically, appropriated by the public, her work itself had not. As she bemoans in an oft-quoted statement from *Everybody's Autobiography:* "it always did bother me that the American public were more interested in me than in my work."

In identifying the taking up of her name and image rather than her content as a significant problem with American celebrity, Stein was not alone. Recalling for a moment my discussion in Chapter 1, H.D. and Kenneth MacPherson's *Close Up* magazine regularly concerned itself with issues of identity as they related to the persistence of the marketplace. The "odd business" of celebrity, contributor Robert Herring notes, craves intimate details of its subjects, "not for the sake of art itself, but for the personality that can be produced using the advertisement machine." [38] H.D. in particular took umbrage to this interest in the machination of personality, devoting a number of publications to the commercial "deflower[ing]" of a favored actress, Greta Garbo, whose increasing popularity within American cinema transformed her from European art-house actress into an "odd unbelievable parody" of herself. [39] The "lump," as H.D. described the popular market, wanted of their entertainment the fulfillment of caricature. In the case of Garbo, it meant fulfilling the expectations associated with both beauty and a specific form of film star. A star is beautiful, and so too must Garbo be beautiful. Beauty, especially European beauty, is

dangerous, so too must Garbo become a femme fatale, "black eyed" and "dark" in spite of her real appearance. The image of Garbo that brought her to Hollywood stardom, then, according to H.D., had little to do with Garbo herself, and nothing to do with the content of her work. She becomes a "totem," ready-made for her audience: a pre-packaged, farcical, exaggerated version of herself, presented to a public trained to purchase and consume it.

And consume they did. If the public had become fascinated with stars for their own sake, rather than for the content of their work, distributors made an aggressive push to give them what they wanted, providing their audiences with personalities -- personalities which, often enough, were out of the hands of those whom they purported to represent.[40] For many artists, this loss of control over their own image proved daunting. For others, like Comelia Otis Skinner, it became a key part of their performance itself, as her one-woman acts, performed through the 1920s into the 1950s, effectively allowed her to "[produce] her own gossip – the inside scoop, the 'real' woman behind the 'performed' star – which she attempt[ed] to control and contain." [41] For Stein, who herself expressed a keen interest in the rising star of Hollywood and its inner workings, the latter model – a highly-scripted version of her own image, one that placed her at its center, as its author and conductor – remained ideal. But Stein did not only address this problem of the "totem" in her winking nods to idolatry, in her deliberate refusal to acknowledge that the portraits of "Cezanne" and others were in any way lacking what her audience sought of them. Despite ushering in what critics and readers alike considered to be a clearer, kinder, and chattier Stein, the *Autobiography* itself operates as a controlled performance of her own identity.

At its most basic level, the *Autobiography* is a fraud: named for Toklas, and written ostensibly from her point of view, the text plays on the conventions of the autobiographical genre to suggest a kind of intimate transparency. Like portraiture, the autobiography is a genre of representation, offering its reader an expectation of full disclosure.[42] But this clarity is problematized by the fact that it is Stein writing about herself using Toklas's imagined voice as a conceit. As Goldman, Wills, and others have noted, Toklas's function within her "own" novel is to run interference. She sits with the "wives of geniuses" as Stein monopolizes the attentions of the novels' men (and fellow geniuses).[43,44] Her position destabilizes gender within the text, but it also challenges Stein's place as a typified female author, in a system of authorship that expects a very specific form of feminine writing: namely, the traditionally confessional, a straightforwardly narrative text. Instead, the *Autobiography* serves up a fictionalized narrator: it is "Toklas," not Stein, who speaks to the reader in personal anecdotes, a "wildly descriptive gesture" that borders on self-parody.[45]

Toklas narrates from the perspective of an intimate outsider. Though she sits among the famous names that litter the novel, she does so from a distance that allows her to occupy the same quizzical space as Stein's imagined audience: the middlebrow reader, for whom Sedgwick insisted that Stein would be impossible to decipher. But decipher Toklas does, in a "verbal, visual and generic game of surfaces" that destabilizes the idea of a "genius" as an organic, inscrutable, impenetrable figure.[46] As is the case in much of Stein's work, the relationship between the names referenced in the *Autobiography* and the people whom they represent are deliberately, hyperbolically superficial. Chad Bennett proposes that Stein's "gossip" is often paradoxically distancing, "as she absents and objectifies her interlocutors" by speaking of them

in detailed, but meaningless banalities.[47] Artists like "little poor Monsieur Rousseau," so timid "he did not even have courage enough to knock at the door;" or Matisse, whose current financial and emotional troubles had left him "discouraged and aggressive," are written about in excruciating, almost parodic detail. Spilled across the page, their lives are no more authentic than the voice that speaks of them. To "Toklas" -- as to Stein herself, in her insistence that there is no real difference between her own work and that of any well-circulated author, but for the audiences' lack of exposure – the famous names in the *Autobiography* are just that: names. Though Toklas claims early on to have heard a "bell ring" each time she has met a real, true "genius," this statement becomes absurd when placed in concert with the ultimately superficial portraits "Toklas" paints of each figure she recalls encountering. Even Toklas herself possesses only a limited knowledge of the "genius" she professes to inherently understand. In one amusing, if esoteric moment, she reminisces upon Matisse's completion of the *Bonheur de Vivre*, a famous painting associated with the vivid and animalistic fauvist style of modernist art simplified by Toklas as "a zoo." It was during this same year, she notes with some import, that the other geniuses she has known were hard at work on their own legacies. Stein was "deep in The Making of Americans," and Picasso completed his portrait of Stein, which "nobody at the time liked except the painter and the painted and which is now so famous." The placement of these moments of "genius," subsumed as they are within the banalities of superficial and largely questionable gossip, mark, ultimately, Stein's attempt at demonstrating her own argument: that one need not be a genius to appreciate its presence, and that, as evidenced by Toklas' continued references to her friends' growing fame and fortunes, the public remains hungry for "legitimate" art. [48]

Initially Stein's gambit was effective. In its simple style and apparently straightforward, gossipy tone, the *Autobiography* bridges the seemingly impossible space between the image of Stein herself as a distant, untouchable (and unreadable) "genius" and the American public, with whom her relationship has, up until this point, been marked by a fascination with image, rather than content. Having enthused upon receiving the manuscript that Stein's "smoke screen" had finally vanished, Sedgwick himself was quick to consider the possibilities that this new, mediated Stein could pose in terms of marketability. Writing to her in 1933, Sedgwick exclaimed that

> All the new fans are running to the bookstores to ask about your other works, and then an explosion is apt to occur. When the announcement [to publish the *Autobiography*] was made, there was a lot of head-wagging, but the doubters are on the run, and the serialization has been a great success – particularly among young people.[49]

By the time *The Atlantic* completed its serialization of the *Autobiography,* Stein's star was on the rise. Her 1934 lecture tour, designed to capitalize off of the popularity of her new best-seller, was a stunning success. But while the *Autobiography* served to parlay the American public's fascination with Stein into marketability, it was not without its drawbacks. Though the *Autobiography* succeeded in bridging the gap between Stein's heretofore incomprehensible "genius" and the sensibilities of the average middlebrow reader, it did so by reaffirming in the public a hunger for exactly the kind of cartoonish, gossipy figures that Stein had sought to move past. The characters created by the *Autobiography* were, in a sense, the exact sort of celebrities that already fascinated the American public. As a result, while Stein experienced her first taste of commercial success with the novel's publication, it was success tempered with the growing

knowledge that she herself had become, in the eyes of the public, the very figure that her novel lampooned. Thus, Stein's first engagement with financial success also served to convince the mass market of the very thing that Stein would have insisted against. After years of inscrutability, they finally "knew" Gertrude Stein.

Lectures in America and the Artifice of "Knowing"

In 1934, Gertrude Stein made her first trip back to the United States in over thirty years as a newly-minted celebrity. Writing about the trip several years later, in a short excerpt from *Everybody's Autobiography* entitled, "Your United States," Stein describes arriving in New York to see her own name winking back at her, lit up in marquee lights and

> moving around a building and it said Gertrude Stein has come and that was upsetting. Anybody saying how do you do to you and knowing your name may be upsetting enough but to suddenly see your name is always upsetting. Of course it has happened to me pretty often and I like it to happen just as often but always it does give me a little shock of recognition and non-recognition. It is one of the things most worrying in the subject of identity. [50]

In seeing her own name projected in such a manner Stein experiences a disconnect. She both recognizes her name (because it is her own) and regards it as foreign (written on a marquee being used to advertise "Gertrude Stein," the popular commodity). Her discomfort is compounded by what she describes as the curious reality of having people she has never met before greet her in the street, emboldened by perceived intimate knowledge of her life:

> How do you do Miss Stein said the man, how do you do, I said, and how do you do like it, he said, very much I said, he said it must be pleasant coming back after thirty years,

> and I said it certainly was. He was so natural about knowing my name that it was not surprising and yet we had not expected anything like that to happen.[51]

Stein's arrival in New York marks her first real "celebrity" experience. Seeing her name in lights does not only represent a shrewd marketing tactic; it is an *imago,* a tangible confrontation with herself as the "famous" Gertrude Stein. What sparks Stein's "shock of recognition and non-recognition," then, is her awareness that the image to which her greeter is responding is both herself and not herself. While it is certainly her novel, with its descriptions of Stein as a centrifugal force in the modernist Parisian artistic moment, that has created the Stein whom the American public recognizes, this "famous" Stein is nonetheless a stranger, one whom she confronts only now that it has been reflected back upon her.[52] Lacan describes the "transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes" the image he or she has seen; for Stein, this assumption meant recognizing the expectations of the stranger who assumes material gleaned from newspapers and Stein's own writing ("it must be pleasant coming back after thirty years," her interlocutor notes) offer a glimpse into the "real" Gertrude Stein.[53] This ability of the image to transform so far beyond its subject is, as Stein notes, "one of the things most worrying in the subject of identity."

Writing "the story of [her] life" for *Vanity Fair* in September of 1934, Stein describes what she felt to be a loss of her own authenticity accompanying her popularity, a crippling awareness that her public self, at least, had become a construction dependent upon the gaze of others. "You know the nursery rhyme," Stein begins in her "And Now" editorial,

> I am I because my little dog knows me. Well you see I did not know myself, I lost my personality. It has always been completely included in myself my personality as any

> personality naturally is, and here all of the sudden, I was not just I because so many people did know me. It was just the opposite of I am I because my little dog knows me. So many people knowing me I was I no longer [...]" [54]

Here Stein offers her most straightforward criticism of celebrity: it has the ability to take over a person's identity. With the public now aware of and clamoring for any detail about Stein's life, she frets, her life no longer belonged to her; "I was I no longer." Stein's anxiety was not without merit. Even as Stein's sales began to blossom, with Random House offering American publications of many of her older works, in some cases for the very first time, success came with caveat. It was not Gertrude Stein alone that was selling, nor was it her "genius," or her literary project. Instead, publishers were quick to capitalize on the perceived gossipy nature of the autobiography, posing Stein herself as a kind of gossip, offering the same insider details the public consumed voraciously in the *Autobiography*. The text printed on the 1934 slipcover of Random House's first edition of *Portraits and Prayers*, for instance, leaves no question as to what the publisher hopes will encourage the public to buy the book:

> Random House celebrates the return of Gertrude Stein to her native land after an absence of thirty years with the publication of "Portraits and Prayers." The series of lectures to be delivered by Miss Stein in the leading universities of America has aroused the widest interest in academic and secessionist literary circles. Several of these lectures refer to the material in "Portraits and Prayers;" the chief address, in fact, derives its title from the book. Her homecoming and the simultaneous publication of her newest work become the occasion for many tributes to a world-renowned figure who occupies a single position in contemporary letters. Portraits and Prayers is an album of intimate characterizations of her friends. It impales on its sharpest phrases such celebrities as Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, T. S. Eliot, Jean Cocteau, Ernest Hemingway, Carl Van Vechten, Sherwood Anderson, Joe Davidson, Mabel Dodge, Edith Sitwell and many others. [55]

Though we are invited to pay tribute to a "world-renowned figure who occupies a single position in contemporary letters," it is evident that Stein's intellectual weight in "academic and secessionist literary circles" is hardly the reason we are expected to purchase this text. Rather, Random House is quick to call upon the trope of celebrity to suggest *Portraits and Prayers* might offer us gossipy insight into *other* (better-known) modernist powerhouses, lauding the text's position as an "album of intimate characterizations" of "such celebrities as" T.S. Eliot, Picasso, Hemingway, and more. Far from providing her with an authorial signature that would foreground her value as an artist and writer, this tome of Stein's most subjectively abstract work instead comes to cement her popular identity as an eccentric and, more importantly, a "genuine article," an authentic link to other, in some cases more famous authors and artists. Thus, Stein takes on what is essentially a secondary position in the marketing strategy of her own work: the focus in selling *Portraits and Prayers* is no longer on Stein, or her work, but on the chance to hob-knob with celebrity, to read "intimate characterizations" of Stein's friends and compatriots: to get an inside look into the master narrative of modernism, with Stein as a tool by which to get there.

Granted, in some sense, Random House was correct. Stein's lectures were in large part about her portraits. More to the point, the lectures speak explicitly about her construction of identity, both her own and that of others. The anxiety that Stein admits to in *Vanity Fair* peppers her lectures, demonstrating her growing discomfort with her own identity as an affected construction. In particular, she emphasizes the artificiality of "knowing" about a person via narrative facts – the very "good gossip" that her audience sought, that Random House, and others, had used to 'sell' Gertrude Stein as a marketable figure. The lectures, and their emphasis

on portraiture, mark Stein's attempt to reign in control of her own identity by reaffirming to the audience the absurdity of "knowing" and "remembering" via gossip and narration. Instead, Stein presents her portraits – defined by a continuous cycle of what she calls "listening and talking" in juxtaposition to "remembering" – as a challenge to the very pretense of a single, knowable identity. In doing so, Stein deliberately rejects familiarity, dismissing the kind of descriptive knowledge on which gossip is based as a game of refractive surfaces, too readily-accessible to ever be authentic. Armed with enough details, Stein bemoans, "everybody can remember almost anything." [56]

Gertrude Stein's Portraits

In Stein's frustration with the trajectory of her fame, we see just how quickly the author came to understand the machinery of celebrity and its impact on personal agency. But Stein's relationship with identity and "knowing" began much earlier. In June of 1917, two decades before the publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, Vanity Fair* published one of Stein's poems, a "political caricature of Henry McBride" entitled "Have They Attacked Mary. He Giggled." The poem marks one of Stein's rare early brushes with mainstream publication, and its fourteen pages were accompanied by the anonymous insistence that "the individual, male or female, who begins foaming at the mouth at Miss Stein's second 'page,' who shrieks 'This is insanity!' at the third or fourth, and ends by writing a letter of protest to the editor of *Vanity Fair*," is a philistine." [57] While as Faye Hammill notes, letters of protest regarding the publication of modern writers were not an idle reference, it is difficult not to see at least some level of intended irony in *Vanity Fair*'s insistence that what its readers were about to experience

was art. [58] For being described even in the work's subtitle as a "POLITICAL CARICATURE," the fourteen brief "pages" of the poem offer nothing like a typical character sketch. The "portrait" begins in some kind of peculiar *media res*, seemingly continuing a dialog outside of the sketch's boundaries:

> Can you be more confusing by laughing? Do say yes.
> We are extra. We have the reasonableness of a woman and we say we do not like a room. We wish we were married.
> Why do you believe in me.
> Including all that is sold, you mean three pictures, including all that is sold why cannot you give me that. [59]

With enough effort, one might be able to find initial references to McBride in the first "page" of the text, or at the very least a sly association with his well-regarded critical position. The reference to "three pictures" sold, for instance, might be taken as a gesture towards McBride's association with the contemporary art market, and the "portrait" itself does at the very least appear to have both a speaker and subject, a "we" and a "you" for the reader to cling to. But any attempt by the audience to further read McBride into this "caricature" is quickly problematized by the work's increasing obscurity, its distancing of language from its position as referent in favor of recontextualizing words as objects in themselves. As the poem progresses, words are increasingly emptied of their content. "PAGE III" begins and ends with the query, "Have you an automobile," continued on "PAGE IV" with the peculiar assertion that "The queen has. We asked for one. They cannot send it now. Cannot they. We will see." [60] But by the end of the poem there appears to be little narrative thread associating the streams of associations. "PAGE XLIV" for instance is developed through auditory wordplay--

> What do officers kiss.
> Officers kiss the cross. Indeed they do. So do soldiers in passing.
> Pass again.
> Chrysanthemum.
> Was his friend a friend.[61]

– relying on quintessentially "Steinian" sentence inversions ("officers kiss / kiss the cross") and the repetition of sounds, rather than ideas ("kiss the cross" / "chrysanthemum") ("so do soldiers"). So incomprehensible does the portrait seem by the end of its fourteen pages that even *Vanity Fair's* introduction cannot seem to help but parody its use of language, with the melodic insistence that "decidedly the second individual is [a philistine]. Is one decidedly." [62]

Though not technically one of the canonized "portraits," primarily due to its lack of a proper name, contextualizing "Have They Attacked Mary. He Giggled" as a "political caricature" lends it the same kind of problematic expectations as Stein's literary portraits. Namely, "Have They Attacked Mary" plays off of the public's expectation that a text supposing itself to be a "portrait" of someone will provide some manner of wholly present, naturalized reflection of the person in question. Wendy Steiner notes that the portrait genre is expected by its invocation of a name to "create immediacy." A name "points to a particular person," thus "[t]he implication is that the portrait and the subject are equivalent." [63] But more than that, it implies that the subject and the portrait will equate in a manner transparent to the reader – that, just as a "chatty par" might offer behind the scenes insight into the world of an actor or media figure, a literary "portrait" will narrate some aspect of its subjects' true identity, some link to the person whose name it shares. The fact that Stein chose to introduce her work to the public via a piece that rejects these conventions speaks to the kind of author she wished to be understood as –

not a linear storyteller, but one whose work lacked a single meaning or narrative. Perhaps more significantly, however, is the fact that Stein expected her audience to be able to read it: that is, to generate their own meaning from the pieces she had offered. Despite not being a technical portrait, "Have They Attacked Mary. He Giggled" nonetheless serves a similar function by expecting the reader to produce meaning, or a lack thereof, from a text that challenges by withholding it. It is exactly this expectation that so frustrated Sedgwick when he was first sent "Cezanne" in 1927. "I am so accustomed to thinking of words as conveying ideas," Sedgwick decried, "that to regard them as symbols of another kind is quite beyond me." [64]

In denying straightforward narrative meaning, Stein's portraiture flouts both literary and cultural convention. So pervasive is the idea that a portrait must convey the reality of its subject that even contemporary criticism has gone out of its way to provide an apology of sorts for Stein's literary obtuseness. In providing a reading of Stein's "He, They and Hemingway," Steiner presses upon the contextual clue that Stein "wrote the portrait in a French school-children's book with an illustrated cover" bearing the likeness of Victor Hugo. "If one keeps this in mind," she writes, "the opening sequence of vertically arranged lines in 'Hemingway' takes on a totally new character." [65] Steiner's analysis of Stein's portraiture is thorough, no doubt, offering a key by which to understand the potential functions of identity in the portrait series. But while Stein may have been conjuring Hemingway by suggesting that herself, "like Hugo, was an educator of youth" in the modernist era, such revelations depend explicitly on access to materials simply not available, or most likely desired, by the works' initial consumers. [66] While "He, They and Hemingway" might obscurely reference the famous author it certainly does not conjure his

image – even Stein herself appeared derisive of the idea that her portraits could achieve such effect.

It is unsurprising then that Stein's lectures, given in support of the chatty *Autobiography*, would take on the portraits as a primary focus. Marketed as a "virtual feast of name-dropping insiderism," reviews from the *Autobiography's* initial publication espoused the book as "witty, conversational" and dealing "almost exclusively with the personalities grouped about Miss Stein;" "full of good gossip," according to the *Chattanooga Times* in 1933.[67] The text took on such a life of its own, as a supposed insider look at the "real" artists of which Stein wrote, that even the artists themselves took umbrage, writing a "Testimony Against Gertrude Stein" in fear that "less informed readers might accept Miss Stein's testimony about her contemporaries" as indisputable fact.[68] But such descriptions could not be farther from the truth. The *Autobiography* is "hyperbolic [and] excessive," "nothing if not a performance, an enactment of authority and all its privileges" parodied through their theatricality. [69] In fact, the *Autobiography* is in many ways meant to *resist* exactly this kind of singular distilling of identity into "knowing," as the narrative, with its deceptive speaker, works "to ensnare the reader within a textual economy in which the exchange between signifier and signified, author and audience, the 'real' and the 'imaginary,' is always already disproportionate." [70] In this sense, despite its relatively straightforward structure, the *Autobiography* (as Will argues) performs the same kind of linguistic and narrative deconstructions that Stein attempts in her most unintelligible "Steinese," even as the result is marketed as a transparent, autobiographical, celebrity text. So the deceptively convoluted narrative "work[s] to ensnare the reader within a textual economy in which the exchange between signifier and signified, author and audience, the 'real' and the 'imaginary,' is always

already disproportionate" – the same kind of linguistic and narrative deconstruction Stein attempts in her most unintelligible "Steinese," even as the result was marketed, and shot to fame, as a transparent, autobiographical, celebrity text.

With this in mind, we might imagine why Stein was quick to use her lecture tour as a medium by which to explain the artifice of this kind of insiderism. One of the central lectures of Stein's tour, "Portraits and Repetition," concerns itself near exclusively with the question of understanding identity. In this lecture, Stein argues for a distinction between "knowing" and "remembering" by suggesting the latter is largely the arena of petty detail and gossip. The language of popular media details obsessively what a person "does" in hopes that enough of this information will somehow provide a transparent image, a portrait, of the figure in question. Drawing herself from celebrity iconography, Stein references John Dillinger to make her point, explaining to her audience that "it was not what he did that was exciting but the excitement of what he was as being exciting that was exciting." [71] Thus this lecture, first given to a sold-out crowd at Columbia, explicitly condemns the very curiosity that likely brought its audience into the room in the first place, telling her audience, in essence, that they remain uninformed: about Dillinger, about their celebrities, and about Gertrude Stein, the subject before them.

At the core of Stein's lectures is the belief that the kind of writing expected of traditional "gossip" – of chatty-pars, of autobiographies, of 'portraits' in the most traditional sense – does not offer its audience an image of their subject as they "really are," but rather, a two-dimensional and ultimately superficial imago. It is here that Stein uses her portraiture to formulate her theory of identity and, I argue, to posit her rebuttal of the kind of celebrity into which she herself has

repeatedly fallen. "Portraits and Repetition" makes an important distinction between the depiction of a person's actions and who they really are: the difference between remembering and existence, according to Stein. This argument, it seems, begins with precisely the kind of gossipy, detail-based culture in which the American public has become immersed. "What does it really matter what anybody does," Stein asks of her audience. "The newspapers are full of what anybody does and anybody knows what anybody does." [72] Armed with enough description, "everybody can remember almost anything" – or at least, assume that they do.[73] But just as the early "chatty pars" reduce celebrities to easily marketed types, so too does "knowledge-about" fail to capture more than a superficial echo of the life of a public figure. Stein' alternative, then, is to reject descriptive knowledge, the excessive "real" details that made her (and her compatriots) "stars" at the expense of homogenizing their identities, turning them into celebrity caricatures. The result is nothing more than a "joke," as Stein herself describes the *Autobiography* in her lectures. Figures like the painfully shy Rousseau, or a Matisse whose life construed a one-man soap opera, are too simplified, too *simplistic*, to genuinely exist. [74] The realization Stein comes to, in considering the impossibility of "remembering" and "knowing" a person in this way, is that such a thing is categorically impossible. For Stein, this is the inevitable link between the *Autobiography* and her larger project, the "Steinese" in which she has always written. As she explains in her lecture: "I wondered if there were any way of making what I know come out as I know it not as remembering. I found this very exciting. And I began to make portraits." [75]

"Portraits and Repetition" informs Stein's audience up front of its intention to strip them of their de facto method of conceptualizing identity. Initially, of course, Stein's method does not

sound all that far from the descriptive narrative that made up the *Autobiography*. Like any "good gossip" it is rooted in saying aloud what one knows:

> I began writing the portraits of any one by saying what I knew of that one as I talked and listened that one, and each time that I talked and listened that one I said what I knew they were then.[76]

As Stein begins to reveal, her conceptualization of identity is not based on external, descriptive re-presentation, but rather on something less immediately tangible. In providing her example, Stein returns yet again to another famous name, that of Cezanne, the subject of the same portrait that so vexed Ellery Sedgwick years prior. Cezanne offers an excellent example of Stein's alternative to "knowing" because, she explains, it is impossible to conceive of Cezanne in one viewing. "Slowly," she explains, "through all of this and looking at many many pictures I came to Cezanne and there you were, at least there I was, not all at once but as soon as I got used to it." [77] Stein calls upon the painter, whose post-impressionist work gained attention both for its invocation of subject and also for its abstract, at times primitive rejection of traditional "realist" painterly conventions, as her muse precisely because the subjects of his paintings, she insists, manifest without exact representation:

> The apples looked like apples the chairs looked like chairs and it all had nothing to do with anything because if they did not look like apples or chairs or landscape or people they were apples and chairs and landscape and people. [78]

DeKoven notes that abstract art, particularly impressionism and its later (and more contemporary to Stein) form, cubism, was appealing to Stein for "the way its relatively loose strictures on

meaning, on the range and significance of content, expanded the possibilities of literature for a writer of her radical possibilities." [79] Though DeKoven adds that any assumption of Stein's work is as "cubist" is problematic because, "unlike words, painted shapes are not necessarily signs," Stein likely found kinship in the ability of abstraction to call attention to the artifices of "transparent" realism.[80] At the heart of Stein's experimental writing lies an awareness of what it denies us, a "stimulating, perhaps infuriating sense that these phrases almost make sense, that they hover close to coherence, yet remain insistently, even perversely, above it." [81] Rowe discusses the extent to which the abstract, artificial quality of modernist painting calls attention to the artifice behind the conventions *expected* of the genre (landscape, still-life, etcetera) and that, similarly, Stein's project professed that "linguistic conventions […] become 'visible' only through their deformation or 'estrangement'." [82] In the case of *Three Lives*, this "estrangement" is affected by the incessant repetition of reductive and often pejorative descriptors until the reader has no choice but to acknowledge their contrivance. For her later "portraits," inspired by cubist abstraction, it is the very fact that those Cezannian apples might, almost, but ultimately do *not* look like apples, which forces awareness of the conventions that lead us to first expect that an object be both fully present and transparently represented.

Such is the value of portraits, for Stein. According to Steiner, "the ability of a portrait to 'render its subject present' is, in fact, its most central characteristic" - it ought "render reality," present a doppleganger of its subject. [83] The "portrait," as understood by the public, amounts to a kind of descriptive character sketch, which serves to offer insight into a subject's "true" self by presenting a hungry audience with intimate descriptive details about the subject's life. The goal to re-present an "authentic" subject in the popular consciousness. Stein, too, was interested in

rendering the subject "present," but without the troubling possibility of rescinding control over a subject's image to the viewer, or the audience. Instead, Stein was interested in what she felt Cezanne was able to do in his abstractions: project the "essence" of a subject in a give-and-take between themselves and the audience. [84] In contrast to "knowing," "essence" is inherently paradoxical. It allows the subject to exist in the "continuous presence," its authenticity contingent on an inability to be described or flattened in terms of a transparent (repetitive) account. "Essence" is the opposite of "gossip" inasmuch as it is perpetually unstable. It is dependent upon the instability of language, its refusal to transmit the same meaning in all situations. Stein's own prescription for appreciation of "essence" suggests that it is dependent upon the instability of language, its refusal to transmit the same meaning in all situations, or to all audience members –even to the same audience twice:

> Every time I said what they were I said it so that they were this thing, and each time I said what they were as they were, as I was, naturally more or less but never the same thing each time. [85]

Stein's portraits demonstrate this quirk of "essence" by highlighting the way in which language is non-representative, never accurately describing "the same thing each time." Her "portrait" of Matisse, published in *Portraits and Prayers* and read aloud during her lectures, performs this linguistic instability, offering a stark contrast to the gossipy description of the troubled man put forth in the *Autobiography*:

> MATISSE
>
> One was quite certain that for a long part of his being one being living he had been trying to be certain that he was wrong in doing what he was doing and then when he could not

> come to be certain that he had been wrong in doing what he had been doing, when he had completely convinced himself that he would not come to be certain that he had been wrong in doing what he had been doing he was really certain then that he was a great one and he certainly was a great one.
>
> Some said of him, when anybody believed in him they did not then believe in any other one. Certainly some said this of him.
>
> He certainly very clearly expressed something. Some said that he did not clearly express anything. Some were certain that he expressed something very clearly and some of such of them said that he would have been a greater one if he had not been one so clearly expressing what he was expressing. Some said he was not clearly expressing what he was expressing and some of such of them said that the greatness of struggling which was not clear expression made of him one being a completely great one. [86]

And so on.

Initially, the portrait's "description" of Matisse as "trying to be certain that he was wrong in doing what he was doing" might call to mind the confession found earlier in *the Autobiography*, that Matisse was in Paris because he and his family "had had a hard time" outside of the city. [87] But however tempting, any attempt at "decoding" Stein's portrait must, by necessity, end at this point. In "Matisse" we are confronted with language as not only non-descriptive, but actively resistant to the retention of meaning. It is insistent as an object, calling attention to itself, a far cry from the transparency expected in descriptive, narrative language. The title of the piece, as others have suggested, lends the expectation that Stein's "portrait" will literally re-present Matisse, availing the audience of some kind of ingenuous knowledge about the artist. Instead, however, Stein uses the portrait to emphasize the impracticality of relying on such linguistic descriptions. Matisse might struggle to "be certain" of what he was "doing," but the words are repeated, inverted and insisted upon so many times that their meaning becomes

suspect, any attempt to build a cohesive linear narrative, denied. This is not to say that the piece is incoherent. As Stein noted in her 1946 *Transatlantic Interview*, "there is no such thing as putting [words] together without sense" because, no matter how much effort she put into the process, "any human being putting down words had to make sense out of them." Rather, it is to emphasize that the text might *almost* make sense – but though one might suss out the connections that bind the portrait to narrative sense despite any number of "innumerable efforts" to the contrary, there will always be aspects of the portrait that remain "insistently, even pervasively" above the audience's ability to "know" it.[88]

The nuances of uncertainty in Matisse's "portrait" become even more pronounced when the piece is performed. In a recording made after her lecture tour ended Stein performs the piece in its entirety, providing a sense of inflection and rhythm not present in the written text. [89] Listening to the poet perform her own work, it becomes obvious how important the role of repetition is in these portraits, as a way of both signifying and breaking down meaning within language. In performing her "portrait" of Henri Matisse, Stein emphasizes her use of the word "certainly," in much the way we might imagine "surprise" to be inflected in a similar performance of her portrait of "Cezanne." But key to understanding Stein's portraiture is the emphasis the author places on the *sound* of the text, rather than its content. In listening to the "Matisse" recording it becomes evident quite early on that Stein values the rhythm of the piece over its content, as language becomes a tool in creating an almost lulling, musical repetition rather than a means of communicating information. If there is one thing that *is* clear, both in reading and listening to the "Matisse" portrait, it is the absence of clarity. Despite its name, this is not, nor is it intended to be, a depiction of Henri Matisse.

Stein's "essence" is difficult to conceptualize largely because it is rooted in its inability to be descriptively re-presented. In this way, it makes the most sense when oriented within the context of Stein's fascination with celebrity as a "real" identity offered to the public. Nowhere is this more significant than in Stein's final American lecture, "Poetry and Grammar," where Stein makes a direct link between the descriptive knowledge of mainstream media and the impenetrability of essence, the "thing in itself" that exists outside of what can be compiled through what she calls, quite pointedly, "newspaper narrative." [90] In contrast to "real" identity, "newspaper narrative" only purports to tell us about the inside of a subject. "They tell it to us as nouns," Stein insists, "tell it to us that is they name it, and in naming it, it as a telling of it is no longer anything." [91] Stein's criticism of newspaper culture recalls her earlier indictment of celebrity: specifically, that once the popular market had begun to "know" and disseminate an image of herself, the public takes control of that image. The issue with "newspaper narrative," at least as Stein sees it, lies in its desire to reduce the intricacies of human experience to a story fit for mass consumption: the production of a singular, dominant narrative, created and disseminated to titillate the masses. In the process, however, such simplification creates caricatures. The writing down of identity with a mind to, as Leff describes it, capture the subject as they "really" are, has the paradoxical effect of erasing any chance of such authenticity, stripping a subject of its solvency by attempting to reduce it within the language of public discourse. It is exactly because "newspaper narrative" assumes to capture the reality of a figure that Stein is concerned by it: "I worry about [narrative] a good deal these days," Stein continues in the lecture, "about knowing what it is and how it I and where it is and how it will be what it is." [92] For an author whose literary project is marked by the rupturing of simplified notions of

"knowing," narrative provides a dangerous expectation. It assumes that an individual, an object, an *experience* can be extracted, congealed, and put to paper; it assumes that it can be commodified, packaged for the masses. Within the context of Stein as a figure of some infamy, it assumes that her own identity can be discovered and understood without her consent. It is, of course, an incorrect assumption – but as interest in celebrity and its trappings grew, so too did the urge to buy into this fantasy.

Narrative, in the manner it is used by mainstream media, reduces identity by propounding to, as veteran journalist W.G. Bleyer advised in 1919, capture public figures "as they really are." [93] But such dramatic assumptions bring with them the danger of believing a person can be completely captured in a single set of loose descriptors – and, by extension, that there is only one image of a person, a single narrative to capture. "Newspaper narrative," in this way, reduces individuals to objects, to "nouns," their meaning derived wholly from whoever is wielding the pen. As Stein concludes, in "Poetry and Grammar,"

> There could no longer be form to decide anything, narrative that is not newspaper narrative but real narrative must of necessity be told by any one having come to the realization that the noun must be replaced not by inner balance but by the thing in itself and that will eventually lead to everything.[94]

Stein's concern with "newspaper narrative" reflects a larger struggle against the notion of the single, master narrative of artistry and literary "genius" that was at the center of both *The Autobiography's* success, and her own fraught relationship with fame. As her own tour demonstrated, the belief that one can "know" a person through description alone is dangerously reductive. The biographical facts and "gossip" that make up middle-brow fame create not an

accurate representation of a subject but a totem, a noun, a word as emptied of meaning as the names Stein uses in her own portraiture. Thus, Stein's lecture series, hinging as it does on her distinctly *non*-descriptive literary portraits, explicitly rebuke this dependency on narrative-as-fact by undermining the assumptions upon which it operates: that language is transparent, that the re-inscription of a subject is not artificial, and, above all, that identity can be transposed through descriptive knowledge of an individual. It is unsurprising that such a project was met with confusion, as in revealing the artifice of this form of identity construction she also reveals the inauthenticity of celebrity as it is celebrated by Anglo-American culture. To really "tell" about a subject, she concludes in "Poetry and Grammar," one must reject entirely the expectation that a subject can be "known" at all. "[T]he noun must be replaced not by inner balance," Stein explains, rejecting outright the notion that any amount of descriptive knowledge can stand in for true identity, "but by the thing in itself." It is this, and only this, that is truly authentic. Not by words, tradition, nor history, will identity, personality or genius be inscribed. Only the subject themselves, a constantly shifting target, can accurately produce their own conception of "knowing."

Though Stein never again reached the level of financial success achieved by the *Autobiography*, she considered her lecture tour to have been a success. In a brief interview with *The New York Times* given before returning to France, Stein suggested that while the older generation "have to struggle against too many preconceived ideas" to understand her work, "the whole younger crowd understand it." [95] This may have been an optimistic reading of U.S. culture, but Stein's statements were not without merit. While Stein's lectures did not bring down the Hollywood industry, the tour itself offered her a chance to develop a theory of identity and

"knowing" that resisted the dominant cultural expectation of narrative as producing a single, wholly-transparent "truth" – a notion in line with the rejection of an unquestioned canon that we see in Jenkins' notions of poaching. In this sense, perhaps Stein was correct in looking forward to future generations when considering the value of her critiques. The present-day fan practice of critical reading is, after all, dependent on awareness that no one narrative is fully transparent.

Notes

[1] Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 42.

[2] Mulvey, 835; Brown, 100

[3] Dyer, 13.

[4] Anthony Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine: A History of Star Makers, Fabricators and Gossip Mongers,* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Missisippi, 2010), 6.

[5] Slide, 6.

[6] Wendi L Gardner & Megan L. Knowles, "Love Makes You Real: Favorite Television Characters Are Perceived as 'Real' In A Social Facilitation Paradigm," *Social Cognition* 26.2 (2008), 156.

[7] Dyer., 61.

[8] Ibid., 61.

[9] Ibid., 47.

[10] Ibid., 47.

[11] Alyson Tischler. "A Rose is a Pose: Steinian Modernism and Mass Culture." *Journal of Modern Literature* 26.3/4 (Spring 2003), 12.

[12] Donald Gallup, "Gertrude Stein and the Atlantic." *The Yale University Library Gazette* 28 (1954), 126.

[13] Barbara Will, *Gertrude Stein: Modernism, Celebrity and the Problem of "Genius"*. (Edinburgh, England: Edinburgh UP Ltd., 2000), 137.

[14] Leonard J. Leff. *Hemingway And His Conspirators.* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), xvii

[15] Nancy Bentley, *Frantic Panoramas: American Literature and Mass Culture, 1870-1920*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania UP, 2009), 130.

[16] Chad Bennett, "'Ladies Voices Give Pleasure:' Gossip, Drama, and Gertrude Stein," *Modern Drama* 53.3, (Fall 2010), 314.

[17] Loren Glass. *Authors, Inc: Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States 1880-1980*. (New York: New York UP, 2004), 115.

[18] Marianne DeKoven.. "Gertrude Stein and Modern Painting: Beyond Literary Cubism." *Contemporary Literature* 22 (Winter 1981), 83.

[19] Ibid., 83; Rowe, John Carlos. "Naming What Is Inside: Gertrude Stein's Use of Names in "Three Lives"." *Novel* (Spring 2003), 220.

[20] Gallup, 124.

[21] Ibid., 124.

[22] Ibid., 124.

[23] Ibid., 124.

[24] Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America* (New York: Random House, 1935), 77.

[25] Gertrude Stein, *Portraits and Prayers,* (New York: random House, 1935), 11.

[26] Johnathan Goldman, *Modernism is the Literature of Celebrity,* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 92.

[27] Gallup, 124.

[28] Will, 137.

[29] Wills, 133.

[30] Qtd. in Wills, 133.

[31] Karen Leick, *Gertrude Stein and the Making of an American Celebrity,* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1.

[32] Ibid., 25.

[33] "Gertrude Stein Arrives and Baffles Reporters by Making Herself Clear," *New York Times,* (25 October 1934), 25.

[34] Ibid., 25.

[35] Gallup, 112; Wills, 135

[36] Tischler, 14.

[37] *The New York Times*, (Jan 20, 1935), 9.

[38] Robert Herring. "Publicity." *Close Up* 2.6 (June 1928). 44.

[39] H.D., "Cinema and the Classics I: Beauty." *Close Up* 1.1(July 1927), 26.

[40] Leff, xvii

[41] Boyle, 373.

[42] Certainly, there are many conventions of autobiography that problematize this idea that the genre is synonymous with personal confession. Nonetheless, the popular conception of the "autobiography" (and the one Stein's audiences would have been familiar with) subscribes to Philip Lejeune's definition of the genre as "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality." In *Autobiography* by Linda R. Anderson, she goes on to note that while Lejeune allows a "certain 'latitude' in classifying particular cases [..] there must be 'identity between the *author*, the *narrator*, and the *protagonist*' (2).

[43] Goldman, 93; Will, 139-140

[44] Stein, *Autobiography*, 14.

[45] Will, 143

[46] Ibid, 143

[47] Bennett, 319

[48] Writing to Stein in 1919, Sedgwick initially dismissed much of Stein's work due to its liminal position amid the writing of "literati" – too obscure, he explained, for the average reader. Taking this as a comment on the validity of her work, Stein argued that her writing was in fact "legitimate literature:" "entirely in the spirit of all that is first class in American letters whether it's newspapers, Walt Whitman or Henry James, or Poe" (112). In the process, she makes an early attempt to do, via letters, what the *Autobiography* seeks to accomplish in its narrative: to both firmly ensconce her writing amid that of other, canonized 'geniuses,' and to make clear that said "genius" is not an unmarketable commodity. Will argues similarly of this moment, noting that here, as was the case throughout her literary career, Stein seeks to bridge her own "great divide" between modernism and mass culture "by affiliating herself with both sides: her work is on a par with that of the canonical writers, but as readable as newspapers: no special interpretive tools required" (135).

[49] Atlantic, 127

[50] Gertrude Stein. *Everybody's Autobiography.* (New York: Random House, 1937), 459-60.

[51] Ibid., 459.

[52] Ibid., 460.

[53] Jacques Lacan. "The Mirror State as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Literary Theory: An Anthology.* eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 442.

[54] Gertrude Stein. "And Now." *Vanity Fair: A Cavalcade of the 1920s and 1930s*. Eds. Cleveland Amory and Frederic Bradlee. (New York: Viking, 1960), 280.

[55] Gertrude Stein. *Portraits and Prayers*. (New York: Random House, 1934).

[56] Stein, *Lectures,* 181.

[57] Cleveland Armory and Frederic Bradlee, eds. *Vanity Fair: A Cavalcade of the 1920s and 1930s*. (New York: Viking, 1960), 20-21.

[58] Faye Hammill. *Women, Celebrity and Literary Culture Between The Wars*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 12.

[59] Gertrude Stein. "Have They Attacked Mary. He Giggled." *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*. ed. Carl Van Vechten (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 533.

[60] Ibid., 533.

[61] Ibid., 538.

[62] Armory and Bradlee, 21.

[63] Wendy Steiner. *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein*. (New Haven CT: Yale UP, 1979), 6.

[64] Gallup, 124.

[65] Steiner, 111.

[66] Ibid., 113.

[67] Qtd. In Glass, 116.

[68] George Braque, Eugene Jolas, et. al, "Testimony Against Gertrude Stein," Servire Press (February 1935).

[69] Will, 139.

[70] Ibid., 143.

[71] Stein, *Lectures*, 182-83.

[72] Ibid., 182.

[73] Ibid., 181.

[74] Ibid., 181.

[75] Ibid., 181.

[76] Ibid., 185.

[77] Ibid., 76.

[78] Ibid., 77. See figure 4-3 for an example of the Cezanne still-lifes to which Stein attributes her inspiration.

[79] DeKoven, 82.

[80] Ibid., 85.

[81] Ibid., 86.

[82] Rowe, 226.

[83] Steiner, 5.

[84] Stein, *Lectures*, 77.

[85] Ibid., 185.

[86] Stein, *Lectures,* 12-13.

[87] Stein, *Autobiography,* 37.

[88] Qtd. In Steven Meyer "Writing Psychology Over: Gertrude Stein and William James." *Yale Journal of Criticism* 8 (Spring 1995), 144.

[89] Gertrude Stein, "Matisse," Penn Sound, Ed. Ulla Dydo. Recording.

[90] Stein, *Lectures,* 245.

[91] Ibid., 243.

[92] Stein, *Lectures,* 232.

[93] Qtd. In Charles L. Ponce de Leon. *Self-Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940*. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2001), 57.

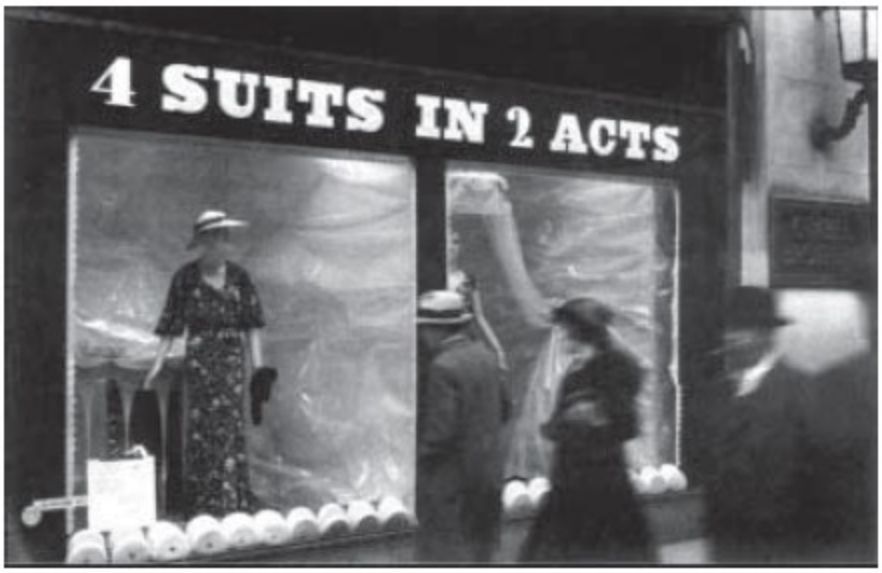
[94] Stein, *Lectures,* 245-46.

[95] "Youth Understands, Says Gertrude Stein," *New York Times*, (5 May 1935), Web.

Figure 4.1

Advertisement for Bergdorf Goodman
c. 1934

Figure 4.2



Window display for Bergdorf Goodman
c. 1934

Conclusion

In 1937, having returned home to Paris following her lecture tour and subsequent taste of American celebrity culture, Gertrude Stein published what became more or less a follow-up to her bestselling *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas (ABT).* Written in the first person, *Everybody's Autobiography (EA)* serves as a debriefing of sorts. In it, Stein offers a retrospective on genius, authorship and fame that seems initially to speak to a newfound cynicism towards the very notoriety she had previously courted. "There is no doubt about it," she surmises of her career:

> in the twentieth century if you are to come to be writing really writing you cannot make a living at it no not by writing. It was done in the nineteenth century but not in the eighteenth or in the twentieth no not possibly. And that is very curious, not so curious really but still very curious.[1]

There is no doubt some honesty guiding Stein's frustration. Though she would go on to see more of her work gain attention in the states (including her opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, written with Virgil Thomson), Stein would never again achieve the mainstream success of the *Autobiography*, despite her own continued belief in the marketability of her work. But as one might guess from a novel that offers Stein's thoughts on identity and fame in the guise of "everybody's" autobiography, *EA* marks a more complicated relationship with both language and reading practices. Much like Stein's portraiture, *EA* offers its reader a troubled, slipping subject. As Barbara Wills points out, "the text parodies and reverses its own hierarchal strategies, foregrounding the radical inessentialism of the authority embedded in the 'I.'" [2] In contrast to *ABT* which equated "genius" with something so rarified that the fictionalized Alice had only met three people who truly deserved the title in the whole of her life, *EA* seems to suggest the

opposite in its persistent confusion of subject ("You that is I well now anyone" [3]). Perhaps more telling still is what Wills considers the "universality" of the novel, created "not so much through the claim that Gertrude Stein is a 'genius' but through the claim that 'everybody' is one as well: the 'I' as well as the 'you.'" Having experienced a taste of literary celebrity and witnessed first-hand the public's fascination with "genius" as a curiosity, Stein's conception of the term appears to have changed significantly since writing *ABT*. "What is a genius," she wonders in *EA*, before answering her own question in true Steinian fashion. "Really inside you if you are a genius there is nothing inside you that makes you really different to yourself inside you than those are to themselves inside them who are not a genius. That is so." [4] What's interesting here, in addition to the slippery subject that Wills notes, is the way in which Stein's use of this kind of subversion stands in direct contrast to high modernism's classism. Be it the artist of Eliot's "tradition" or the "learned man" that Pound conceives of as his ideal reader, the genius stands as a key figure in modernism's literary hierarchy. His superior intellect is justification for fear of the encroaching masses; his work generates the Anglo-American canon. Indeed, the idea that "you" – that "everybody" (and thus, no one, and "nothing") – can be a genius is "in a sense 'post-modern' in that it registers a new kind of serialization of persons, a new reproducibility in the category of 'everybody' that effectively levels distinctions and differences, including those upon which the very notion of genius is founded." [5]

Having witnessed first-hand the American obsession with "genius" for its own sake, Stein returns to the (supposed) autobiographical genre with a newfound sense of cynicism regarding both the notion of "genius" and the hierarchy that creates it. Indeed, in one of the few

moments of *Everybody's Autobiography* to offer clear recollection, Stein relates a conversation with Dashiell Hammett about the apparent narcissism of twentieth century literature in which she suggests that:

> The men all write about themselves, they are always themselves as strong or weak or mysterious or passionate or drunk or controlled but always themselves as the woman used to do in the nineteenth century. Now you yourself always do it now why is it. He said it's simple. In the nineteenth century men were confident, the women were not but in the twentieth century the men have no confidence and so they have to make themselves as you say more beautiful more intriguing more everything and they cannot make any other man because they have to hold on to themselves not having any confidence.[6]

As we have seen before, "genius," for many of the male high modernists, came to mean the ability to step outside of oneself. The poetic mind is a "shred of platinum," to quote Eliot. It may be cognizant of its own experience, but to create great art it must function as a catalyst, leaving behind no trace of itself in the work it produces.[7] Of course, as we have also seen, such a goal is not only impossible but based on the assumption of masculinity as transparent. It is easy enough to imagine that a work is "universal," after all, when one assumes it functions within a canon where the only readers it need speak to share the same identity, social standing and ideology as its author. What Stein demonstrates, then, is a clear awareness of the reality behind the lofty ideals of masculine modernism. In relating this story, authentic or fictional, Stein effectively "reads" and critiques the dominant narrative of modernism itself – that of the genius as a conduit of sorts, a figure who reflects universal experience. Instead, she recognizes high modernism – "20th century" literature, as she calls it – to be a work of anxiety, men who "all

write about themselves." In doing so, she demystifies the institutionalized literary canon. No longer a rarified lineage of great, old men, the works of "geniuses" become "nothing," as she puts it. This isn't to say the individual texts are worthless, certainly. Rather, by acknowledging that twentieth century literature by men holds within it no real difference from nineteenth century women's novels, Stein equates two different "canons," regardless of gender or lofty intellectual claims.

Of course, acknowledgement is not the same as disassembly. The question of canon and authorial control remains at the core of contemporary reading and fan practice, not just in literary and visual texts but in society as well. My dissertation has focused on finding a space of one's own within these narratives, on the impulse to fragment and rupture in ways that challenge the very definition of canonicity. Using the framework of contemporary fan practice, I have made a case for understanding "canon" in the fannish sense: as something that may be given (and institutionally policed and enforced), but also as a compilation of ideas, narratives, norms and behaviors that can be elaborated upon, selectively poached from, re-read, and retaken. I have argued for canon as participatory, as a notion perpetually under contestation. By re-evaluating the concept of canon using these conditions, we may begin to imagine the context in which the women of modernism labored within a heavily masculine modernist hierarchy. For poets like Moore and H.D., the modernist canon offered a point of rupture, from which notions of style and classical antiquity could be poached and re-evaluated from a feminist perspective. Similarly, Loy's re-animated girl-machine redefines both avant-garde constructions of idealized femininity, and responds to the Western "modern woman" in a way that reveals the grotesque reality behind the plasticine beauty of the Hollywood star. Gertrude Stein, of course, takes this further still.

Having recognized the narrative surrounding her own celebrity, Stein implores her own audiences to become readers, using her work to draw attention to the artifice that lies at the core of America's star system. Such acts are not destructive but defiant, giving voice to readers otherwise silenced by the assertion of a definitive literary and cultural canon. Be it the "new woman" of modernism or the fan fiction of contemporary media, the appropriation of canonicity as relative to its readership has become valuable, if not necessary, to women writers who operate within a cultural and societal hierarchy that devalues their work as secondary to their masculine counterparts.

*

Last year, the television series *Supernatural* marked its 200th show with an episode entitled "Fan Fiction." Not for the first time, the episode hinged on the meta-textual conceit that the Winchester brothers, having had a series of pulp novels written about their lives by a prophet, have developed an in-series fan base. Unlike previous episodes of this nature, however, "Fan Fiction" was unique in that the fans depicted were a group of young women, producing a school play based off of the *Supernatural* novels. In this version of the story, however (and in a clear attempt to smooth over the show's previous troubles with its fan base), the characters of Dean and Castiel – portrayed by two of the in-show fans – were written into the "fictional" play as having a relationship explicitly romantic in nature, a transformation from the show's canon that was clearly jarring to the "real" Dean Winchester. Upon being faced with a supernatural entity bent on ending the performance, however, Dean becomes protective of the girls putting on the show, finally giving them his (and presumably, the writers') blessing by telling them, "I have my version, and you have yours. And that's okay." [8]

As social media continues to grant fans greater access to the writers and producers who create the texts they consume, such statements are becoming more common. But while *Supernatural*'s assertion – that the fans and the showrunners will maintain two different readings of the text, and "that's okay" – may be well-meaning, it nonetheless demonstrates the extent to which fan practice is still misunderstood. In writing and producing "Fan Fiction," *Supernatural* supposes itself to be granting fans access to the show's canon. By comparing fan readings to the show's own canon ("I have my version, and you have yours") the text assumes that what fans crave is legitimacy, an affirmation from the creators of a text that their own interpretations are valid. But this attempt to exert authorial control, even by supposedly relinquishing it, falls short because fan readers *do not require* the "legitimacy" of canon. Quite the opposite. Canon, in the institutional sense, is by its very nature a homogenizing force. Reading within its confines means conforming to the often-patriarchal standards it sets, including understanding "prescribed genres in certain ways and gaining pleasure from them" as they are. [9] And for fans of *Supernatural*, such compliance has long-since ended. Indeed, since Chad Kennedy's disavowal of Destiel, the show has seen a ratings steadily decreasing, as fans reject the show's "version" of canon in favor of fan communities and their own revisionist imaginings.[10] Rejected from the show, expected to enjoy it for its (hypermasculine, compulsively heterosexual) canon, *Supernatural*'s fans have simply written, and in the process read, around the text. In some ways, one can't help but think of Virginia Woolf removed from the library, offered the chance to return "if accompanied by a Fellow" and choosing instead to leave entirely. This is the value of fan practices; this is the importance of reading. Be it *Supernatural* fans spread across Tumblr, or the "modern woman" barred from Trinity at the turn of the twentieth century, the ability to talk back

to – or reject – canon is a powerful tool against a culture that has effectively canonized (so to speak) feminine inferiority. It is the ability to reject authorial control without giving up access to the whole of a text. It is the ability to face institutionalized hierarchies of masculine tradition and turn away, condemning them, as Woolf does, to "sleep forever."[11]

Notes

[1] Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography,* (New York: Cambridge, 1993), 102.

[2] Wills, 151.

[3] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 12.

[4] Ibid., 86.

[5] Wills, 151.

[6] Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 3-4.

[7] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 39-40.

[8] *Supernatural.* "Fan Fiction." S10E05. Directed by Phil Sgriccia, Written by Robbie Thompson. CW. November 11 2014.

[9] Bury, 42.

[10] "Supernatural: Season 10 Ratings." *TV Series Finale [Dot] Com.* 22 May 2015. Web.

[11] Woolf, 32.