

Modernism and the Queer

Djuna Barnes Gertrude Stein

Ery Shin

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Michaelmas 2013

Faculty of English
Brasenose College, University of Oxford

For Injoo Hwang, Yong-Do Shin, Young-Kwon Shin, and Dax Steins

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my supervisor, Jeri Johnson, for so patiently and thoroughly reading this thesis through all its different drafts. I could not have arrived here without her support. Other readers who have kindly advised me on portions of this work likewise hold my gratitude: Sos Eltis, Rubén Gallo, Jean Mills, David Palumbo-Liu, and Marjorie Perloff. I thank Indiana University Press, thirdly, for granting me permission to adapt the article "Djuna Barnes, History's Elsewhere, and the Transgender" (© Indiana University Press, 2014) into my first chapter; the article was originally featured in the *Journal of Modern Literature's* Winter 2014 issue, and now finds second life in this dissertation. My last acknowledgment goes to the Authors League Fund and St. Bride's Church (joint literary executors of Barnes' Estate) as well as the University of Maryland's Special Collections Library staff for permitting me to include select Barnes illustrations in this project.

Abstract

Djuna Barnes and Gertrude Stein may appear unrelated to one another at first glance. We have an impoverished upstate New Yorker versus relatively comfortable Californian, bisexual romantic nomad versus lesbian monogamist, nihilist versus life-affirming enthusiast, and agnostic-atheist versus secular Jew. When they are referenced together (which happens rarely), it is usually in the context of their Parisian exploits. But a closer look reveals more vital affinities. Both writers remain problematically situated in the modernist canon. Both were inspired by visual art. Both struggled to get published during their lifetimes. Both disassociated themselves from mainstream feminist movements, preferring subtler, more idiosyncratic ways of questioning the status quo. Both held a sustained interest in the queer and, as this dissertation seeks to demonstrate, imagined that theme in original ways—Barnes, through loss; Stein, through phenomenology.

Writing out of the spirit of Christian martyrdom, Barnes revels in queer suffering and its transfiguring potential: queers extravagantly lose (themselves), fail, and suffer, yet such ordeals aren't without value. The first half of my dissertation, thus, appraises Barnes' "queer negativity" in general before pondering how its masochistic energies push against those authorities that would negate the queer. Chapter One analyzes Barnes' mythical-seeming transgendered figures who encounter profound failure, despite the imaginative freedom emanating from their ahistorical surroundings. Barnes' sense of queer failure intensifies in Chapter Two, where same-sex desire invokes the abject by symbolically collapsing psychic boundaries between lovers and refusing reproductive futurity. Both chapters contextualize the moral inversion that becomes the focus of Chapter Three: how

does such nihilism tragically ennoble the queer and endow it with insurgent impulses? Without taking a self-consciously queer activist stance, Barnes draws on what Gilles Deleuze would later enunciate as an inverted affect regime: the power of punishment to enforce repressive sexual regulations through pain and hence to bridle perversion becomes inverted when punishment opens the portal to pleasure, when pleasure relocates to sites of perversion.

If Barnes writes as a romantic martyr, Stein looks at the queer through a phenomenologist's eyes. The reciprocity between social conditioning and consciousness, in particular, remains an urgent concern throughout her career. To be "queer," one often breaks away from a lifetime of habituated orientations toward sex and gender. But queerness cannot wholly bracket the norms that have been left behind. It exists in relation to what it queers. Foregrounding this discussion, Chapter Four examines how Stein's modernism, phenomenology, and queer criticism intersect. Chapter Five investigates how "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," "Many Many Women," and *The Making of Americans* reorient us from the "straight" and narrow. Yet this reorientation remains partial. Not all heteronormative biases can be shed, as is evident in *The Making of Americans*' classist undertones running through its "singular" queer vision. The sixth chapter further tests the limits of reorientation as such. *Ida's* Ida desperately wants to live a queer life, but discovers that she cannot if she approaches queerness as a radically separatist ideal. A solipsistic universe where she can entirely withdraw from society through sleep, silence, or soliloquy remains a fantasy. Ida's internal conflict, in turn, mirrors Stein's struggle to enact aesthetic modes that prove just as impossible to practice, being devoted to eliminating memory, emotions, personal identity, and social awareness.

Table of Contents

Illustrations	1
Abbreviations	2
Preface	3
PART ONE: THE FALL	
1 History's Elsewhere and the Transgender	20
2 The Apocalypse	52
3 Suffering in <i>Nightwood</i>	80
PART TWO: QUEER PHENOMENA	
4 Stein and Phenomenology	111
5 Reorientation	158
6 <i>Ida's</i> Interworld	191
Afterword	226
Bibliography	232

ILLUSTRATIONS

Djuna Barnes, <i>Sophia and the Chamber Pot</i>	26
Djuna Barnes, <i>Non E Vero—1850</i> (“ <i>Who was the Girl</i> ”)	27
Djuna Barnes, <i>The Beast</i>	30
Vittore Carpaccio, <i>Two Venetian Ladies</i>	50

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABT</i>	<i>The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas</i>
<i>A&B</i>	<i>Alphabets and Birthdays</i>
<i>BTV</i>	<i>Bee Time Vine and Other Pieces [1913-1927]</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Collected Poems</i>
<i>CS</i>	<i>Collected Stories</i>
<i>G&P</i>	<i>Geography and Plays</i>
<i>GHA</i>	<i>The Geographical History of America</i>
<i>HWW</i>	<i>How Writing is Written</i>
<i>I</i>	<i>"I could never be lonely without a husband": Interviews by Djuna Barnes</i>
<i>L</i>	<i>Look at Me Now and Here I Am: Writings and Lectures, 1909-45</i>
<i>LA</i>	<i>Lectures in America</i>
<i>LO&P</i>	<i>Last Operas and Plays</i>
<i>LS&W</i>	<i>The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder</i>
<i>MPGS</i>	<i>Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein with Two Shorter Stories</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>
<i>QED</i>	<i>Fernhurst, Q. E. D., and Other Early Writings</i>
<i>RAB</i>	<i>Reflection on the Atomic Bomb</i>
<i>RS</i>	<i>At the Roots of the Stars</i>
<i>YGS</i>	<i>The Yale Gertrude Stein</i>

Preface

Djuna Barnes and Gertrude Stein may appear unrelated to one another at first glance. We have an impoverished upstate New Yorker versus relatively comfortable Californian, bisexual romantic nomad versus lesbian monogamist, nihilist versus life-affirming enthusiast, and agnostic-atheist versus secular Jew. When they are referenced together (which happens rarely), it is usually in the context of their Parisian exploits. Both were American-expatriate queer modernists living in Paris at overlapping times: Stein, from 1903 till her death in 1946; Barnes, throughout the 1920s. Both knew a number of the same literary figures and related “personalities” of their day, including Carl Van Vechten, Marcel Duchamp, Natalie Barney, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Janet Flanner, and Charles Henri Ford. Both were aware of each other’s presence. For Stein, Barnes was a passing visitor at Rue de Fleurus, memorable only for her connections with James Joyce, Mina Loy, and Ford. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and Toklas’ actual memoir, *What is Remembered*, each mention Barnes once in the blandest of terms (*ABT* 200; Toklas 141). Not unaware of Stein’s patronizing disinterest, Barnes resentfully recounted to James Scott decades later, “D’you know what she said of me? Said I had beautiful legs! Now, what does that have to do with anything? She said I had beautiful legs! [...] I couldn’t *stand* her” (qtd. in Herring, *Djuna* 175; Wetzsteon 441).

But a closer look reveals more vital affinities. Both writers remain problematically situated in the modernist canon, acknowledged in niche circles but rarely incorporated into university core curricula. (Barnes remains overshadowed by her mentors, Joyce and Eliot, while Stein, by her peers and pupils, most notably Pablo Picasso and Ernest Hemingway.) Both were inspired by visual art, Barnes having attended the Pratt Institute for half a year,

Stein being a long-term patron of Paris-based artists. Both struggled to get published during their lifetimes, despite having amassed substantial creative material. Both disassociated themselves from mainstream feminist movements, preferring subtler, more idiosyncratic ways of questioning the status quo. Both held a sustained interest in the queer and, as this dissertation seeks to demonstrate, imagined that theme in original ways—Barnes, through loss; Stein, through phenomenology. Barnes' and Stein's queer impulses appear everywhere in their oeuvres, but not in ways we would expect and *not* to make overt cases against homophobia. The pair's resistance to queer identification and polemic, however, doesn't prevent queer readings of their work, "queerness," as Heather K. Love points out, "being bound up with powerful misidentifications, ambivalence, and the refusal of community" (25).¹ Literature can harbor a subtly polemical edge, even if its authors fail to engage deliberately with polemic.

Writing in the context of a *fin de siècle* discourse of degeneration, decadence, Freudianism, and even Christian martyrdom, Barnes revels in queer suffering: queers extravagantly lose (themselves), fail, and suffer, yet such ordeals, to a certain extent, transfigure them. The first half of my dissertation, thus, appraises Barnes' queer negativity in general before pondering how its masochistic energies push against those authorities that would negate the queer. Chapter One analyzes Barnes' mythical-seeming transgendered figures who encounter profound failure, despite the imaginative freedom emanating from their ahistorical surroundings. Barnes' sense of queer failure intensifies in Chapter Two, where same-sex desire invokes the abject by symbolically collapsing psychic boundaries between lovers and refusing reproductive futurity. Both chapters contextualize the moral inversion that becomes the focus of Chapter Three: how does such nihilism tragically ennoble the queer and endow it with insurgent impulses? Without

¹ Love refers to Willa Cather's uneasy relation with her own lesbianism here, yet her observation holds no less true for Barnes and Stein, authors grounded in the same contradictions.

taking a self-consciously queer activist stance, Barnes draws on what Gilles Deleuze would later enunciate as an inverted affect regime: the power of punishment to enforce repressive sexual regulations through pain and hence to bridle perversion becomes inverted when punishment opens the portal to pleasure, when pleasure relocates to sites of perversion. That I explore the meaning of queer loss in a women's modernist context places this inquiry within the realm of negative affect studies. More specifically, the third chapter falls at the intersection between psychic damage, queer politics, and decadence. It builds upon the works of critics such as Kenneth Burke, Victoria L. Smith, Martina Stange, Carolyn Allen, Elizabeth Pochoda, Teresa de Lauretis, and Dianne Chisholm by extending their insights in a new direction, that of Barnes' masochism and its allegorical terms.

If Barnes writes as a romantic martyr, Stein looks at the queer through a phenomenologist's eyes. Influenced by the visual-filmic vocabularies informing cubism, futurism, dadaism, and surrealism; William James' psycholinguistics; and George Santayana's doctrine of essences, Stein is less interested in tragedy than immediate perceptual experience. The reciprocity between social conditioning and consciousness, in particular, remains an urgent concern throughout her career. "It takes time to make queer people" (*Making Americans* 21), Stein once declared, and texts such as "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene," "Many Many Women," *The Making of Americans*, and *Ida* interrogate this formative process. To be "queer," one often breaks away from a lifetime of habituated orientations toward sex and gender. But queerness cannot wholly evade the norms that have been left behind. It exists in relation to what it queers. Foregrounding this discussion, Chapter Four examines how Stein's modernism, phenomenology, and queer criticism intersect. As Carole Bourne-Taylor and Ariane Mildenberg argue in their introduction to *Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond*, modernism and phenomenology grew out of the same historical anxieties underlying the early-twentieth century and share fundamental

concerns that render them incisive heuristic methods for one another. Both movements are difficult to define, reformulate the workings of consciousness, and seek to overcome misguided assumptions behind nineteenth-century objectivism, such as rigid subject-object distinctions, empirical infallibility, and impartial narration. While a modernist reading of phenomenology or a phenomenological reading of modernism easily follows, this study stays within the latter, tracing how Steinian consciousness shapes, and is shaped by, our cultural horizon.

Chapter Five investigates how “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” “Many Many Women,” and *The Making of Americans* reorient us from the “straight” and narrow. Yet this reorientation remains partial. Not all heteronormative biases can be shed, as is evident in *The Making of Americans*’ classist undertones running through its “singular” queer vision. (A narrative persona’s preconceptions do not lessen the novel’s aesthetic value, needless to say, but are interesting within the context of phenomenological reductions—ideological reflexes that cannot be reduced, despite the phenomenologist’s well-meaning attempts.) The sixth and final chapter further tests the limits of reorientation as such. *Ida*’s Ida desperately wants to live a queer life, but discovers that she cannot if she approaches queerness as a radically separatist ideal. A solipsistic universe where she can entirely withdraw from society through sleep, silence, or soliloquy remains a fantasy. *Ida*’s internal conflict, in turn, mirrors Stein’s struggle to enact aesthetic modes that prove just as impossible to practice, being devoted to eliminating memory, emotions, personal identity, and social awareness.

DIFFICULT SAINTS

Djuna Barnes is not an easy figure for most Gay Pride proponents to rally around. Her writing is generally saturated by an aesthetics of melancholy and despair, more jubilant texts such as *Ladies Almanack* notwithstanding. Issues rooted in homophobia, racism, as well as misogyny find no resolution. Hank O’Neal’s informal memoir of Barnes, for instance, frequently testifies to Barnes’ contentious personality.² Barnes calls “Djuna Books,” a local bookshop named in her honor, “a terrible little lesbian bookshop” (19). Derogatory references to “pansies” and “buggers” appear everywhere. A distaste for lesbians, categorical lesbianism, “mushy” female fans, and women in general culminates in numerous insults.³ Responses to *Nightwood* especially aroused ambivalence in Barnes, according to O’Neal: “It was acceptable for the strong literary qualities of the book to influence someone, but it was another matter if the book gave meaning or solace to young women, unknown to her, who were casting about in search of justification for their sexuality” (172). To the outward eye, Barnes’ “queer negativity” puts her at odds with Gay Pride’s affirmative political agenda,⁴ offering readers neither redemption nor a way out of impossible love. But when was literature ever obliged to accommodate such ideological impulses? What Barnes’ pessimism might reveal if it were taken at face-value (and its intransigence demands we do so) is that queer modernism need not be a redemptive exercise in contesting patriarchal conceptions of history and social power. The hagiographic elevation of past authors is no longer a sufficient mode for literary theory.

In mainstream lesbian-feminist criticism, the tendency to gloss over Barnes’ morbidity and to draw out idealistic elements—the mere presence of sexual deviance,

² O’Neal was Barnes’ one-time literary executor during her last years.

³ See O’Neal 25, 27-28, 30, 32, 35, 62, 64, 105, 111, 117, 120, 137, 150, and 169-72.

⁴ For samples of lesbian and gay studies heavily informed by Gay Pride’s spirit, see Altman, *Homosexual Oppression*; Duberman, Vicinus, and Chauncey, Jr.; Harris, “More Profound Nationality”; McNaron; Faderman; Cook; Martin and Lyon; and Doan and Prosser.

overtly (and fleetingly) anti-patriarchal points—gets in the way of reading Barnes’ oeuvre holistically. Writing in 2013, Mary I. Unger extravagantly claims that Barnes’ early chapbook, *The Book of Repulsive Women*, “celebrates” in its “disabled” bodies as emblems of a spiritually freer, more egalitarian America. Beyond an implicit critique against societal norms that value women according to their beauty, age, and class (the critical consensus regarding the text’s themes), *Repulsive Women*, in Unger’s eyes, exerts a self-conscious effort to “defy national and local campaigns to exterminate ugliness, disability, and other forms of non-normativity from public space” (135) by virtue of its women being, unsurprisingly, “repulsive.” The circularity characterizing this appeal combined with its broadness (virtually all grotesque literary images located in American cities at this time would suffice) and unfounded assumptions leave me unconvinced, though. By assumptions, I mean Unger’s conceiving Barnes’ characters as somehow choosing their wretchedness to make a political statement against “the American System.” To say that these women “embrace human difference within the American System rather than conform to the standardizing practices of modern art and culture” (Unger 145) is akin to positing that the average mendicant lives to be an anti-capitalist visionary. We can’t go this far with Barnes, and my essay begins at this impasse. Barnes’ writing is too doggedly grim to support such unequivocally redemptive exegeses. “Not until the 1920s and 1930s would [Barnes] begin to imagine and narrate the futurity of such extraordinary bodies” (127), Unger says, but Barnes, as this thesis argues, actually negates their futures and imaginative faculties. For extraordinary bodies, particularly queer ones, fall outside ordinary reproductive narratives and, in a more abstract sense, psychic exchanges.

Interpretations that overstate Barnes’ celebratory gestures subsequently turn Barnes into too much of a homo-affirming role-model to do justice to her anti-social outlook. Or worse, interpretations that take Barnes to task for not doing enough for the lesbian-feminist

cause miss the point of what art is. Like the Woolf critic Toni A. H. McNaron who expresses “regret” at her author’s unappealing lesbian portraits (13-14), Joan Joffe Hall, in a 1972 review of *Ladies Almanack*, attacks the *roman à clef* for its “playfulness” that she considers “irresponsible” toward the gay rights movement (qtd. in Lanser 164). In a similar vein, Karla Jay accuses Barnes of “present[ing] a reductionist vision” (191) of the pseudo-almanac’s real-life models, simply for portraying them in a less-than-flattering light. She notes at one point, “Had Barnes been willing or able to accept her lesbianism, the *Almanack* might not have existed or might have been different. The same could probably be said for *Nightwood* and some of her other works” (193). Some of Barnes’ texts, in short, are “problematic” because not unambiguously “prolesbian” (Jay 193). Aside from misjudging the book’s purpose and tone (*Ladies Almanack* is far from a documentary homage to Natalie Barney’s salon), Jay and like-minded academics prompt us to interject: why must queer writers invent only winning queer characters and adopt only socially conscientious attitudes toward the queer? We hardly expect straight writers to create only well-adjusted straight men and women.

Such questions seek to counter the vacuity of certain recuperative reading practices in queer studies. If literary criticism becomes nothing more than a salvational *modus operandi*, it ceases to be literary. As Harold Bloom laments in *The Western Canon*, “To read in the service of any ideology is not, in my judgment, to read at all” (29). Or in Marjorie Perloff’s words, “I take it that poetry is, first and foremost, the language art,” where “it is only ‘weedy speech,’ as Niedecker calls it, that has the power to ‘sustain,’ only the ‘urgent wave / of the verse’ that has the power to cast us on a new shore,” not “the ‘right’ subject matter” (*Poetic License* 51). Of course, aesthetics is ideological, but it rules supreme, by definition, in the verbal arts. All interpretations remain subjective, therefore, yet not all are equal. Some give the impression that all stories lead to the same, shall we

say, punch-line, that every text will automatically assume an empowering function due to its marginalized author and characters. Willful misreadings morph writers into left-wing saints and reduce their creative output to the sum of fortuitously liberal parts.

Jane Marcus' "Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman's Circus Epic" comes to mind here. A text can do one thing, its author, another, but Marcus aligns Barnes' politics and *Nightwood*'s political moments too closely for us to take her argument without demur. That Barnes' "portraits of the abject" comprise "a book of communal resistances of underworld outsiders to domination" (Marcus 221) is an idea I sympathize with. To jump from this notion to "My purpose in reviving *Nightwood* is political. [...] The revision of modernism in which this essay participates is an effort to read race, class, and gender back into the discussion" (Marcus 222) to "Djuna Barnes identifies with all outsiders" (Marcus 229) is too formulaic. The analysis pre-determines what it sets out to find and denies the bigoted, peevish Barnes whom O'Neal, among others, describes.⁵

In their introduction to *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*'s 1993 Barnes feature, Nancy J. Levine and Marian Urquilla declare, "Now that the first wave of feminist recovery is subsiding, it is possible to see and discuss the interesting flaws and contradictions that made Barnes so unapproachably complex as a woman and as a writer" (7). They continue, "We have passed beyond what Peggy Rosenthal aptly called 'vulgar feminism,' that is, criticism that reserves its approval for texts that present a heroine who is 'liberating herself from society's restrictions'" (13). Their pronouncement may have been premature. The academic world evolves at a much slower pace than that of social media or journalism, due to its relative insulation, lack of internal communication, patron-system, and rigorously stylized publishing standards. Essays by Marcus, Jay, and their millennium apostles suggest as much.

⁵ See, for instance, Herring, *Djuna*; Doughty 149-50; Levine and Urquilla 14; Kaivola 181; Chisholm 176; Fitch, "Lightning Bolts" 147; Martins 110; and Benstock 245.

Stein suffers similar valorization—perhaps more so for her butch looks, out-and-out homosexuality (compared to Barnes’ bisexuality), numerous odes to lesbian domestic bliss, and what Hemingway calls (homosexual) “patriotism.”⁶ Critics want to reclaim Stein, like Barnes, to legitimate professional academia’s investment in the avant-garde as, in David Kaufmann’s words, “a pursuit that is both relevant and necessary to the maintenance of a liberal polity” (232). Another role-model for progressives may be welcome, yet a writer can’t be just that, especially in Stein’s case. Even the queer “patriotism” that Hemingway attributes to her becomes equivocal in light of Stein’s discrimination between gay male and female practices recounted on other occasions. In a letter to W. G. Rogers, for example, Hemingway admits, “She used to talk to me about homosexuality and how it was fine in and for women and no good in men and I used to listen and learn and I always wanted to fuck her and she knew it and it was a good healthy feeling and made more sense than some of the talk” (*Selected Letters* 650). On a less ribald note, Hemingway reminisces, in *A Moveable Feast*, that Stein once told him,

“The main thing is that the act male homosexuals commit is ugly and repugnant and afterwards they are disgusted with themselves. They drink and take drugs, to palliate this, but they are disgusted with the act and they are always changing partners and cannot be really happy. [...] In women it is the opposite. They do nothing that they are disgusted by and nothing that is repulsive and afterwards they are happy and they can lead happy lives together.” (25-26)

The chapter that includes this passage, “Miss Stein Instructs,” devotes itself to Stein and Hemingway’s conversations about homosexuality, with Stein trying to soften her mentee’s homophobia by distinguishing between “sick” queers one should “pity” and their well-adjusted peers: monogamous lesbians like herself. Stein harbored a disdain for gay men

⁶ In a 1933 letter to Janet Flanner, Hemingway writes, “[W]hen the menopause hit [Stein] she got awfully damned patriotic about sex. The first stage was that nobody was any good that wasn’t that way. The second was that anybody that was that way was good. The third was that anybody that was any good must be that way. Patriotism is a hell of a vice” (*Selected Letters* 387-88).

that matched her contempt toward women, despite her friendships with gays such as Thornton Wilder, Sherwood Anderson, Avery Hopwood, and, again, Van Vechten.

All in all, Stein was a politically incorrect expatriate Jewish-American lesbian who distanced herself from Paris' lesbian and Jewish circles (minus immediate family).⁷ She never publically acknowledged her relationship with Toklas (Retallack, Introduction 13; Wagner-Martin, "Favored Strangers" 209). No matter how open her situation was behind closed doors, Stein understood the importance of maintaining a low public profile. That's partly why she moved away from her extended family to France (Wagner-Martin, "Favored Strangers" 57-58, 103; Perloff, "Grammar in Use" 38; Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder* 86-87); why *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* skirts around the Parisian gay scene; why only certain friends were aware of her sexual orientation (Stimpson, "Mind" 495); why she and Van Vechten never mentioned their homosexuality in their gossip correspondence (Burns, Introduction 8). And having internalized the virulent sexism of her day, epitomized in Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*, a text Stein took to heart (Katz, "Weininger"; Retallack, Introduction 23-25), Stein worked hard to exhibit what she described as the "maleness that belongs to genius" (qtd. in Retallack, Introduction 25).⁸ Despite Stein's oft-quoted remark "[E]verybody wants to be a father and being a father is depressing, and having a father is depressing" (*LS&W* 116) and suffragette-inspired works such as *The Mother of Us All*, Stein considered herself a patriarch of sorts. (What matters for her, as Luke Carson highlights, isn't the renunciation of all fathers, just inept ones [41].) Her affair with Toklas outwardly anchored itself on old-fashioned gender roles, Stein playing the "husband" to Toklas' "wife." Toklas would entertain other "wives," while

⁷ Stein may have described herself as "a Jew, orthodox background, and I never make any bones about it" to friends such as Sam Steward (qtd. in Wagner-Martin, "Favored Strangers" 230), but her silence on the Holocaust and friendship with Nazi collaborator Bernard Fay make her Jewish identity politics controversial. See Burns and Dydo, with Rice; Malcolm 51-53, 78-86, 93-94; Retallack, Introduction 67-70; Knapp 71; and Mellow 466-67.

⁸ For more on Stein's misogyny, see Dickie 55; Wagner-Martin, "Favored Strangers" 87; and Ruddick 65.

Stein conversed with their “husbands,” the men who mattered.⁹ Stein took great pride in her influence with male artists and writers. Friends whom Stein considered equals, such as Picasso and Matisse, were welcomed during amicable times and dismissed during falling-outs. Rivals were barely tolerated. Stein ignored Joyce, resented Eliot for his critical acclaim and editorial influence, actively disliked Pound, and met William Carlos Williams with measured respect only after he praised her work.¹⁰ Pupils, finally, were mentored so long as they embraced Stein’s advice.

The deeper we delve into Stein’s and Barnes’ life, the more obvious it becomes that the formal appreciation of their work cannot be contingent on their personalities or literary themes.¹¹ White-washing the pair’s politically incorrect beliefs or ignoring their intentions and surrounding contexts altogether can only get us so far. Within certain feminist-poststructuralist camps, however, the latter practice (an extreme and degraded New Criticism) persists—more often for Stein than Barnes, Stein’s language being obscure enough to support most, if not all, readings. In 1989, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar may have been onto something when they announced, “As exhilarating as it is to imagine Stein as a composite of the Marx brothers, Hélène Cixous, and Jacques Derrida [...] Stein’s texts can nevertheless only function as Rorschach tests in which readers discover their own theories corroborated, for Steinese constitutes an attack on the very idea of literature” (245-46). Gilbert and Gubar’s remark hints at a paradox within Stein studies: the more (the obscure) Stein becomes valorized as a patron-saint for liberal intelligentsia, the less she seems to be read for pleasure by the general public or studied in classrooms.

⁹ That Stein and Toklas’ private division of power is widely agreed to have been a different matter (Wagner-Martin, “Favored Strangers” 122; Klaich 202, 214; Hemingway, *Moveable Feast* 103-04) doesn’t alter Stein’s masculine chauvinism.

¹⁰ See Wagner-Martin, “Favored Strangers” 197; Mellow 249, 253, 287-88, 291-92; Toklas 141; and Hemingway, *Moveable Feast* 31.

¹¹ For more on the problems of canon formation and literary theory that treats texts as more or less transparent extensions of itself, see Perloff, *Poetic License* 7-69; Perloff, “Tolerance and Taboo”; and Guillory.

Two reasons mainly account for this effect. Firstly, a literary corpus that exists as a footnote to *écriture féminine* has little to offer masculine readers or those unsympathetic toward 1970s French feminist theory. Catharine R. Stimpson flat-out warns us against connecting Stein with gynologocentric discourse, clarifying, “[Stein’s] literary language was neither ‘female,’ nor an unmediated return to signifiers freely wheeling in maternal space” (“Somagrams” 79). Equally wary of grand generalizations, Karin Cope’s frustration at the predictability defining excessive feminist-poststructuralist approaches broadens the intellectual stakes, intimating the irrelevance destined for literary criticism if it continues proselytizing rather than evaluating:

Was I really reading Stein – and if so why – if she accorded so well with all of the critical moralizations and evaluative predispositions I’d picked up at Yale and Johns Hopkins in the 1980s? Somehow, every text that I read or wrote about authors ranging from Coleridge to Artaud to Wittig to Derrida to Stein came out sounding as if it were the same – as if only one critical metanarrative were possible: this writing is brilliant because difficult, difficult because brilliant, ultimately particularly challenging and radical, offering a destabilizing and interventionist judgment of some status quo. (12)

Ulla E. Dydo more generously ventures, “Recently, theoreticians have offered keys to Stein in feminist, lesbian, and other readings. Yet none of these accommodates more than selections of her texts” (63). The second factor behind Stein’s inaccessibility ties into the call to refrain from critically reading the most difficult Steinian works. A writer whose primary contribution is advertised as indeterminacy for its own sake—beyond multiple interpretations, *no* interpretation—loses efficacy. She cannot withstand time if her signature innovations fail to muster more of an argument besides the mild observation that multiple meanings regularly come into play. To maintain, as was the vogue in the 1980s and 90s, that Stein’s innovations mustn’t be interpreted because they aren’t meant to be interpreted *is* an interpretative gesture and raises the question of what exactly defines serious interpretation today. When Marianne DeKoven states,

There is no reason to struggle to interpret or unify either the whole of *Tender Buttons* or any part of it, not only because there is no consistent pattern of meaning, but because we violate the spirit of the work in trying to find one. Like the rest of the “lively words” writing, *Tender Buttons* functions anti-patriarchally: as presymbolic *jouissance* and as irreducibly multiple, fragmented, open-ended articulation of lexical meaning. Its primary modes are dissonance, surprise, play (76)

she perpetuates the prejudice that Stein cannot be read. For common-sense goes: why bother reading what not only makes zero traditional sense, but doesn't even forge its own sense? Yet the anti-hermeneutics that DeKoven calls for functions as a hermeneutical strategy, albeit one technically impossible to perform as an academic. If there is no point to interpretation, there is no need to hire professional interpreters. A far cry from Susan Sontag's honest urgings to return to a more sensory aesthetic experience in her “Against Interpretation,” DeKoven-styled commentary on Stein typically unfolds with a series of disclaimers against “decoding.”¹² What follows is praise for Stein's contextual multiplicities, then scorn for non-poststructuralist readings, deemed reductive because independent of Julia Kristeva's, Hélène Cixous', or Luce Irigaray's direct influence. After such lip service, the stock feminist-poststructuralist “decodes” Stein in his or her own way. But the extracted, in this case, amounts to little more than how Stein's indeterminacies (must) overthrow phallogocentrism.

If one interjects the possibility of referential meaning, one quickly comes under suspicion of turning those possibilities into ossified laws. But is such wariness necessary today? Few critics review texts from fixed vantage-points anymore or make claims to absolute truth. Even Richard Bridgman, a favorite target for Stein's feminist-poststructuralist critics, refrains from pushing his views forward as the key to Stein's oeuvre or implying that the key-lock metaphor pertains to hermeneutics at all. His book, *Gertrude Stein in Pieces*, isn't meant to be an exhaustive overview, considering select

¹² See, for instance, Ford 47; Holbrook 752; and Berry 70-71.

works through a humanist lens. As if to ward off poststructuralism's paranoia, Cope muses,

Perhaps we have now come to a point where we no longer need to repeat quite so uniquely and tiresomely in our criticisms: "What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?" etc. We can go on to ask other questions, questions that certainly are not abstract and ahistorical, questions that, of course – as do the strictly discursive questions above – have their own epistemic boundaries and concerns, but which are no less valuable for all of that. (137)

What other questions indeed? Lisa Ruddick opens the door to them when she writes,

There has been a great deal of debate recently as to how to approach Stein's most experimental texts. Some readers have been tempted to try to decode these works, while others, by far the majority, have insisted that any pursuit of continuous meanings amounts to a betrayal of the polyvalence of the texts [...] I believe that a text can be polysemous and still have themes, or "patterns of meaning." (7)

Ruddick reminds us that polysemy and sustained interpretation aren't mutually exclusive, the first overlap being: why and how are Stein's texts polysemous? Using "Marry Nettie" as her point of reference, Marjorie Perloff raises the related issue that prioritizing some hermeneutics over others is precisely that: a value-judgment. "Why violate the *jouissance* of Stein's 'pre-Oedipal' language?" begs the answer, "[N]ot all 'dislocations' are of equal value. To assume that Stein chooses her words more or less randomly, that she is merely being 'playful,' is to ignore the careful contextualization that makes such play possible. No two words, after all, are used precisely the same way" (Perloff, "Grammar in Use" 51).¹³ It becomes facile to say that the only metaphysical closure is no closure or unreadable texts garner value mostly for their unreadability.

A critic's tone is what distinguishes literary appreciation from propaganda. As basic as this tenet sounds, we often forget the basics in the haste to salvage our icons as well as find fresh interpretations in today's hyper-competitive university environment. In

¹³ See also Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder* 83-114; Perloff, *21st-Century Modernism* 66.

striving to achieve a more measured tone, to read narratives of queer loss without necessarily sublimating them, my approach parallels that of the Gay Shame movement insofar as Shame embraces its namesake's literary representations. This current wave in queer theory pushes to embrace the stigmatization historically plaguing sexual alterities, reaching a more immediate understanding of what it means to be or feel queer in the twenty-first century. In the process, its uncovering of the limitations of "reverse discourse"—the hasty and unanimous reversal of gay shame to gay pride—sheds new light on not just same-sex desire but, as Chapter Two discusses, the "bent" side of all desire. Critics such as Heather K. Love, Leo Bersani, Lee Edelman, Valerie Traub, David Halperin, D. A. Miller, Christopher Nealon, Douglas Crimp, and Sally R. Munt theorize about today's queer realities with a darker emphasis than intellectuals writing in the 1960s or 70s.¹⁴ What's shifted is the framework for LGBT political gains. Previous generations sought to minimize losses and play up triumphs. Dennis Altman declared in 1971, "With the recent growth in homosexual self-affirmation, the time for such books [documenting queer melancholia and suffering] has passed" (17). Gone were self-loathing "inverts" persecuted in courts, censored in the press, or beaten to death in broad daylight. Here were proud, post-Stonewall fags and dykes ready to march on the Whitehouse and settle down in the suburbs. But the gay rights movement has matured to a point where such neat divisions between pre- and post-Stonewall life no longer hold. They're neither desirable nor true. To read fiction through such false binaries—discarding, excoriating, or misreading what doesn't fit in with Gay Pride politics—is not to read at all.

In that spirit, this dissertation reads Barnes and Stein through an attitude of interrogation rather than affirmation. And while it teases out Barnes' and Stein's queer

¹⁴ Much of Love's *Feeling Backward*, for instance, ruminates on our ethical obligation toward the dead. Queer history remains littered with corpses, and their owners deserve to be remembered and, where possible, vindicated through political action that negates the circumstances bringing about their deaths in the first place. Love "feels backward" through literature, stressing how the past is vital to understanding the present, as homophobia acquires new forms or retains old ones.

elements, it doesn't insinuate that these authors are merely the sum of their queer textual components. Nor does this inquiry propose that the queer lens is the only or most valid way through which to see these women. What it does do is bring to the fore two American modernists who have yet to achieve the canonical status of Eliot, Pound, Joyce, and Woolf; who possess distinct sensibilities, yet occupy the same period and locales; and who experiment with queer motifs through quirky, often hauntingly beautiful gestures. Beyond lesbian innuendos, there are timely questions here regarding the spiritual meaning of suffering for the romantic outcast and how one breaks away from mainstream society to become such an outcast in the first place—even how far out one can go without turning back.

DJUNA BARNES

THE FALL

1

History's Elsewhere and the Transgender¹

An art school dropout, Barnes not only wrote poetry, plays, interviews, and fiction, but drew as well, mixing media by composing illustrated books. Even within the verbal medium, she favored blending genres. A prose book could feature indented poetry; plays could be prefaced with character and setting descriptions elaborate enough to stand alone as separate pieces; newspaper interviews could resemble impressionistic sketches. On top of experimenting with medium and genre, Barnes, like Joyce, destabilized time periods by deploying mock-antiquated styles. Critics have described Barnes' archaic-seeming texts as rococo, baroque, Early Restoration, Georgian, gothic, Jacobean, Elizabethan, Miltonic, symbolist, surrealist, Donnian, Herbertian, Paterian, and so on.² A distinction to make, however, is that Barnes does not reproduce these styles exactly but adapts them. As Louis F. Kannenstine puts it, "[A] manner and style of no particular era, and thus of any era" (xvii) are achieved when Barnes' texts infuse, let's say, Shakespearean language with twentieth-century diction and motifs. By manipulating older expressive modes, Barnes creates stylistically indeterminate and therefore temporally ambiguous linguistic landscapes situated outside the bounds of a repressive patriarchal history—history's elsewhere. History's elsewhere and its inhabitants fail to be unequivocally affirmative in a queer-feminist sense, however, rendering Barnes' writing difficult to absorb into

¹ In slightly adapted form, this chapter originally appeared, as mentioned in the acknowledgements section, in the *Journal of Modern Literature's* Winter 2014 issue. See Ery Shin, "Djuna Barnes, History's Elsewhere, and the Transgender," *Journal of Modern Literature* 37.2 (Winter 2014): 20-38.

² See, for instance, Scott, *Djuna Barnes*; Kannenstine; Stevenson, "Writing the Grotesque Body"; Marcus, "Mousemeat"; McGuigan; Ponsot; Sielke; Doughty; Kaup; and Lanser.

recuperative critical projects. I might also add that such tensions lead to paradoxical modernisms in that history's elsewhere, its transgressive potential notwithstanding, does not offer a definitive way out for the queer.

Extending the inquiries of Julie L. Abraham and Bonnie Kime Scott, this chapter gives an account of how myth functions in Barnes through transgendered failures beyond conventional history. For within Barnes' ahistorical frameworks, transgenders enact various aspects of the queer ontological crisis: an Aphroditus, Dame Evangeline Musset triumphantly initiates women into same-sex desire, but dies without fathoming all of its secrets in *Ladies Almanack*; *Ryder's* Dr. O'Connor exists as a crippled Tiresias unable to smite the Minotaur-like Wendell. Each expresses the historical impossibility of queer being in terms of failure, specifically a failure of self-knowledge and of social acceptance. *Ryder* and *Ladies Almanack* are hence united by their interest in mythical transgenderism, but the transgender effects no radical inversion of the queer status quo.

One might conceive such failure under Judith Halberstam's "queer art of failure," that is, a purposeful refusal of "normative markers of success and achievement" (186). Halberstam studies failure in two senses: failure that is a form of success if "losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing" (2) offer more valuable social rewards than the "positivity of contemporary life" (3); failure that is just failure whenever the queer subject "collaborates with rather than always opposes oppressive regimes and dominant ideology" (23). Yet Barnes goes beyond the latter to enter the "nihilistic critical dead ends" (24) that Halberstam ultimately disavows. To sanitize the relentlessness of Barnes' desolation ignores the Barnes who wrote in a letter to her mother, "To me, who am at best, a little melancholy—?having [*sic*] life is the greatest horror—I cannot think of it as a 'merry, gay & joyous thing, just to be alive'—it seems to me monstrous, obscene & still with the most obscene trick at the end..." (Herring, Introduction 22-23). Barnes'

bleakness was already apparent in a 1919 interview with Guido Bruno for *Pearson's Magazine*:

I asked Djuna Barnes: “Why are you so dreadfully morbid? At first in your pictures, then in your poems. Your prose stories are overpowering even for one who has digested Russian literature for the last twenty years. Now comes your play [*Three from the Earth*]. No one can deny that all of your efforts are picturesque, unusual, even beautiful in their ugliness. No one denies that you have talent. But why such morbidity?”

“Morbid?” was her cynical answer. “You make me laugh. This life I write and draw and portray is life as it is, and therefore you call it morbid. Look at my life. Look at the life around me. Where is this beauty that I am supposed to miss? The nice episodes that others depict? Is not everything morbid? I mean the life of people stripped of their masks. Where are the relieving features? [...] Today we are, tomorrow dead. We are born and don't know why. We live and suffer and strive, envious or envied. We love, we hate, we work, we admire, we despise. . . . Why? And we die, and no one will ever know that we have been born.” (I 385-86)

I am not morbid but frank, Barnes pronounces. Trapped in such an existential wilderness, all being is doomed, straight or bent. In fact, even at their most playful, Barnes' texts close off critical attempts to domesticate their negativity. Hence, to adapt Halberstam's reference to *Little Miss Sunshine*, where the Hoover family replaces the motto “May the best girl win” with “No one gets left behind!” (Halberstam 5), “no one gets left behind” in Barnes because no one goes anywhere.

Barnes' sensitivity to the reciprocity between myth and everyday defeats nods to the power new mythologies wield in opening up queer realities, while admitting the difficulties in divorcing texts from the matrix in which they were created. Like the transgendered crowds George Brassai observes in *The Secret Paris of the 30's*—the butch women frequenting the lesbian bar Le Monocle, the drag queens dancing the night away at one of the “big homosexual balls at Magic City” (*n. pag.*)—Dame Musset and Dr. O'Connor live in worlds distanced from mainstream norms. Yet this gulf, while sizable, is far from total. The majoritarian world constantly encroaches on the queer underground in various forms. In Brassai's Paris, the owner of the queer-catering Montagne Sainte-

Geneviève dance hall needs to “set up lookouts to signal the sudden arrival of the vice squad” (*n. pag.*). Although physically absent, men still cast a shadow on Musset’s coterie through Patience Scalpel’s skepticism toward lesbianism and the shared memory of Musset’s rape.³ The conservative townspeople who threaten Wendell’s liberty in *Ryder*, by denouncing either his homeschooling practices or his polygamy, also implicitly threaten O’Connor’s. Indeed, that Christian authorities and Wendell dwell in the same mythic space as the doctor suggests history’s elsewhere means nothing without history’s overarching *here* or only becomes definable in relation to its counterpart and vice-versa.

This sense of liminality is what distinguishes transgendered from lesbian-feminist historical re-appropriations in Barnes. Unlike its feminist correlate that straightforwardly counters the dogma of male history-making through alternative mythologizing, the transgender provides no clean, consistent breaks with the commonly-held past. In *Ryder* and *Ladies Almanack*, Molly Dance and Doll (notably rhyming names) envision matriarchal myths through mock-antiquated tongues. They are consistently in, of, and for an historical elsewhere—two of its architects, if you will. But their transgendered cohorts live with one foot elsewhere, one foot here. O’Connor and Musset extend yet complicate the inverted poly-historical structures promulgated by their peers, not because they do drag but because their queerness embodies ongoing communal losses excluded by more predictably transformative narratives.

³ Patience is *Ladies Almanack*’s sole heterosexual and mother.

MYTHIC STYLE

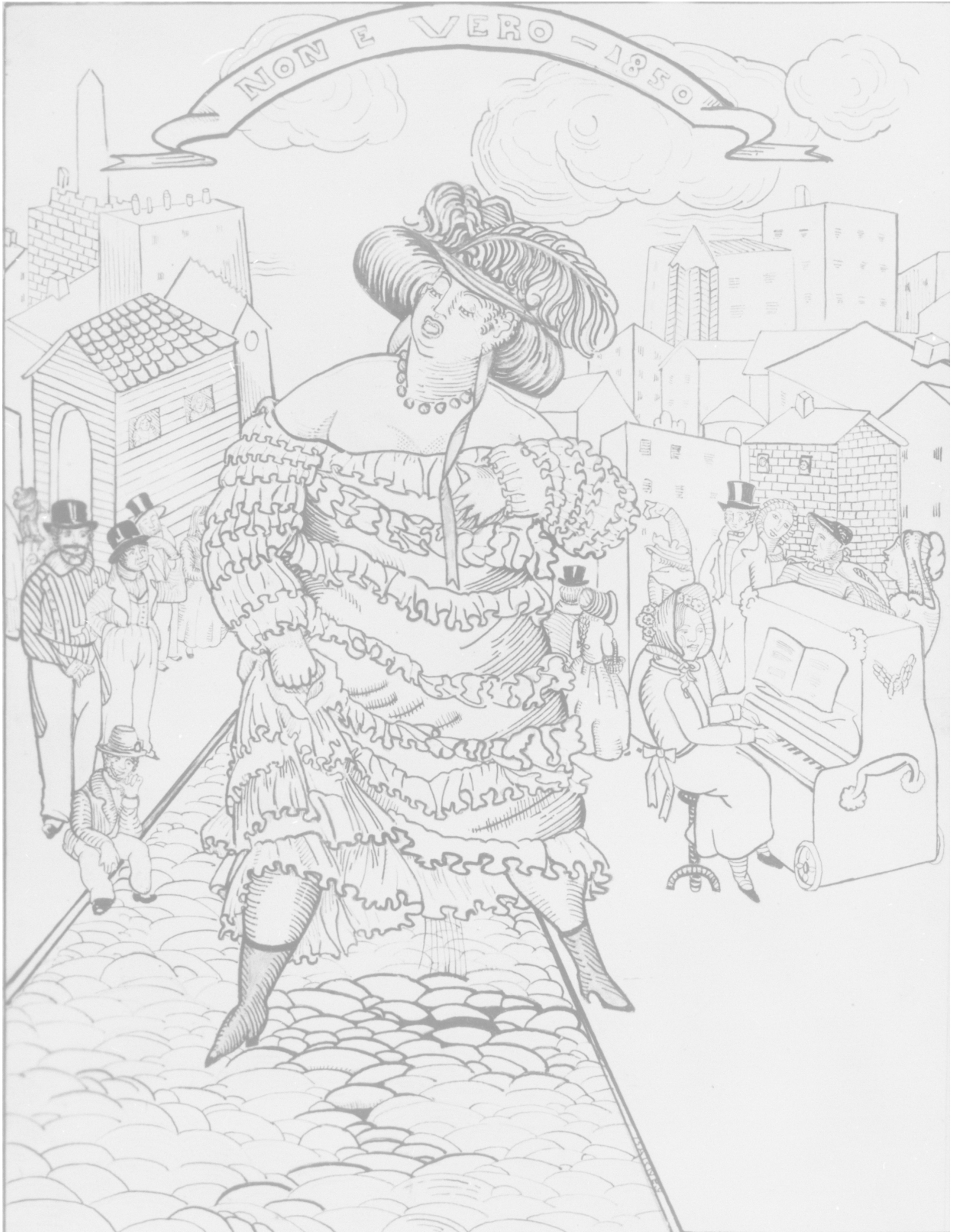
In “Run, Girls, Run!” (in *Vagaries Malicieux*), *Ladies Almanack*, *Ryder*, and *The Antiphon*, Barnes’ language transports us to a mythically timeless past by drawing upon and adapting so many historical influences that precise historicization becomes impossible (or beside the point). But this mythical imaginary that subsumes all periods and belongs to none—history’s elsewhere—remains unique in its lesbian-feminist focus, Anglophone accent, visual apparatus, and sustained application. Although many modernists, most famously Pound, Eliot, and Joyce, experiment with outmoded styles, some graft choice snippets into their texts rather than synthesize and adapt them. Or if they do, they pursue queer themes less aggressively, without illustration, lesbian interest, or actively altering (the official version of) past events. In *The Cantos*, a collage technique takes precedence over grammatical integration. Pound pastes Chinese, Italian, German, Latin, and Greek onto an otherwise contemporary script. Seen in *Choruses from ‘The Rock’* and *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot’s fusion poetics goes beyond transplantation (not to snub the collage effect), but remains deferential to a masculine world and its Biblical heritage. *Ulysses* structurally parallels Homer’s *Odyssey* and assimilates past vernaculars over stretches, as its “Oxen of the Sun” episode’s language reveals. Yet the novel’s phenomenological perspective belongs, with few exceptions, to men. None of these authors possess Barnes’ visual sense and insider’s knowledge of female sexuality. None are emblematisers, and none reach history’s elsewhere as pointedly or extensively as Barnes does, her tone vacillating between humor, irony, and breezy vulgarity. They only catch it tenuously, spasmodically. Eliot’s and Pound’s women are peripheral and lifeless, their men, often neurotic and insecure, but not homosexual per se. (Eliot’s queerest character is *The Waste Land*’s Tiresius, but the poem he inhabits doesn’t devote itself to him the way *Nightwood*

“bows down” to O’Connor or *Ladies Almanack* immortalizes Musset.) Even Joyce’s “Nighttown” scene in *Ulysses*, renowned for its gender-bending antics and homosexual double-entendres, finds its momentum through impulses other than matriarchal mythmaking.

Re-orating the West’s chronicles, Barnes’ mythic voice interlaces good-natured ribaldry toward bodily functions and desires with sarcasm regarding male violence, sweeping aside stodgy Victorianisms and the sentimental pathos typically expected from the abused or bereaved. The bawdy humor renders playful all erotic arrangements, no matter how bizarre or frowned upon, defusing puritan values through an anti-serious aesthetic. That Barnes stays within English and its historical forms, straying into French or German on rare occasions, lends a directness to her narratives missing in, for example, *The Cantos*. Less deflection occurs, since less time is spent source-hunting and translating. When pen-and-ink illustrations modeled after Renaissance engravings and woodcuts accompany Barnes’ retro-prose, especially racy ones such as that of *Ryder’s* Sophia urinating into a chamber pot, the text’s directness even assumes a confrontational tone.



Djuna Barnes, *Sophia and the Chamber Pot* (1928)



Djuna Barnes, *Non E Vero—1850* ("Who was the Girl") (1928)

According to Hank O'Neal, Barnes openly acknowledged her debt to "*L'Imagerie Populaire*, an anthology of illustrations compiled and published in Paris by Pierre Louis Ducharte and Rene Saulnier in 1926" (214-15). *L'Imagerie Populaire* derives from an

emblem book tradition thriving during sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, France, and, to a lesser extent, England. As Rosemary Freeman's seminal text *English Emblem Books* outlines, Greco-Roman mythology and medieval alchemy were fashionable subjects for emblematisers.⁴ So Barnes' artistic influences were, in and of themselves, predisposed to classical themes and allegory.

Barnes' pastiche poetics may not be the first of its kind, yet it remains memorable for its wit, prolonged use, emblematic component, and lesbian-feminist scope. Like *Nightwood's* Nora, who is "outside and unidentified" with "the world and its history" (53), and Robin, the "beast turning human" endowed with eyes "still faintly clear and timeless behind the lids—the long unqualified range in the iris of wild beasts who have not tamed the focus down to meet the human eye" (37), it summons spaces beyond heteronormative chronology. This modernist pastiche frames and visually intensifies the queer mythmaking of Barnes' cast, the men and women who map out erased queer experiences.

Such historical queerings problematize a monolithic patriarchy that manipulates what is recorded, by whom, and how. Abraham is right when she points out how Barnes' interest in matrilineal memory betrays an awareness of and desire to surpass the limits of "the official record, the history of the father" (268)—what Ellen E. Berry otherwise articulates as the female modernist's search for "alternative cultural mythologies" (60). Representative of an otherness written out of mainstream history, Barnes' queer characters and the fluctuating aesthetic backdrop they inhabit transgress linear time and memory, both conventionally dictated by exclusionary male hegemonies.

⁴ For more on English and continental emblem book traditions, see Freeman. She cites (more or less in order of importance) Andrea Alciati's *Emblematum Liber* (1531), Guillaume de La Perrière's *Le Theatre des bons Engins* (1539), Gilles Corrozet's *Hécatomgraphie* (1540), Claude Paradin's *Devises Heroiques* (1557), Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* (1586), P. S.' *The Heroicall Devises of M. Claudius Paradin* (1591), Thomas Combe's *The Theatre of Fine Devises* (1593-98), Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britannia* (1612), H. G.'s *The Mirrour of Maiestie* (1618), and Francis Quarles' *Emblemes* (1635) as representative works, Alciati's being the first.

Both released in 1928, *Ryder* and *Ladies Almanack* flaunt a variety of genres and earlier styles. Assimilating contemporary situations and expressions into the superannuated, their pastiche modes operate through the double channels of genre and language to recreate pasts that never were. Inspired by Barnes' experiences growing up in a polygamous household, *Ryder* traces the Ryder family's struggle to cope with the philandering of its *paterfamilias*, Wendell. The family mock-epic incorporates several aesthetic sensibilities, including those belonging to Chaucer, Rossetti, Shakespeare, and the Bible. In a flurry, it speeds through parables, dreams, poems, soliloquies, letters, bedtime stories, lullabies, and so forth. *Ryder*'s first chapter, "Jesus Mundane," opens the novel with lofty Biblical speech—a parental sermon. God, the highest Father, addresses Wendell, a wayward son, through a series of aphorisms that underline the latter's damnation. The Father begins, "Go not with fanatics [...] so cofounded are they with thy damnation and the damnation of thy offspring, and the multiple damnation of those multitudes that shall be of thy race begotten" (3). The chapter's last three paragraphs bear no fairer news for Wendell:

Go now, and lift up thy cries from about me, for I have done with thee awhile and thy ways, and thy ways' ways, and the things that thou hangest about the places of the soul. And speak not of Me, for thou knowest not of what thou speakest [...].

Knowest thou if thou hast troubled me, or how thou hast inconvenienced me for thy sake? Or if thou hast pleased me in any way, or hast not? Thou knowest not where the station is that I go to meet thee in. If I have travelled a long way, or if thy soul hath been a bubble rising, and my coming a long while.

These things are as the back of thy head to thee. Thou hast not seen them.
(5)

The Bible never employs as many ambiguous pronouns, nouns, fragments, or analogies ("things are as the back of thy head") to renounce humanity with such weariness. The Christian deity threatens and punishes, but never gives up on his worshippers quite as Barnes' version of him does. For Barnes' God turns away from *Ryder*'s patriarch,

establishing Wendell's spiritual claims as pretensions, a judgment that recurs throughout the novel ("Ryder, you are not God because you tremble in the balance. God does not tremble" [202]). That Wendell remains a messianic imposter reinforces itself in the image of the chimera Beast Thingumbob mourning over his wife's lifeless body, the corpse of an Artemis of Ephesus.



Djuna Barnes, *The Beast* (1928)

To have pagan subjects in Renaissance emblematicism, the tradition this drawing borrows from, is standard. What isn't is the inverted Christian iconology in the upper left-hand corner: the Jesuit *sacré cœur* (sacred heart) denoting Christ, with its sunrays and adjacent bird signifying the worshipper's love and Holy Spirit, contains the words "The Beast." By

inscribing “The Beast,” another name for Satan, at the heart’s center, Barnes subverts a hallowed symbol to stress Wendell’s villainous blasphemy.

Four chapters later, “Rape and Repining!” draws upon a “rhetoric heavily reliant on Renaissance literary styles” (78), as Sabine Sielke puts it. Through excess, this rhetoric becomes caricatured to satirize the male tradition that arbitrarily and hysterically vilifies the broken hymen:

Girl, hast fornicated and become Wanton before thy Time? What Presage had you of it? [...] Who told you, Hussy, to go ramping at the Bit, and laying about you for Trouble? What thing taken from your Father’s Table turned you Belly up? What Word in your Mother’s Mouth set your Ears outward? Bawd! Slattern! Slut! Who gave you Rope to turn on? Slain you are of Slumber, and your Family mown down before that Sword of Sorrow. Thy Brother weeps amid his Diapers, and thy Father behind his Beard! (23)

And further on still:

Thou art Witless Whey, and should be Scourged! Flayed! Whipped! Stocked! Cried against! Howled over, and spent quickly, that you get from out our Country and over the Border and into some Neighbouring Land, there to lie, until some Blithering, Scabby Potsherd mends a Stewpan with you, or lays you between Hot Iron and Hot Iron, and so melts you down, to make a Cap for his Heel. (28)

Such farcically exaggerated rage climaxes with the chapter’s ending two-liner “It is Spring again, O Little One, the Waters melt, and the Earth divides, and the Leaves put forth, and the Heart sings dilly, dilly, dilly! It is Girls’ Weather, and Boys’ Luck!” (29). Parody allows Barnes to more bitinglly ridicule the absurdity underlying the West’s sexual orthodoxies.

Chapter Seven fast-forwards to what would otherwise be a twentieth-century vernacular if it weren’t peppered with enough *thee’s*, *thou’s*, and *quoth’s* to be rendered undatable. Imparted in Chaucerian verse, Chapter Ten likewise presents noticeable linguistic slippages, smuggling in contemporary phrases such as “*bon vivant*,” “*Versus Con and Pro*,” and “virtue” (instead of “vertu”). Modern literary allusions, in one case, to Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (“Yet many a yearës round— / As Alice went in

Wonderland astound” [55]), compound *Ryder*’s warped time-scape. Chapter Eighteen, “Yet for Vindication of Wendell,” returns to and further dilutes Chaucer’s voice with modern spelling:

Out of the troubled heart shall spring
 A birdē loud on tautē wing
 Of loneliness made swift and clean
 To caw the wintry march between
 Man and his difference, there bind
 The bleeding wound upon the mind
 For somē lives are empty groves
 Wheredown the genius pond’ring moves,
 Nor any game were lost or won
 Were not there blanks to count upon. (93)

Given Chaucer’s penchant for bawdiness and his status as one of the fathers of English literature, it seems fitting that Barnes relates the most sympathetic chapters “about” Wendell, the self-anointed mega-patriarch, in Chaucer’s modified vernacular and couplet rhymes.

Released three months after *Ryder* and loosely narrated by “A Lady of Fashion,” *Ladies Almanack* charts Dame Evangeline Musset’s lesbian exploits from birth until death, scattering in abstract references to sapphism and the female condition throughout. Its twelve chapters accord with the twelve calendar months, though not all are devoted to Musset or follow her life in consistent intervals. The pseudo-almanac was privately printed by Darantiere of Dijon (Benstock 235; Scott 62) and chiefly targeted at Paris’ underground expatriate lesbian community. Like *Ryder*, it mixes genres but works more closely within a single style: Restoration comedy. By and large, it sustains the language of playwrights such as William Wycherley, John Vanbrugh, Thomas Southerne, and William Congreve.

That being said, an eighteenth-century linguistic facsimile never materializes. Hints of the Book of Psalms (“Yea, it strikes loudly on the Heart, for thus she gives her Body to all unrecorded Music, which is the Psalm” [23]), Robert Burton (April’s “Acute

Melancholy”), and Shakespeare flit across the page. A language that flows from period to period yet clings faithfully to none surrounds us. Looking at the quirky sexual phrases “back mated,” “flaps of Gomorrah,” “front to front,” and “braid-to-Braid,” James B. Scott describes *Ladies Almanack*’s language as “not really localized” but “polished, urbane, witty, and worldly” (84). Clitoral stimulation and female genitalia are mentioned, but one never finds anything so self-consciously and graphically lesbian in an actual novel of manners or Burton’s genteel vocabulary. Even suggestive Restoration comedies in the vein of Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* refrain from “talking sex” exclusively for and between women. But from the first page, *Ladies Almanack* engages with same-sex desire from an insider’s perspective. All the anatomical bits and pieces Dame Musset “relieve[s]” throughout her life set this tone: “Hinder Parts”; “Fore Parts”; “Quarters most horribly burning” from sitting on “Fur, or thick and Oriental Rugs”; “that Part” most “solace[d]” by “other Parts as inflamed, or with the Consolation every Woman has at her Finger Tips, or at the very Hang of her Tongue?” (6). Such wordplay undercuts certain male-rooted traditions by bastardizing their conservatism toward not just same-sex female relations but the promiscuous feminine. Luxuriating in unbecoming female sexuality, *Ladies Almanack* disrupts banal truisms like the Madonna complex and the more recent stereotype of “lesbian bed death.”⁵

⁵ A popular term inspired by Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz’s 1983 sociological study *American Couples: Money, Work, Sex*, denoting the alleged infrequency with which long-term lesbian couples engage in genital sex compared to their heterosexual and gay male counterparts. See Blumstein and Schwartz 195-98.

TIRESIAS

In *Ryder*, Molly Dance's revision of traditional history reveals the vitality of a woman's imagination, while trivializing the sanctity of phallogentric narratives. A dog fancier and "wench of a high water" (192), Molly is one of Wendell's many conquests, yet "conquest" hardly seems the right word for a woman who doesn't see female sexuality in vanquished terms. For her, sex is not a moral matter, women are not "fine bitches" whose "pedigrees" need be monitored, "one man's thoughts are not worth much more than another's" (199), and pleasure always wins over "good" taste. So Molly beds whomever she wills and raises ten children without care for their paternal origins. When Wendell inquires into the father's identity of Molly's last child, Molly responds with, "[W]ho cares? He didn't, I don't, and the child won't have to, and that's simplification" (198). By "simplifying" social niceties, Molly frustrates the father's genealogical imperative and its prohibitive mores. Molly's mother did not know who Molly's father was either, "never see[ing] but half a man at best, and the halves that she saw, were, she said, as identical as peas in a pod, and how could God hold her responsible, if he made so small a difference in such important instruments?" (191). Taking after her mother's irreverence, Molly prays as she likes; believes Henry James was a horse thief, Caesar betrayed Jesus, and Judas was a "man without friends" (198); and places "battle scenes" beside "infants' pictures" on her walls (193). "Bottom up or head up [...] it's all one to the Lord. He never said we were all to come to, in one position. Molly Dance I am, whichever way you take me, and that's saying more than most. My heart's nearer to my history than yours, that's the bone of contention" (198), she even declares at one point, proudly trumpeting her refusal to adhere to the law of the father.

Molly rewriting the Biblical creation myth challenges patriarchal lore on a

fundamental level. Jonah, a figure initially of cowardice, becomes the “First Man” in Molly’s eyes. After a whale spits him out, four angels deliver a block of land for him to dwell on, the world covered in water till then. Jonah proceeds to sire the human race by coupling with “a woman all dressed up in ribbons, and hee-hawing like an ass, which is the sirens’ song” (195). Different tribes emerge (Molly’s “tribe of Dance” being one of the first), Cain slays Abel, poetry arrives, animals descend from the sky, and history culminates in the birth of Britain (197). Molly’s historical mix-ups not only expose, through parody, the inconsequential and arbitrary nature of male-oriented historical “fundamentals” (194), but also situate the reader within a more recognizably feminine framework. A world without land, the whale from which all life originates, mermen, mermaids—the pervasive water imagery recalls the fluids of menstruation, the amniotic sac, childbirth, tear ducts, and the like. We may not find ourselves in the most original of women’s spaces, but we are no longer trapped in a closed mythical past. History’s gendered reappropriation climaxes with Molly’s proclamation that original sin was not a woman’s but a man’s. Passing on the midwife Mary Flynn’s vision, Molly quotes, “It was an apple, surely, but man it was who snapped it up, scattering the seeds, and these he uses to this day to get his sons by” (198). In this alternate reality, man damned both sexes to wretchedness by his lust, fathering descendants such as Wendell.

O’Connor, conversely, lives at the edge of Molly’s imaginative realm. Molly may set the stage for radical political upsets to unfold, but not all players can perform as though in a vacuum. Some, like O’Connor, remain at the mercy of the crowd despite their otherworldly allure. Both *Ryder* and *Nightwood* feature a self-hating, homosexual Dr. Matthew O’Connor (modeled after one of Barnes’ Left Bank acquaintances, Daniel A. Mahoney [Herring, *Djuna* 210-15]), but the original O’Connor has received far less attention than his 1936 successor and his mythical connotations, even less. Like Tiresias,

Ryder's O'Connor straddles both genders, described as half-ox and half-hare by one of Wendell's bastard sons (235). Unlike Tiresias, however, the self-proclaimed "woman of a few thousand gestures and a hundred words" (139) is a blind prophet of Thebes no one will follow. Both he and his later counterpart in *Nightwood* resemble crippled seers in this sense. For despite Susan Gubar, among others, who finds redemptive power in O'Connor's transvestic aesthetics and semiotic manipulations (498-500), the majority of critics approach *Nightwood's* doctor—and, by extension, *Ryder's*—as a figure of impotence. No one adheres to his admonitions, and many of his rambling monologues are neither said in earnest nor meant to be taken that way. When James B. Scott remarks,

Everyone listens to him, particularly Felix and Nora; but no changes are ever brought about by the doctor's advice. [...] All the doctor gets for his efforts are his pains. Tiresias-like, he is able to foresee the future; Tiresias-like, he cannot alter its course; but, unlike Tiresias, the Doctor suffers unconscionably. For his gift of insight, or foresight, is purchased by his own sympathetic nature (109)

his comment holds true for *Ryder's* O'Connor as well. The same goes for Charles Baxter's observation: "O'Connor's use of words is, in fact, not good for anything, as he realizes, and his mission loses its savor once he acknowledges his own powerlessness. He knows he possesses energy, but he also knows that it is useless" (1178).⁶ Despite their conversations, Dr. O'Connor fails to convince Wendell to halt his megalomaniacal ways (their talk on "Holy Inspiration" leaves Wendell's infantilism unchanged [200-04]); Wendell's bastard son to quit stealing (227-36); or Wendell's other son, Hannel, to stop perceiving women as commodities to beat "with the warming pan" or inseminate (161-62). The blind prophet cannot subdue the Minotaur ethos seizing the men around him.⁷

⁶ See also Smith, "Story beside(s) Itself" 201-02; Gerstenberger 38-39; and Davidson 215.

⁷ Because Barnes renders timeless those tales of female violation and male violators—the fate of some women becoming that of all women, the crimes of some men reflecting badly upon every man—it is helpful to read Wendell and *The Antiphon's* Titus Hobbes within a Jungian framework, as Minotaur-archetypes epitomizing sinister male sexual aggression; see Jung 6. Based on Barnes' father, Wald, Wendell and Titus are likened to bulls in appetite and appearance. Their endless womanizing and taste for violence evoke the bloodthirstiness of their mythical forbear. See *Antiphon* 97, 108, 110-11, 121, 151; *Ryder* 42, 56-57, 62-65, 205-06.

Equally importantly, Dr. O'Connor cannot win over the women. The 1928 version of O'Connor also recalls an impotent Theseus as a result. Psychologically alienated (trapped in the figurative equivalent of Daedalus' labyrinth), the homosexual Theseus cannot persuade Ariadne to aid his cause against the Minotaur or accept him as a hero. No matter how many infant deliveries he oversees or how "nice and as good a man" he is (123), O'Connor presents a transgendered model his female acquaintances resist. Amelia, Kate-Careless, and Molly struggle with Wendell's male chauvinism, yet are unprepared to rally around a feminized masculinity. For *Ryder's* women, conditioned to a heteronormative reproductive economy, the inverted male is thus a puzzling, strangely sympathetic, yet impossible alternative. A Theseus who will not sire children has no meaning for these Ariadnes. In *Ryder's* family-oriented narrative, communal acceptance of sterile life-trajectories unsurprisingly fails to materialize, which is why Amelia, Wendell's long-suffering wife, once pressures the doctor to find a wife and why the doctor "was no longer comfortable in the presence of women" afterward (161).⁸

The chapter "Amelia's Dreams of the Ox of a Black Beauty" similarly gestures toward the impossibility of Dr. O'Connor's existence within a straight, natal narrative. Echoing Sophia's dream where "Beethoven" melts into the dreamer, triggering Wendell's immaculate conception, Amelia's dream of spying a "great" black ox intruding on a sleeping woman ends in the opposite: no climax, only the solemn and resigned defeat of a supernatural beast figuring as both queer archetype and anti-Christ (to Wendell's "Jesus Mundane"). Through a keyhole, Amelia witnesses an ox entering a room to lie in bed beside a slumbering woman. The animal's first words to her, "I am also" (99), echoes Exodus' "I am that I am" and awakens her. Its next words to her, "Give me a place in your

⁸ The full weight of what the childless queer means within reproductive ideology will be addressed in the next chapter, through Lee Edelman's theoretical terms. Because homosexuality literally opposes species survival through relations unable to independently produce children, social organizations philosophically treat it as an assault on life itself that must be stamped out.

Saviour,” earns the response “Go away and do not try to defile me, for I have time in which to think, but you must labour” (99). Its third statement, “Give me a place in your God, or I go to acquaint him that I am, and he will damn himself in me, for there is need of that also” (99), confirms the ox’s status as a spiritual unknown. But the woman’s ensuing indecision convinces the animal she cannot comply with his demands. In an act of compassion, the ox prays for her before a crucifix and leaves.

At the chapter’s beginning, Amelia’s thoughts resentfully dwell on Wendell’s alarm at her last-born’s dark coloring. So reading her dream as an amalgamated racial and sexual allegory is encouraged by the narrator: “Further than this, surely no mind can go, remembering that Amelia was a girl, country-born, all the days of her life, and well rounded in restrictions” (98). Yet *Ryder*’s insistence that the only rule is no rules prompts us to go further. If the dream were only about “get[ting] the black man the attention of the Lord, and a place in his mercies” (98), emasculating Wendell, or proving Amelia’s baby was not sired by another, why does the black ox depart without winning anything, and why is Wendell not himself? Despite *Ryder*’s allusions to Wendell’s paradoxically beast- and Christ-like nature, it is not an emasculated Wendell featured but another male entirely. For Wendell does not ask, he takes; he does not pray for others, he entreats others to pray for him; he is not a beast of labor, but one who feeds off the labor of others.

A more plausible explanation emerges if the black ox personifies O’Connor, the obstetrician who oversees Amelia’s delivery in the preceding chapter and incidentally defends her virtue (“Bile alone is father of [the baby’s] colour” [97]). The guilt-ridden O’Connor becomes a queer archetype in his would-be consort’s dream, the homosexual who fails to find salvation in the church also failing to save a potential bride, the woman herself beset by problems of female subjugation within the novel’s procreative scheme and the spiritual emptiness that Christianity, a historically phallogocentric tradition, offers.

The dream room itself suggests as much in its Christian paraphernalia devoid of any progressive force:

A night-light was burning before a Christ with down-dropping sweet head, and way down-falling body. And there were much books in a wall shelf, on the history of mankind [...] And there were pictures on the wall of women going nowhere to nothing, with snood and long leaning throats and hands held loose for lack of sorrow, and there was one grand tapestry in even stitches of Friars going from nowhere to nowhere, holily, and one huge panel of Adam and one huge panel of Eve. (98-99)

The stasis characterizing each object is thorough enough to indicate irreversible stultification if one were to perpetuate this religious mythology. If we followed this torpid Christ, Barnes implies, we may find ourselves so too “going nowhere to nothing,” our eyes forever straining to catch a glimpse of night-lights that penetrate the darkness. The castrated ox that cannot perform like the bull consequently represents the impotent homosexual who belongs nowhere with no one.

APHRODITUS

A different but related exigency confronts the queer in *Ladies Almanack*. The predicament becomes one of lesbian identity and desire: sapphic alterity that cannot apprehend or articulate itself despite its queerly mythical surroundings. To speak of the backdrop first, *Ladies Almanack* mirrors *Ryder* in its impulse to reimagine creation mythologies. Instead of forming from one of Adam’s ribs or love-acts, the first lesbian materializes from celestial merging:

After the Fall of Satan (and as he fell, Lucifer uttered a loud Cry, heard from one End of Forever-and-no-end to the other), all the Angels, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricornus, Aquarius, Pisces, all, all gathered together, so close that they were not recognizable, one from the other. And not nine Months later, there was heard under the Dome of Heaven a great Crowing, and from the Midst,

an Egg, as incredible as a thing forgotten, fell to Earth, and striking, split and hatched, and from out of it stepped one saying “Pardon me, I must be going!” And this was the first Woman born with a Difference. (24-26)

For the women of Barnes’ underground Parisian circle and later readers, the unfertilized, heavenly egg becomes an icon anchoring a new mythic tradition, one diverging from *Ryder’s* decadent Christianity.

The construction of queer mythologies gains momentum when *Ladies Almanack* presents readers with “The Fourth Great Moment of History,” following on the heels of *Ryder’s* triptych. Like *Ryder’s* O’Connor who recounts “Three Great Moments of History” to one of Wendell’s bastard sons, Dame Musset’s amour, Doll, relates well-known historical figures to her, but with a twist (“My most Darling, but now has come the Time when you must listen to the fourth great Moment of History [having undoubtedly heard the other three]” [41]). In Doll’s account, the Bible’s Sheba and Jezebel become lovers. Doll subsequently joins Molly Dance and Dr. O’Connor in their efforts to rewrite the official record, destabilizing the patriarchal canon’s influence in the present. In *Ryder*, Barnes’ four great historical moments are utterly unlike those that standard textbooks present. The queer intrudes upon each moment and defuses age-old political tragedies with campy flourish. Firstly, “the cunningest of asps” bites Cleopatra’s left breast so fiercely that she cries out Jesus’ name (229). Yet suicide by snakebite was far from the plan. Cleopatra coincidentally discovered the asp when reaching for a fig to eat as a laxative. Her desire to shit, boredom, and succumbing to “mother instinct” induced the Egyptian queen to bring the asp to her breast. “History” rolls on with its second great moment: the unionist Barbara Frietchie wolf-whistles at General Stonewall Jackson as he rides by, shrieking at him, “UUUUh, HHHu, Stonewall!” (230). The civil war informs O’Connor’s next reminiscence as well. During the confederate surrender, General Lee presents his blade hilt-first to General Grant, slyly commenting, “You know what you can do with this, don’t

you?” (231). We return to Doll’s retelling of history as she knows it. She describes to Musset how Jezebel routinely seduced men from her window, yet, when she called out to the Queen of Sheba one day, “*that was Jezebel’s last ‘Uoo Hoo!’*” (41). The implication that Jezebel severs herself from men and the male tradition upon coming together with the Queen of Sheba becomes an allegory for lesbian conversion and fidelity—the latter, to Musset’s chagrin (“Musset’s Eyes fell” [41]). Doll’s tale recasts violent male legacies to find history’s elsewhere, where Jezebel is not killed by kings “wending to War and to Death” (41), Sheba’s queen need not bother with Solomon, and Eve fares well without Adam.

On those rare occasions when women conform to patriarchal “History, or whatever it was” (33), they become exiled from Musset’s ranks. When Dame Musset and her friends chase down Bounding Bess to welcome her into their circle, Musset becomes offended by what she perceives to be Bess’ “pedantry”: “That woman’s Feet are all Heels, and what do they ever portend but a pedant. They are always gaited thus, and know not whether they are walking into or out of Truth. She is not for us!” (33). For Bess obsesses over historical facts without questioning the authority from which they spring. She, moreover, agitates about whether she will “be taken seriously when discussing the Destiny of Nations” (33) among polite society and harbors lesbian sentiments while viewing lesbianism itself as a failing. In Bess’ words, “[W]as not Sappho herself, though given to singing over the limp Bodies of Girls like any noisy Nightingale, nevertheless held in great Respect by the philosophers of her time?” (32). Everyone’s derision toward Tuck’s interest in the newcomer paired with Tuck’s own admission of Bess’ fatuousness emphasize the gender biases underpinning Bess’ knowledge. “Ah Woe is me!” Miss Tuck laments, “you, my dear Musset were, as always, quite right. She thaws nothing but Facts, do what I would, nor one unfathomed Mystery in the Lot!” (37). She elaborates in

exasperation,

“For no matter what I came upon but that Wench had some Word for it! Now it was Horace, now it was Spinoza, and yet again it was the Descent of Man, and that Descent, I will have nothing to do with, here or then! When a Woman is as well seasoned in her every Joint as she, with exact and enduring Knowledge, there is nothing for it but to let her add herself up to an impossible Zero, and so come to her Death of that premeditated Accuracy [...]” (37-38)

Like Bess, women who draw near the past and present through the words of men negate themselves, because they embrace a male system that politically negates alternative epistemologies. The father’s logic equates itself with everything and its other, the lore of the Mother, with nothing—the “impossible Zero.” From its foundations, the “History” formulated by Horace, Spinoza, and the Bible has no place for Bess. That she fails to see this contradiction in terms is what arouses Musset’s irritation and earns Bess the pedestrian-pedantry punning insult. Knowledge that claims to be absolute is a vacuous knowledge and one ill-suited for probing the subtleties surrounding Musset’s Lesbos.

So Musset nimbly exposes the folly of those who claim wisdom through empty facts. But knowing what something is not doesn’t necessarily lead one to knowing what it is, especially if that something is Mytilene’s nebulous heart. Musset points out Bess’ misguidedness, yet certain truths elude her too, despite her being a celebrated lesbian dignitary whose name reinforces her authority as both a lesbian evangelist and muse. We are told in the beginning that Dame Musset

had been developed in the Womb of her most gentle Mother to be a Boy, when therefore, she came forth an Inch or so less than this, she paid no Heed to the Error, but donning a Vest of a superb Blister and Tooling, a Belcher for tippet and a pair of hip-boots with a scarlet channel (for it was a most wet wading) she took her Whip in hand, calling her Pups about her, and so set out upon the Road of Destiny [...]. (7)

That destiny is Aphroditus’: to live and inspire love among women as their epicene, cross-dressing leader. Although Musset’s sexual prowess inducts her “into the Hall of Fame, where she stood by a Statue of Venus as calm as you please” (9), her intersexual qualities

and male drag align her more with the hermaphroditic Aphroditus than Aphrodite proper.⁹ As Aphroditus hailing from “some Counry [*sic*] too old for Tradition” (34), Musset guides women away from “the Whine of Motherhood” toward Sappho’s “more mystic, sodden Sighing,” “repair[ing] what has never been damaged” (31) by addressing the mistaken notion of compulsory heterosexuality and sexual naiveté (the requisite premarital undamaged hymen).

But despite her accomplishments (“Dame Musset was sainted” [14]), loyal following, and sexual experience (“I have learned on the Bodies of all Women, all Customs, and from their Minds have all Nations given up their Secrets” [35]), Musset fails to grasp the timeless lesbian wisdom she longs for. She sometimes mistakes the wisdom of middle age for enlightenment, yet such misunderstandings are swiftly corrected. In the month of November, Musset sets out through “the Town” to share the newfound wisdom of her “fifty odd” years, which she believes will revolutionize lesbian relations. Walking through such spatial imaginaries as “Petticoat Lane, just off Breach-String-Alley” (76), “Highhip Road” (77), “Brambelly Grove” (77), and “Wellover Square” (78), a kind of *flâneuse* who doesn’t so much detachedly gaze at her surroundings as coalesce with them, Dame Musset brims with excitement over the message “Never want but what you have, never have but that which stays, and let nothing remain. Wisdom is indifference, the only Trouble with it is how extraordinarily it fills the Bed” (78). This oracular pronouncement appeared twenty pages earlier, in fact, during the narrator’s meditation on the way out of jealousy for women: if lesbians “but reason,” they will realize that “where there is a Grain of Reason, there is a Grain of recovery, and where there is a Grain of Recovery there is a Blade of Indifference, and where this shoots up, there may be a Garden of Oblivion in

⁹ Not only does Musset’s character openly parody *The Well of Loneliness*’ Stephen Gordon, as is widely recognized, but she also evokes the haunting androgynes featured in Algernon Charles Swinburne’s *Poems and Ballads*, most prominently in the pieces “Fragoletta” and “Hermaphroditus.” For more on Swinburne’s hermaphroditic themes within Victorian aesthetic contexts, see Bashant; Dellamora; Hare; Landow; and Morgan.

which to ease the Breath” (58). Such insight, Musset is convinced, will “save the world all its Trials and Troubles, even for such as are silly enough to be in Love with a Man and a Man” (78). Musset’s final listener, however, an older “Madame in Mittens sipping her Tea by the Gates of the Ministry,” interrupts her with, “Ah yes, [...] I am sixty, and at my Age both Youth and Wisdom are over, and you reap a third Crop.” “God save us, [...] is there yet more to learn of this world?” Musset cries out in response. The “Crone” assures her, “But yes, [...] there is that and others. At sixty you are ten Years tired of your Knowledge” (79).

This epistemological failure goes beyond Socratic resignation (“I know that I know nothing”) before humankind’s inability to grasp absolute knowledge. Musset’s failure to understand the queer points to a definitional void embedded in queerness itself. Anticipating contemporary arguments regarding queer erasure and poststructural politics, which deconstruct self-identifying labels in favor of celebrating, as Sheila Jeffreys phrases it, “‘difference’ for its own sake” (38),¹⁰ Musset’s bewilderment extends the existential melancholy permeating the chapter “September: Her Tides and Moons.” Women’s love for women is described in painful terms: sorrow, futility, vanity, but above all, unknowability. In the narrator’s words, “A man may rage for the little Difference which shall be alien always, but a Woman tears her Shift for a Likeness in a Shift, and a Mystery that is lost to the proportion of Mystery” (57). Despair culminates in Psalm-like chants, where the lesbian “we” reinforces the collective nature of the disorientation:

We shake the Tree, till there be no Leaves, and cry out at the Sticks; we trouble the Earth awhile with our Fury; our Sorrow is flesh thick, and we shall not cease to eat of it until the easing Bone. Our Peace is not skin deep,

¹⁰ Characterizing the individual as endlessly elusive, complicated, fluid, dynamic, and therefore sexy is a self-gratifying gesture underlying much contemporary culture, not just queer poststructuralist theory. Label avoidance is also a smart move for counteracting homophobia: it’s difficult to persecute what defies categorization. However, the counter-argument to self-erasure lies in the trickiness of its implications. To quote Jeffreys again, “The deconstruction of identity in queer theory has been criticized for making political action difficult, since people determinedly unsure of who and what they are do not make a powerful revolutionary force” (39). For more on how deconstructive philosophy leads to problems of political solidarity for struggling minority groups, see Grosz 55; D’Emilio xxviii; and Walters 844.

but to the Marrow, we are not wise this side of *rigor mortis*; we go down to no River of Wisdom, but swim alone in Jordan. We have few Philosophers among us, for our Blood was stewed too thick to bear up Wisdom, which is a little Craft, and floats only when the way is prepared, and the Winds are calm. (58-59)

Such confusion echoes Patience Scalpel's back in January, in an almost identical voice: "Where, and in what dark Chamber was the Tree so cut of Life, that the Branch turned to the Branch, and made of the Cuttings a Garden of Ecstasy?" (12). Patience's uncertainty toward "Women and their Ways" (11) symbolically begins the book and anticipates Musset's lasting mystification. Dame Musset may not possess Patience's same "Derision" (12), but she remains baffled by the same questions. Queerness becomes, as it does in much queer theory, not a thing we can concretely pinpoint, but that which blurs neat demarcations around things.

Musset's death assumes a sinister significance in light of this intellectual cul-de-sac. Her declaration "I live [...] for two remaining Ferocities, Food and Understanding!" (33-34) turns morbidly prophetic when reversed: if she cannot understand, she must renounce life. The reason Musset dies is not because her earthly duties are done, as the narrator suggests,¹¹ but because she fails to formulate a queer epistemology able to encompass the continual displacements defining "[t]he very Condition of Woman," one "so subject to Hazard, so complex, and so grievous" (55). That Musset's tongue remains unscathed whilst the rest of her burns to ashes on the funeral pyre reads, then, ironically. Musset's tongue survives to pleasure her mourning disciples but also signifies a dumb mouth: an Aphroditus unaware of lesbian love's most intimate, enduring secrets cannot share them. This is why Musset's epitaph in the "Temple of Love" addresses an as yet unenlightened lesbian majority, saying, "Oh ye of little Faith" (84).

¹¹ Musset meets her death "as one who had a grave Commission and the ambassador recalled. She had blossomed on Sap's need, and when need's Sap found such easy flowing in the Year of our Lord 19—what more was there for her to do?" (80-81).

For Barnes, history's elsewhere both challenges and is complicit with such failures. *Ladies Almanack* and *Ryder* generate mythic structures through language and character to ground themselves in a tenuous queer space, that place beyond patriarchal history. Yet history's elsewhere, while attenuating the father's prerogative, precludes a lasting place for the queer. Musset fails to grasp the heart of queer being, despite her menopausal wisdom. O'Connor fails to find social acceptance. Within myth, the transgender faces the same difficulties he or she would stumble across in Barnes' day and ours. Even in Musset's thriving underground, curious spirits such as Nip intuit how "Morsel[s]" of queer "Understanding" can be "printed nowhere and in no Country, for Life is represented in no City by a Journal dedicated to the Undercurrents, or for that matter to any real Fact whatsoever" (34). To admit this deadlock isn't to flatten all queer narratives into the same narrative or deny them transformative power. Such a *reductio ad absurdum* approach to literary criticism would be just as hollow as its feel-good counterpart. But without evaluating those motivations to superimpose politically affirmative messages onto texts or appreciating how history's elsewhere springs from and loops back into those impossibilities defining everyday life, it becomes more difficult to see homophobia's increasingly insidious forms in the present.

To read Barnes' melancholic energy as a cover-up for something other than itself, finally, discredits the beauty and terror that failure evokes as an aesthetic domain. The point is that there is no point beyond the poetic abyss yawning before the reader. *Ryder's* chapter "The Soliloquy of Dr. O'Connor (Family Physician to the Ryders) on the Way to and from the Confessional of Father Lucas" offers a striking testimony to that end. O'Connor cries out for divine intervention on behalf of his soul, but heaven remains shut. Or beyond inaccessibility, it self-destructs, as religious and secular imagery prophetically melt together, consumed by a "Sorrow" outlasting nothingness. The doctor's monologue

dissolves into a sequence of dream-like or hallucinatory images, Matthew's "I" giving way to an omniscient third-person once he poses his final question: "[A]nd who am I that I should be damned forever and forever, Amen?" (139). Immediately, the next and last paragraph moves to a fade-out. Candles, the ceiling, stars first "bloomed and wilted and died" (139), then "[t]he figures at the altar blurred, crossed, melted into each other; fornication of the mass" (140). The frenzy breeds Death, and "Death's wailing child in wax," Jesus, "[lies] in a bowl of wine, mouth open for the gushing breast of grief, pouring forth the Word in an even belt of wrath" (140). What follows is apocalyptic:

The church turned upside-down. Sorrow burst and the seeds fell and took root, and climbed about the stations of the cross and bore Him down to earth, and climbed on and on and bore Matthew and Nora and Jacob down to earth, and Sara and William and John, and Emily and Susie and Tim and Molly and Maggie and Lucy and Patrick down to earth, and climbed on and bore their children and their children's children down to earth, and the children of them begotten, and were not appeased, and climbed and bore man down utterly, and stretched out and took his works and bore them down also, and there was Nothing, and this, too, they reached for and closed on, trembling terribly and gently.... (140)

History and history's elsewhere recede into oblivion. With nowhere and nothing to go to in a mythic expanse, Barnes' transgendered outcast clasps an anguish that terminates everything—all myths, life, art—so that not even the page remains. Such destruction becomes a poetic spectacle in itself: an end that is beautifully rendered, beautiful because ending.

The failure to wholeheartedly self-destruct, in truth, translates into a separate kind of defeat in Barnes—a vulgar, listless sort. Barnes' short play *The Dove*, like *Nightwood's* Jenny (to be considered in Chapter Three), illustrates the perils of inauthentic experience through yet another mythical-seeming queer: "The Dove." Somewhere between a vampire and maenad, this lesbian adolescent cannot incite a pair of closeted lesbians to frenzy or to what the Greeks knew as Dionysus' ecstatic madness. The maenad's vampiric bite at the

play's end was to have mediated such a return to the primordial. The symbolic withdrawal of blood was to have initiated the Burgson sisters into a modern-day Dionysian Mystery ritual, where the "advanced virgins" (RS 152) could finally experiment with the flesh, wield firearms beyond jest, ingest intoxicants such as "opium or hashish" (RS 153), and extend the trance-inducing dance tentatively begun by Amelia. The heretofore repressed were to have been granted a chance to shed their inhibitions. But The Dove's blood sacrifice (her biting Amelia's breast) is wasted on the unwilling. Vera interrupts the moment with a phallic prop (the "*uncorked bottle*" [RS 161]), and The Dove instantly realizes she has no place in their apartment. The excess she represents—the will to annihilate subjectivity in brute violence and deviant sexual ecstasy—cannot be tolerated in the Burgsons' barren world. Failing to induce a revelation, The Dove departs alone to an unknown destination, be it death or a neighboring flat. Barnes' theatrical adaptation of the maenad brings us another encounter with myth, but one that leads neither to history's elsewhere nor even noble oblivion.

Breaking The Dove's hold on Amelia, Vera's untimely entrance traces back to Vera's fear of The Dove's "causeless anger" (RS 156) and moral inertia, that "terrible quality [...] as if [she] wanted to prevent nothing" (RS 154). Vera fears, in short, The Dove's tendencies that belong to a maenad and vampire. As Vera confides to her younger guest, "[W]hen you're out of this room all these weapons might be a lot of butter knives or pop guns, but let you come in [...] It becomes an arsenal" (RS 157). Like the maenad, the "*slight girl barely out of her teens*" (RS 149) is blood-rooted, mad, sexually unconstrained, wine-loving, and in possession of a make-shift thyrsus, "*the blade of an immense sword*" (RS 150) she polishes until Amelia's return. Like the vampire, The Dove bites.¹² If the

¹² With her red-hair, "*highbridged and thin*" nose, ennui, and "*almost dangerously transparent skin*" (RS 149), The Dove falls into Barnes' "vampire" type conceived during the author's journalist years. Barnes interviewed several public personalities for various newspapers, but it was Flo Ziegfeld who captured the kind of urbanite his interviewer was fascinated by: "A vampire [...] is a woman who eats lightly of uncooked

Burgson sisters remind The Dove of “two splendid dams erected about two little puddles” (RS 157), The Dove herself is a waterfall no dam can contain.¹³ Vera’s dread of “let[ting] everything go on, as far as it can go” (RS 157) accounts for her failing to seize the moment when The Dove “places her hand on [Vera’s] throat” (RS 156). “Perhaps what I really want is a reason for using one of these pistols!” Vera laughs (RS 155). But when The Dove sanctions that wish with a lesbian touch, Vera cannot bring herself to pull the trigger on “such a little thing” (RS 156). Her irresolution explains why only Amelia runs after The Dove upon hearing the gunshot. Even the name “The Dove” was coined by Amelia, not Vera.

The Dove’s crucial act of vampirism occurs when The Dove responds to Amelia’s entreaties for her sword with a bite to the breast. Multiple readings could be posited here: lesbian outrage at a woman’s cry for the phallus; oral sadistic parasitism; broken incest taboos; profane fluid contamination; and so on. But what I find most interesting in a play that sets out to be obscene and entrenched in psychoanalytic truisms is the melodramatic declaration at the end: Amelia’s “*This is obscene!*” (RS 161), referring to the bullet-holed painting of Vittore Carpaccio’s Venetian courtesans in her hands.¹⁴ (The finer details—whether Amelia means the painting’s content; the bullet hole through the piece, a symbolic remnant of a kind of phallic penetration; or the defacement of art itself—are unclear.)

things; who walks out between tall avenues of spears to die, and doesn’t, and finally spends the evening in an orgy of virtuous dreams. That’s time wasted. A vampire is a good woman with a bad reputation, or rather a good woman who has had possibilities and wasted them” (I 73). His description becomes the template for Barnes’ vampires in “The Terrible Peacock” and, to a lesser extent, *The Dove* (the degree to which Ziegfeld’s sketch may have been fabricated by Barnes herself is open to question, given her impressionistic reporting style [Messerli]).

¹³ The Burgson sisters may have been loosely inspired by Barnes’ mother and step-mother, Elizabeth and Fanny, who were too weak-willed to leave their consort despite his frequently abusive whims. Amelia Burgson even shares the same first name and complacency toward life’s tedium with Amelia Ryder, *Ryder*’s Elizabeth incarnate.

¹⁴ While the Burgson sisters treat *Two Venetian Ladies* as an image of the illicit, it remains an ongoing debate within art history as to whether Carpaccio’s painting depicts courtesans or noble women belonging to the Milanese Torella family. See, for instance, Brown; Junkerman; and Santore.



Vittore Carpaccio, *Two Venetian Ladies* (1490)

To single out *that* object (or the act performed on it) as obscene rather than The Dove's possible suicide or the play's cross-generational lesbianism ironically underlines the persisting lack of obscenity in the Burgsons' lives. Unlike others who take the finale as an open-ended question, I see the play as wryly pointing toward its own frivolity and stasis. The Dove along with the rest of the play's suggestive theatrical elements—the reds and pinks of the “luxuriously sensual” Burgson apartment (*RS* 149), weapons, animal “infestation”¹⁵—fail to bring about an explosive Dionysian release, one purging the Burgsons' sexual as well as imaginative repression. The two sisters remain trapped in

¹⁵ Flies and bats fly in, monkeys come in through the window, and the mailman “offers” The Dove “some dancing mice” (*RS* 160).

their emotional rut, unable to break out of their frigid, cloistered lives. The queer dove takes flight alone (no one knows where to), while the hysterical virgins fuss after trifles, lacking the imagination to share the torpor emoted by the painted courtesans they idolize. Amelia may say, “God! I’d like to tear out all the wires in the house! Destroy all the tunnels in the city, leave nothing underground or hidden or useful, oh, God” (*RS* 160), but her house and city will always stay standing. She and her sister resist The Dove’s queer delirium that would have razed everything to start afresh on rubble. The ideal of straight, sheltered womanhood goes uncontested in *The Dove*, which snapshots a world too accustomed to its own spiritual paralysis, where nothing happens and no one visits.

2

The Apocalypse

The adoration with which some critics address their literary icons is understandable on a personal level. “Heritage” and “roots” are real words for everyone. As Carolyn Allen puts it, however, we are “more interested in opening up the ‘dark places’ [...] between women lovers than in providing escape to a world where the girl always gets—and keeps—the girl” (*Following Djuna* 3). The “dark places” this chapter opens up, then, turn out to be breaking points in the self and straight nuclear family. Barnes veers away from both the procreative logic underlying heteronormative futurity and the idea that queer love ensures the affective survival of its partakers. More aggressively put, queerness *is* the apocalypse for Barnes in that it terminates futures and sentience. Case in point: *Nightwood* does not conform to what Tyrus Miller dubs the “typically high modernist concern with the confusion of the individual trying to make sense of a bewildering cosmos,” instead promoting “ontological uncertainty and complete ‘progressive breakdown of character, the disintegration of the indices of “self” in fiction”” (147). Robin regresses into a bestial degenerate, miming and possibly copulating with a dog; the formerly teetotal Felix succumbs to drink and hallucinates the “Grand Duke Alexander of Russia” (123); Dr. O’Connor dissolves into inebriated “*wrath and weeping*” (166); Nora bangs into the jamb of a chapel door and loses consciousness.

I start with an examination of this breakdown, moving on to explore how Barnes interrogates those murky existential anchors we insist are extensions of the self and

therefore free of peril: *my child, my lover*. Informing this discussion of Barnes' representations that deconstruct heterosexual family life and individual subjectivity itself are Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and Lee Edelman's anti-natalist rhetoric. Despite differences in time and sensibility, both Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* and Edelman's *No Future* gravitate toward oblivion in ways that dovetail with Barnes' fascination with ultimate endings. More specifically, insofar as they advance an anti-social psychoanalytic thesis through the abject, both Kristeva and Edelman help clarify the disintegration of queer being in Barnes, who rejects reproductive schemes, romanticized child figures, and any illusions of coherence surrounding same-sex desire. Edelman borrows Lacan's rather than Kristeva's terms and Kristeva only lets slip her appreciative wonder at abjection's mystery toward her book's end, but they agree the abject lurks in our familial bonds and death instincts. For Edelman, Euro-America's right-wing fantasy of "The Immaculate Child" renders abject "The Queer." For Kristeva, what is abject is "The Mother," whose womb every child must escape if he or she is to emerge a sentient being. Where the two theorists more intimately converge is in their apocalyptic tenor. While cautioning against the abject's "powers of horror," Kristeva every so often imbues them with a sense of mystical epiphany. By the last chapter, she admits "the power of fascination" the abject or "what a moralist would call nihilism" exerts on her (208), concluding her treatise with an incantation for abjection to engulf "the religious and political pretensions that attempt to give meaning to the human adventure" (209). The reverie is posed thus:

Perhaps those that the path of analysis, or scription, or of a painful or ecstatic ordeal has led to tear the veil of the communitarian mystery, on which love of self and others is set up, only to catch a glimpse of the abyss of abjection with which they are overlaid—they perhaps might be able to read this book as something other than an intellectual exercise. For abjection, when all is said and done, is the other facet of religious, moral, and ideological codes on which rest the sleep of individuals and the breathing spells of societies. Such codes are abjection's purification and repression. But the return of their repressed make up our "apocalypse," and that is why we cannot escape the dramatic convulsions of religious crises.

In the end, our only difference is our unwillingness to have a face-to-face confrontation with the abject. Who would want to be a prophet? For we have lost faith in One Master Signifier. We prefer to foresee or seduce; to plan ahead, promise a recovery, or esthetize; to provide social security or make art not too far removed from the level of the media.

In short, who, I ask you, would agree to call himself abject, subject of or subject to abjection? (Kristeva 209)

Decades later, Edelman's queer would rise to this challenge. It situates itself in the heart of what Kristeva envisions from a distance, "a place, to be sure, of abjection expressed in the stigma, sometimes fatal, that follows from reading that figure literally" (Edelman 3). Queerness becomes the abject that opposes the child fantasy upon which society's bullshit prayer for immortality arises. It stands for the anti-social energies running through and perpetually threatening to overrun the social. If Kristeva carves out the general "mechanism of subjectivity" defining abjection (208), Edelman spotlights its queer constituent—the abject queer, the queer-as-abject that works against grand teleological narratives.

Kristeva ends *Powers of Horror* claiming that the abject finds its most beautiful, privileged form in literature, through writers such as Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Proust, Artaud, Bataille, Kafka, and Céline. Barnes easily joins their ranks as a storyteller entranced by abject bodies and desire. Before Kristeva poetically translates existential horror into abjection, before Edelman identifies the abject with the queer, Barnes implicitly positions queerness outside stable families and psychic identities and thereby foregrounds both thinkers. For Barnes, procreative and psychic dictates incurring abjection invoke a queer apocalypse that signals the end of everything and beginning of nothing: the abject mother whence the original threat of losing ourselves is posed, a menace continually resurrecting itself in whatever endangers the ego's boundaries, be it a same-sex lover, an animal, language, or silence; abject children and childbirth that, in an outward sweep, abjectify women, either through oppressive domesticity or visceral pain.

We are left with stories that go nowhere but into darkness, littered with neurosis and romantic dead-ends, where there are no psychic boundaries, no courtship period, no cumming, no cuddling afterward, no move-in date, no marriage, no future for queers.

ABJECTION

Ironically, the Jane Marcus of “Laughing at Leviticus” and I share the same point of departure here: Kristevan abjection. While she focuses on the political solidarity generated between abject bodies and its implications against the body politic that abjected these bodies in the first place, however, I conceptualize the allegorical consequences that occur when the subject-object divide collapses. Described as a process of self-making in which the subject proper individuates by expelling the abject—what is unclean and improper—from within itself, abjection keeps primordial oblivion at bay. It is a reaction to wretchedness and wretchedness itself, an idea Georges Bataille explores as early as the 1960s in his discussion of the disgust aroused by corpses, decay, human excreta, and obscene sexual acts (57-58). Abjection is, moreover, “*a precondition of narcissism*” (13), according to Kristeva. The ego must demarcate itself before it can love what rests within its boundaries. Such self-love, in turn, hearkens back to abjection by working to safeguard the ego. After all, Freud relates narcissism as an “instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature” (“Narcissism” 73-74). Both abjection and narcissism protect subjectivity from the void beyond.

The interrelation between the two concepts becomes more complex when homosexuality is presented as a kind of narcissism in Barnes. Masie Tuck-and-Frill declares before Dame Musset’s circle, “A Man’s love is built to fit Nature. Woman’s is a

Kiss in the Mirror” (*Ladies Almanack* 23). The almanac’s narrator similarly claims later on, “A man may rage for the little Difference which shall be alien always, but a Woman tears her Shift for a Likeness in a Shift, and a Mystery that is lost to the proportion of Mystery” (57). In *Nightwood*, Nora explains, “A man is another person—a woman is yourself, caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own. If she is taken you cry that you have been robbed of yourself” (143). Thus, Nora famously defines Robin with the words “She is myself” (127). Boundaries between women disintegrate, identities collapse, and the abject surges forth from the lack of differentiation perceived between the female object-choice and self. She is myself, I am she, we are one, the *chora* resurrects itself, abject. Not only is the beloved deemed a figurative “I,” but she also morphs into an incestuous other: my sister, daughter, mother. “Love of woman for woman, what insane passion for unmitigated anguish and motherhood brought that into the mind?” (*Nightwood* 75), Dr. O’Connor bewails once. Latent autoerotic instincts reach satisfaction in the lesbian’s symbolic summoning of the maternal *chora*, which Kristeva identifies as the pre-oedipal matrix of the womb whence we distinguish ourselves by abjecting, paradoxically, what nurtures us. The lesbian lover invokes the abject mother by virtue of her sex and so shatters the “defense against autoeroticism and incest taboo” (Kristeva 14). “Abjection is therefore a kind of *narcissistic crisis*” (14) on multiple levels, Kristeva tells us. It precedes and follows the Greek youth languishing by a pond. It clouds his waters by setting in motion contradictory undercurrents: the desire to progress by escaping the womb, then regress back into it via an object-cathexis that gratifies primary narcissism.¹

In Barnes’ fiction, the abject consequently ensues from the breakdown in ontological barriers between women and between human and beast. As Dana Seidler, Thomas Heise, Michael Davidson, and Sharla Hutchison, among others, note, such

¹ Inversion as a result of failed abjection is likewise proposed by Frann Michel, who regards Robin as a case study in incomplete ego development, although she does so in different Kristevan terms (an adapted Freudian castration complex).

abjection bears strong connections to the degenerationist theories and eugenics discourse popular during the late-nineteenth to early-twentieth century, which pathologized homosexual, colored, and disabled bodies. Barnes' writing, most urgently in *Nightwood* and *The Book of Repulsive Women*, suggests the influence of Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, Havelock Ellis' (and John Addington Symonds') *Sexual Inversion*, Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, and Eugene Talbot's *Degeneracy: Its Causes, Signs, and Results* in its involvement with deteriorating bodies and spaces (the latter of which I detail in the following chapter).² Nearly everywhere, Barnes gives us a vision of humanity spiraling downward, undoing itself through its own follies and weaknesses.

Regarding the flesh specifically, though, much of Barnes' poetry reveals how patriarchy envisions the female body as abject—a nameless, alien monstrosity. *The Book of Repulsive Women and other poems*, for instance, incites horror in its invocation of what is typically considered grotesque about the feminine physique. The feminine becomes loathed as only an unknown and dreaded other might be. Ergo the collection's emphasis on “repulsive” images, such as those of hookers, corpses, and mental zombies: the dead prostitute in “Six Carried Her Away”; another prostitute “living all grimaces” in “Twilight of the Illicit” (20); the “leering,” “sagging,” “belly bulging” lesbian reclining in “From Fifth Avenue Up” (11-13); the nudist with “vivid and repulsive” lips standing on “A vague molested carpet” (17); the dancer-turned-prostitute “soiled” by hard times (22); Corpse A and Corpse B in “Suicide”; the jilted lover who construes herself as a “corpse that flames and cannot die” (33); a “Lady” whose “smitten tongue” is “still, too still” (35); the mummified king's daughter with “breasts dark of death” and “seeds of pepper falling down from brittle, spiced womb-cakes” (43); “The Flowering Corpse” (47); the “walking-

² For additional examples of degenerationist studies, see Sadler; Stoddard; Henry; and Fere. For secondary criticism regarding degenerationism's aims and historical backdrop, see Terry and Urla; Gilman; Goldberg; and Somerville.

mort” who “squalls her bush with blood” (60); the mother who tells her son, “I am the birth-place of the dead” (79).

Other texts, such as the short story “Cassation,” bring us back to psychological rather than material threats posed by the abject. To gain company and additional care for her mentally-disabled three-year-old daughter, Valentine, Gaya brings home sixteen-year-old Katya. (That the matron and would-be ballerina cruise each other in a café, Katya following a “small rain of coin” Gaya leaves behind (*Collected Stories* 384), suggests an almost mercenary beginning to their erotically-charged relationship.) After a year, Katya is asked to “stay forever” (389) and become a make-shift child. Gaya will oversee every aspect of her life, from her whereabouts to her eating and sleeping habits. Everything will be provided for so long as Katya “helps” (390) Valentine by adopting the child’s vacuity for the sake of communing with her. What is at stake, however, is subjectivity itself. Katya is asked to exchange her sense of self for the abject, to “climb” into the pre-oedipal void where Valentine dwells in “bereavement” and “dispossession” (389). This request isn’t new. It is insinuated earlier during the pair’s walks around Berlin’s Imperial Palace. Recounting Gaya’s philosophizing then, Katya says, “She explained that to be like everyone, all at once, in your own person, was to be holy” (388). But if “I” am like everyone else, then do “I” not disappear? Gaya’s theology derives from and simultaneously distorts Christian imperatives by arriving at the abject. As Kristeva emphasizes, the ego, being such a fragile construct, cannot totally merge with others without losing itself. The impossibility of Gaya’s pseudo-religious logic is manifested in the unreadability of an Italian Bible lying open in Katya’s room. The religion behind the book becomes problematized as one “empty of need, therefore it was not holy perhaps, and not as it should have been in its manner” (387).

Carolyn Allen explains Katya’s departure and Gaya’s eventual madness in terms of

self-differentiation or the lack thereof. Katya rebels against Gaya's attempts to trap her as a daughter-substitute, while Gaya repudiates memory and awareness to mentally become one with Valentine. Allen comments, "In the final scene, Gaya is no longer differentiated from her vacant daughter. She sits beside her child, imitating her mad sound, the seductive woman-turned-mother-turned-child fallen into the void" ("Writing toward *Nightwood*" 61). I agree but wish to specify that the abject impels each scenario. Katya leaves because she will not return to what Kristeva calls the "source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away" (15). Gaya's failure to abject, conversely, submerges her in the same catatonia afflicting her daughter, who remains in that place where there is "[n]o mind, no thought, nothing whatsoever else" (*Collected Stories* 391).

"Cassation" anticipates the thick sexual atmosphere and abject erotics pervading *Nightwood*, where romance fails again due to the breaching of identity boundaries. Nora errs in seeing herself as one with Robin, while Robin fails to distinguish herself enough from the animal and archaic mother.³ Nora is too much the mother trying to school her wayward child, too much the ego narcissistically seeking to re-assimilate what it believes to be a part of itself. But the child-doll can only take so much supervision before erupting with resentment. Robin (reportedly) runs behind Nora in Montparnasse, drunkenly telling her, "You are a devil! You make everything dirty! [...] You make me feel dirty and tired and old!" (143). In the end, narcissism releases the abject from its constraints. Nora's narcissistic desire to utterly possess her lover (who she sees as an extension of herself) in sleep or death undoes her. Robin's narcissism prevents her from returning such attachment, as Robin falls deeper for the abject animal within until distinctions between beast and woman fade ("Robin was outside the 'human type'" [146]). Abjection accounts for why Robin "barks" and "crawls" (170) before the Madonna. She lapses into animalism,

³ Both maternal and marital dynamics between Nora and Robin have been recognized by many, most notably Allen, who sifts through the complex, often contradictory energies charging the pair's romance, both women being "vers" and hence able to fluidly switch between butch and femme roles. See Allen, "Erotics."

losing all sense of self to the dog, maybe sexually engaging with the animal as many critics have speculated (recalling Wendell's bestiality implied at *Ryder's* conclusion). Nora's and Robin's failure to abject destroys ipseity. Narcissism cancels out narcissism. Only non-being is left.

The primordial promises us erotic freedom severed from guilt. Yet to say, as Carrie Rohman does, that Robin's immersion in "the nonlinguistic, the undecidable, and the animal" (57) heralds what the "post-human" should be appears quixotic. Such readings figure Robin as more or less an innocent and Nora as a relic of conservatism to be destroyed, arguments supported by the following from O'Connor:

"There are some people who must get permission to live, and if the Baronin finds no one to give her that permission, she will make an innocence for herself; a fearful sort of primitive innocence. It may be considered 'depraved' by our generation, but our generation does not know everything." (117-18)

True, his generation and ours do not know everything. But the animal cannot only entail transgressive potential without abject risk. Its threat of violence and egotistical excess always hovers in the air. In *Ryder*, the Beast Thingumbob kills his love with love, bestial maleness sacrificing mythical womanhood to the ritual of childbearing, while *The Antiphon's* Dudley and Elisha don animal masks when harassing their kinswomen, forging allegorical links between animalism and male violence. The ram, rooster, bull, half-bull—as Barnes' animal imagery attests, Wendell's and Titus' minotaur-like aspects included,⁴ the animal, in short, remains an ambiguous signifier. Part-animal avatar, Robin is hardly fulfilled in her prowling, trances, and defenselessness while inebriated, when she has no control over who touches her and where. Robin is also not perfectly analogized with the animal per se, being neither self-sufficient ("And then think of Robin who never could provide in her life except in you" [128]) nor divorced from the artificial.⁵

⁴ See Chapter One's footnote six.

⁵ See Martins 115-16; Whitley 90-92; and Blyn 151-52 for targeted readings on how Robin blurs the

Robin was unhappy before she met Felix, and her misery escalates with time and different partners. We don't know why Robin suffers exactly, besides presumably being made a pariah for her sexual and gendered deviations. Her silence bars deeper understanding. Some blame this suffering, rather predictably, on a society that represses her, but this seems too flippant considering Robin's identity crisis and resulting neurosis. Robin is neither fully beast nor human, neither of this time nor another, neither child nor adult, neither feminine nor masculine, neither present nor absent, neither awake nor asleep. Perhaps this definitional crisis explains why characters and critics alike become obsessed with her: she is the eternal ellipsis we want to fill. Victoria L. Smith views Robin as the novel's "empty center," the "woman over whom battles are fought" but who remains virtually unknowable because "described almost entirely through analogies" (199). Catherine Whitley likewise believes Robin "remains an enigma [...] because the images which Barnes uses to portray her never quite add up, but seem instead to be pointing beyond themselves to an unknown and unknowable referent" (90). Merrill Cole correspondingly muses that "Robin is the novel's sovereign power, shaping the destinies of those around her, the dummy that makes the ventriloquists speak, though a cause absent even from herself" (406). At the same time, Cole goes a step further in correctly aligning Robin with abject terror and rapture: "It is precisely in the depiction of Robin [...] that the novel circles closest to its unspeakable interest: not simply the love that dare not speak its name but the absolutely unnameable jouissance indistinguishable from death, the encounter Robin alone does not fear—and that she thereby comes to figure" (395). "[S]he who is eaten death returning" (*Nightwood* 37)—eyes follow her, hungrily, until lids close in fear.

Robin's silence inevitably becomes just as ambivalent as the rest of her. Unlike

Rohman who affirms Robin's reticence as a way of consciously disengaging with a world that has no place for her, I see it as debilitating. Silence can assume more purity than speech, an alternative to lies and meaningless chatter. (Nora once interrupts Felix and the doctor's conversation with, "Are you both really saying what you mean, or are you just talking?" [18].) Not in Robin's case, however. Robin's silence is that of Kristeva's unconcatenating melancholic, not the defiant pagan, and it silences Nora. The sight of Robin with another woman in the garden, for instance, mutes Nora, her silence functioning as a sign of spiritual nausea rather than the spirit's escape. And it is strange that Rohman lends weight to Dr. O'Connor's remarks to Nora (regarding Robin's "primitive innocence"), the words of a lying seer, while denouncing language itself as suspect, particularly babble such as his—talk for the sake of talking, words signifying wounds.

Like her precursor, Dusie, who is called a "pet or beast, according to [the] feelings" of those around her (*Collected Stories* 406), Robin neglects her own wishes in "the way that animals neglect themselves" (*Nightwood* 115). The "little of her life" she tells Nora revolves around "her wish for a home, as if she were afraid she would be lost again, as if she were aware, without conscious knowledge, that she belonged to Nora, and that if Nora did not make it permanent by her own strength, she would forget" (55). Yet without effort on her part (not to be confused with faithfulness), home can never be found. Seitler may attribute Robin's vagabond existence to the higher "service of disrupting comfortable and naturalized assumptions of couplehood, romantic permanence, or narratives of heterosexual life on which the social order is founded" (549). An element of self-sabotage, however, underlies Robin's flight instinct. The vagrant never stopped wanting a home. Barnes even admits in a brief parenthetical aside, "[I]n Robin there was this tragic longing to be kept, knowing herself astray" (58). Like the narrator in "Call of the Night" who gazes out the window and thinks not of escaping into the "world of things unseen" but of

home (“I loose the ache of the wilderness / And long for the fire instead” [*Collected Poems* 24]), Robin, despite her feral aspects, seems to gaze from the forest at “gleam[ing]” (*Collected Poems* 24) windows every so often, half-yearningly drawn to the stable. It turns out Barnes challenges heteronormativity through Robin, yet simultaneously exposes the dangers of entering that chasm where even the terror of being elsewhere terminates. Barnes accepts responsible free love but never validates a non-egalitarian mode of loving. Such reserve accounts for why Robin and Wendell disappoint, why ladies who “cackle and crow” (48-49) over their lesbian exploits are lambasted in *Ladies Almanack*. Those who desire fidelity like Nora aren’t chastised for desiring the thing itself but for clinging to it too closely, a futile endeavor in our world of suffering.

Now back to silence. Earlier, loss was identified with Robin’s saying too little. Now, Kristeva’s “double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject” (207) gushes forth when we say too much. Silence or speech, it doesn’t matter for Barnes. The abject finds its way into everything. Language itself becomes its vessel. One raves because one wants but must not have the mother. In O’Connor’s case, the wrong orifice. “Through the mouth [...] I elaborate that want, and the aggressivity that accompanies it, by *saying*” (41), Kristeva declares. Read against this grain, the doctor’s tirades displace and ingest the abject in one fell swoop. Similar to Anna Freud’s “Sandy,” a little girl who was terrified of dogs and whose talkativeness increased the more phobic she became, verbally devouring dogs she feared would do the same to her,⁶ the doctor verbalizes his phobia. In Kristevan language, his “verbalizing activity, whether or not it names a phobic object related to orality,” denotes “an attempt to introject the incorporated items,” confronting the “‘ab-ject’ that the phobic object is” (41). The bereaved jabbbers about forbidden love and

⁶ A case study originally discussed in one of Anna Freud’s 1946 seminars (qtd. in Kristeva 40-41). For details on Sandy’s case, see Lacan and Tendlarz 37-39.

being out of desire and fear, viciously circling around the breakdown, wanting to be broken.

ANTI-FUTURITY

In the wake of Nazi fascism and its emphasis on the immaculate family, the Paris-frequenting Barnes writes against reproductive dogma itself. The phallogentric order persists through marriage, childbearing, and gendered indoctrination—patresfamilias grooming the next generation to take their stead. Yet Barnes dwells on life's futility, extramaternal representations, fallen child figures (children are never "innocent" or altogether nice for Barnes), and those sexual as well as ethnic outsiders who ordinarily would never have a place in the heteronormative imagination. Edelman's *No Future* can well be applied to Barnes' writing in these regards, although Barnes, of course, refrains from urging us to embrace the death drive in quite the same way Edelman does.⁷ If we perceive "the survival of the social in the Imaginary form of the Child" (14), according to Edelman, then homosexuality does away with such survival, biologically and figuratively, in its pursuit of "sterile, narcissistic enjoyments understood as inherently destructive of meaning and therefore as responsible for the undoing of social organizations, collective reality, and, inevitably, life itself" (13). Queerness, as part of a larger symbolic system,

⁷ See Freud, "Pleasure Principle" for Edelman's famous inspiration. Daniela Caselli cautions us from carelessly applying Edelman's bottom-line to Barnes—that "queerness attains its ethical value precisely insofar as it accedes to that place [of the death drive], accepting its figural status as resistance to the viability of the social while insisting on the inextricability of such resistance from every social structure" (Edelman 3)—because such projection assumes "a willing subject radically self-aware in her negation of knowing her own good" (*Improper Modernism* 174). Although I agree with Caselli that Barnes is never overtly political or politically invested in queer marginality as a cause, I don't believe that that should deter us from reading her politically at certain points. Enough of Barnes' oeuvre promotes the death drive, an anti-moralist position, even if in the specifically "inappropriate, fragile, impure" way Caselli mentions (*Improper Modernism* 174). Edelman's call to detonate the "logic of reproductive futurism" (17) may be a bit too self-consciously politicized for Barnes, yet the author nonetheless shows a similar interest in non-reproductive programs and figurative niches outside the heteronormative mainstream.

opposes the “logic of futurism” or “reproductive futurism” in that queers cannot beget among themselves; are associated with AIDS, being stereotyped as disease-bearing agents (therefore the gay blood donor ban); recall drug-ridden, bacchanalian lifestyles threatening family values; and hence allegorize anti-procreative ideology regardless of whether they are, to quote from Edelman again, “psychically invested in preserving the familiar familial narrativity of reproductive futurism” as individuals (17). This isn’t to say children and childhood do not figure prominently in Barnes’ texts. They do. Mother-child dynamics permeate lesbian relationships, spurred by the absence of children and need for surrogates. Dolls appear to that same effect. Progenitive desire is voiced, especially by men. But faith in biofuturity is spurned.

The author’s non-reproductive outlook probably developed, in part, through a combination of biographical and historical circumstances. The free-spirited bohemianism of her grandmother, Zadel, and the Greenwich Village arts scene Barnes was to join from 1912-1921 fostered a matter-of-fact openness toward free love and its de-emphasis on childbearing relationships. Writing for national magazines such as *Harper’s*, Zadel was a one-time progressive journalist and literary salon hostess whose personal life was (and still is) considered scandalous: twice married and divorced, heartily sex-affirmative, polyamorous, mayhap incestuous with Barnes.⁸ From Zadel, Barnes would learn to embrace desire without apology or restraint. Once Barnes left her childhood home behind, she eventually took up residence in the Village. There, during its cultural heyday, she followed, contributed to, or frequented a number of liberal-minded venues that expanded her already-unorthodox attitudes: rowdy Irish saloons like the Golden Swan, where Barnes could, according to Gerald W. McFarland, “rub shoulders with the gangsters and other ‘lowlife’ types who were among its habitués” (179); the notorious dance club Webster

⁸ See Herring, “Zadel”; Herring, *Djuna* 52-64.

Hall; Mabel Dodge's Fifth Avenue Salon; the (Henrietta Rodman faction of the) Liberal Club; the Liberal Club's unofficial dining spot, Polly's Restaurant; the Provincetown Players, a theatrical group relocated from Provincetown, Massachusetts to Greenwich's MacDougal Street; and politically radical publications like Max Eastman's *The Masses* and Albert Kreymborg's *Others* (featuring topics such as free love, homosexual tolerance, women's suffrage, legalized birth control, access to divorce, and sympathy toward prostitutes).⁹ (The bohemian Paris of the 1920s Barnes later emigrated to extended the social milieu to which she was already accustomed.¹⁰)

As Eastman's and Kreymborg's journals attest, bohemian stances toward motherhood tied into broader birth control debates arising in the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. In the essay "Ryder as Contraception: Barnes v. the Reproduction of Mothering," Sheryl Stevenson helpfully places *Ryder* in a line of anti-reproductive narratives, which includes *Wuthering Heights* and *A Farewell to Arms*. From roughly the 1880s to 1950s, Stevenson reports, changing views on women's obligation to bear children at the expense of their own comfort and lives, epitomized in Margaret Sanger's *Woman and the New Race* and *Motherhood in Bondage*, contributed toward decreasing birth rates.¹¹ Many of Barnes' poems sound as though they could've been dedicated to Sanger herself, so vehement are their representations of the suffering that procreation incurs. In "Birth," Barnes writes, "That all things born must always die. / And that the seed of Nothing lies / Yet here within this envied Much— / So we are forecast, and of such / The child's first sobbing prophesies" (*Collected Poems* 59). The same fatalism surfaces in "Discant (Pregnant women...)," where childbearing is, again, painted as an exercise in futility: "Pregnant women, hard as stone; / Monuments for sheep to lay their foreheads

⁹ See Heise; Wetzsteon; Stansell; McFarland 189-226; Harris, "Around Washington Square" 173-206; Chauncey; Ramirez; Fishbein; and Edwards 18-21.

¹⁰ See Benstock; Wilson; Seigel 295-397; McAlmon; Franck; and Fitch, *Sylvia Beach*.

¹¹ Besides Sanger, see Dye; Gordon; Leavitt; Lewis, "Motherhood Issues"; Lewis, *Politics of Motherhood*; McLaren; Oakley; Scholten; and Wertz.

on— / If your ear has a tempered drum / It can hear / The foetus weeping on its thumb; / The grief, fare toiling over bone / And how should I mourn? and yet how should I mourn” (*Collected Poems* 175). Critics have speculated that this intense hostility toward propagation and its philosophy driving such writing stems from a more personal pessimism. Barnes was raised on an impoverished farm some fifty miles north of New York City, the daughter of a bigamist and notorious womanizer, Wald Barnes. His irresponsible siring—his first wife and mistress-turned-second-wife constantly troubled by jealousy, birthing pains, infant deaths, physical exhaustion, and dwindling funds—and his sexual abuse profoundly embittered Barnes.¹²

Barnes’ obsession with what Joan Retallack labels “static surface orientation” in the theater exemplifies such negativity. The narrative structure behind the majority of Barnes’ early plays refutes an optimistic futurism by warding off action sequences and leaving characters to float in a state of emotional inertia. No hope for the future exists, so Barnes’ early plays, to borrow from Retallack, “begin and end with the characters locked and isolated in little mysteries that fail to fascinate us” (“One Acts” 48). If action insinuates time ticking and latently affirms tomorrow, Barnes, Retallack elaborates,

is condemned to surfaces, and that’s where her brilliance lies – in description. Beyond description there is a mine field. Narrative must go somewhere, must advance into a future which, in her view, is doomed. The fatalism is too great to trust the sweep of events through time, so they become the narrow forced march of mechanical repartee. [...] Her characters hold each other and time itself at bay with stalemates and diversionary epigrams [...] that neither advance the action nor contribute to their understanding of one another. (“One Acts” 47-48)

Whether or not one agrees with Retallack’s estimation that Barnes’ one-act plays remain amateur at best (the Provincetown Players only performed three of Barnes’ productions [Wetzsteon 438]), she’s right to point out that Barnes’ men and women fail to “develop” or do much onstage. Nothing really happens (and not in Beckett’s revelatory way), and no

¹² See Dalton; Wetzsteon 431-48; Herring, *Djuna* 1-74, 268-70, 280-81; and O’Neal.

one goes anywhere in terms of language, emotional suspense, or knowledge. Instead, they languish in their misery in predictable ways. Cardboard archetypes—Barnes favors eccentric, astringently world-weary types—let loose a series of pseudo-profound epigrams to themselves or others, lending a wooden feel to dialogues. What little plot there is revolves around post-factum cogitations. In *Three from the Earth*, the Carson brothers visit Kate Morley to learn about her past affair with their father. *She Tells Her Daughter* circles around what may or may not have happened years ago. Ragna's spiritual decay anchors *The Death of Life*, where disappointment over past dreams leads to suicide. Lady Olivia Lookover reminisces on her youth to a curious niece in *Little Drops of Rain*. *Water-Ice's* messenger visits a certain Lady Fiora Silvertree, a beauty who has gone into seclusion for the past decade, to inform her of current events.

Much of *Nightwood* is similarly (but infinitely more successfully) a lamentation over what has already ended. Nora and Matthew's conversations, Teresa de Lauretis notes, for instance, "stretch out the time of narration by excruciatingly protracted monologues and punctiliously detailed descriptions of characters and locations, like a film shot in long takes where we can see the minutest details of a scene but what 'happens' is next to nothing" (118). Within these static frames that themselves, as formal gestures, stall the future and forward-looking ideology, the child conjures no hope. The process leading to the child's conception, first of all, forecloses any vitality at the outset. In *Nightwood*, none of the cast, whether straight or gay, finds romantic fulfillment. To the contrary, desire dismembers them. As Dr. O'Connor broods to Frau Mann, "[I]f one gave birth to a heart on a plate, it would say 'Love' and twitch like the lopped leg of a frog" (26-27). Neither uplifting nor elegant, love is rendered pathetic, likened to the feeble stirring of a mutilated limb seeking the torso whence it was sundered. At another point, the doctor exclaims, "Love, that terrible thing!" (75) upon observing Jenny's agitation at Robin's flirting with a

“tall slightly surprised English girl” (72). This scene eventually gives over to Jenny’s hysterics and physical blows. The frustration of all desire mirrors the frustration of all happiness.

None of the women want children, all the men do (Jews and a gay), and of the two children present, one is a baby-lesbian while the other is an “idiot” (40). The belief in a heteronormative future is violently expelled at all quarters. “*Nightwood* opens in a bed of childbirth that becomes a deathbed,” Leigh Gilmore comments, “The passing away refers to the literal death of Hedvig, a briefly featured, goose-stepping matriarch, and to the passing on of her figural legacy: the impossibility of conventional motherhood. Children and mothers uncoupled from each other drift through the novel” (615). The death-bed motif is likewise apprehended by Robin Blyn, who connects Robin Vote with Hedvig in that “[l]ike Hedvig, Robin is placed on a bed and in a highly detailed set” (151). Robin’s child delivery also becomes a bloody, frantic ordeal, the bed transforming into a deathtrap:

Amid loud and frantic cries of affirmation and despair Robin was delivered. Shuddering in the double pains of birth and fury, cursing like a sailor, she rose up on her elbow in her bloody gown, looking about her in the bed as if she had lost something. “Oh, for Christ’s sake, for Christ’s sake!” she kept crying like a child who has walked into the commencement of a horror. A week out of bed she was lost, as if she had done something irreparable, as if this act had caught her attention for the first time. (48)

An antipathy toward the bed of childbirth becomes an aversion to what comes out of it: children. Suffering from what, in a realistic novel, might be post-partum depression, Robin tells Felix before striking him in the face, “I didn’t want [my son]!” (49). Her antagonism toward her child almost ends in infanticide. Felix once returns home to discover her “holding the child high in her hand as if she were about to dash it down, but she brought it down gently” (48). This gesture is later repeated when Robin holds a doll, her pretend-child with Nora, “high above her head, as if she would cast it down, a look of fury on her face” (147).

The original Guido and his son, Felix, on the other hand, share the same prayer for immortality through the preservation of the family line. (At least outwardly they do. Chapter Three will consider the counter-intuitive forms that immortality may assume for the Volkbeins, but for now, let it suffice to take this family's reproductive ambitions at face-value.) As ethnic outsiders, they hunger for "sons who would recognize and honour the past" (45), who would help the family inch its way into a European heritage not in its birthright. Robin's "American-ness" was to have facilitated this ambition, Robin being from a young country with relatively little history, making her, according to Smith, "a perfect screen on which [Felix] can project his compulsions about and toward the past" ("Story" 198). But Robin fails the Volkbeins. True to Dr. O'Connor's prophecy, the last of the Volkbeins is an "idiot" (40), hearkening back to the mentally vacuous child, Valentine, of "Cassation." Felix marries Robin for her American vigor only to find himself attached to a ticking time bomb.¹³ (The significance behind Felix's not entirely innocent choice to wed a woman inherently at odds with his reproductive project is part of Chapter Three's discussion.)

The other child, Sylvia, isn't really a child if we typically define children by their innocence. Known as Jenny's niece but not related to Jenny by blood, this "little girl" of unspecified age becomes infatuated with Robin.¹⁴ Resembling The Dove and Barnes' other precocious children, problematized because sexed, Sylvia joins their band of, in Michael Davidson's words, "perpetual isolatos who upset the domestic ideal of the stable, heterosexual family and the continuity of biologically reproductive futurity that is the centerpiece of much narrative fiction" (217-18). The child may be darling and precious at times, but for Barnes, herself a victim of childhood sexual trauma, he or she is never innocent by virtue of youth. Children do not symbolize an unambiguously ethicized future

¹³ That children of interracial marriages are doomed by their birthright is a theme traceable to Barnes' interview of the Duchess of Clermont-Tonnerre in "American Wives and Titled Husbands" (I 323-24).

¹⁴ See *Nightwood* 70-71, 74, and 115-16 for Sylvia and Robin's interactions.

but risk, not unlike that posed by adults. Allen may address the “little girl” of “Cassation” as a “precocious young woman” to sanitize her libidinal energy (*Following Djuna* 38), but for critics such as Daniela Caselli, Barnes says too little and too much in both directions for us to be sure:

[T]he story does not fully justify an identification of the narrator with either a precocious little girl or a young ‘new woman’, because the implied reader colludes and becomes embroiled in constantly assessing if what she is reading is actually of a sexual nature. The story sets up a process of estrangement which leads the reader to constantly consider her own moral paradigms; although this is a story of seduction in which the ‘little girl’ of the original title claims to have been sixteen at the time of the events, her seduction (her ‘corruption’) consists – paradoxically – of being lured into regressing to a childhood which never was and cannot exist. (*Improper Modernism* 137)

Caselli made this same assertion years earlier, in fact, when she claimed that “there is no innocent space, no pre-linguistic position from which to criticize corruption or artificiality” in Barnes (“Tendency to Precocity” 198), offering the writer’s short stories as proof. Children in “Oscar,” “Cassation,” “The Grande Malade,” “Dusie,” “Behind the Heart,” “The Diary of a Dangerous Child,” “The Diary of a Small Boy,” and “A Boy Asks a Question,” for instance, are too decadently aware of the performative aspects of child-like behavior to be guileless. Hence, the child can fall, and perhaps childhood has always contained an element of depravity about it. Even the “baby in short skirts” of “Vagaries Malicieux” is painted as a Lolita-esque figure, “laugh[ing] heartily when her mother told a rather naughty war story” and “[speaking] of international matters with a very personal twinkle in her eyes” (19).

“To be utterly innocent [...] would be to be utterly unknown, particularly to oneself” (138), Dr. O’Connor tells Nora. No living individual is innocent by this definition. Make-shift children in *Nightwood* are no less prone to damnation, “rather than redeeming history, often [serving] as a reminder of its loss,” according to Davidson (216). He points out how Robin “is often called a child, her bisexuality, sexual adventurousness, and somnambulism

suggesting Freud's preconscious, infant state that exists outside or prior to socialization" (218). So is the doctor but for different reasons: outbursts, tears, and a childlike distress for the world. Both characters are damned. And in an ironic twist, O'Connor, despite his "mother's reverence for childhood" (73) and desperate wish "to boil some good man's potatoes and toss up a child for him every nine months by the calendar" (91), can never birth children, being a hirsute, cross-dressing fairy living in squalor. The closest thing he has to a child, Davidson suggests, is his spate of words, the wild raving that never ceases and is the doctor's sole creation (215). The dolls that lesbian lovers gift one another are equally damned, being pale substitutes of life, only "effigies" and "shrouds" (142). (Is Robin doubly damned, because she is likened to both a child and doll and would destroy both?¹⁵) In Nora's words, "[W]hen a woman gives [a doll] to a woman, it is the life they cannot have, it is their child, sacred and profane" (142). But that life is lifeless, offering no hope, merely a hoax. No one in the novel takes dolls seriously as progeny.

Ryder and *Ladies Almanack* also support Edelman's "child-averse, future-negating force" (113) in their own ways. *Ryder* does so by turning Wendell's procreative logic upon itself: instead of life, Wendell's lust breeds death. *Ladies Almanack* turns away from a heteronormative future by delighting in what Deborah Parsons describes as "the lesbian's resistance to patriarchal demand in her refusal to reproduce, and the pleasures available to the female body when undefiled by the pain of male intrusion and possession" (46). Child support is a serious concern in both narratives. Indifferent to his harem's well-being or his wallet, Wendell sires one child after another, leaving his mother, Sophia, to financially support the expanding clan, no matter if she needs to "go a-begging." No joy seems accessible for women at any stage in the process, whether in the begetting or birthing. For straight sex in *Ryder* is usually nonconsensual and giving birth is disastrous,

¹⁵ See *Nightwood* 147.

to the extent that Amelia advises Julie, “Once I was safe enough and I could not let well enough alone, but must get myself in the way of doom and damnation by being natural. So take warning by my size and don’t let a man touch you, for their touching never ends, and screaming oneself into a mother is no pleasure at all” (95). This concept of naturalness is what Edelman attacks. Motherhood and wifely duties have only wreaked havoc on Amelia. Julie can do nothing but watch, when the time comes, her mother’s agony on the childbed, “trembling” and “sobbing” (96) as a child might, her “image of birth,” as Marie Ponsot recognizes, “full of the fear of death and framed by the sight of her mother’s sprung and bloody pelvic floor” (111). Elisha’s vision of his mother Kate-Careless’ body as “a distorted shape of death” (222), worn down by pregnancy and age, reinforces the mother’s image as one of exhaustion.

That reproductive ideology culminates in suffering, often death; that the future sought in the child eradicates the mother’s present; that children’s prospects in this world remain no better than their parents’—such psychological deadlocks recur with a vengeance throughout *Ryder*. In giving birth to one of Wendell’s bastards, a young girl perishes (77). Kate-Careless delivers a stillborn child “amid wailing and crying and great lamentation” (100). These anonymous deaths join hundreds of others in Julie’s nightmare. Chapter Twenty-four, “Julie Becomes What She Had Read,” features a montage of child deaths and pregnancies, the connotation being that pregnancy is a kind of death, one destined for the female sex throughout “great history” (109). Five-year-old Arabella Lynn prays before bedtime, dies in her sleep, and sparks a natural catastrophe upon her burial (“The heavens crack asunder, and the valleys are inundated!” [108]), worrying the “hundred little girls” who form Arabella’s funeral procession. Immediately, Julie, heretofore one of Arabella’s mourners, assumes the departed’s place in bed, forced to experience the Messiah’s agony during crucifixion. A tropology of rape mixed with biblical torture and death comes into

play. Julie, by being bedded, “becomes the shudder of the condemned,” “soles turned up, “hands all backs for agony,” “[e]very man’s heart [in] her mouth, the bowels of the world kennel in her belly,” and “shadows of foreshortened destinies fall[ing] down from about her” (109). Sex signifies and begets death—of both the maternal conduit and infant—through life’s bloody invocation. Julie, then, morphs into a “voluptuous sixteen” (109). After a paragraph, however, she finds herself back “amid the children” (109). Hundreds of eerily pregnant “little girls” fall out of the sky to their deaths or perdition, condemned to motherhood and damned by the same token. That the chapter ends with Julie waking to Wendell’s anger (she most likely cries out against his procreative crusade in her sleep)—“Did I not hear her deriding me greatly?” (110)—signals its tension with Ryder’s “riding.”

The critique against Wendell’s desire to be “Father of All Things” (210) continues, even occasionally from Wendell’s own lips. In another of Wendell’s self-mythologizing tales, for instance, Beast Thingumbob’s Artemis-like love foresees her own death in the birthing of her ten sons. She dies as she predicts, as previously mentioned, and her act of maternal sacrifice is described as “the useless gift of love” (121). One of Wendell’s bastard sons, by claiming he will never sire children and so avoid perpetuating age-old filial disappointments, likewise points to the uselessness of the procreative act. When children realize “what a moiling cauldron of evil” the heart is (235), the lad muses to O’Connor, how can they see their parents in the same light? The old faith in parental goodness and omnipotence must wane. The story goes no other way for Barnes. Itself a narrative of growing disillusionment in fathers, *Ryder* stops at the instant Wendell comes undone. The dream of eternal life through the reproductive chain crumbles as Wendell concedes his mortality (“I am born and I must die, that is so, is it not?” [241]), all spiritual conceits fled before his helplessness to sustain the lives of his seed. Pressured by local authorities to give up his bigamy, Wendell, with Sophia’s help, evicts Amelia and her

children from the family home. “And whom should he disappoint?” (242) closes *Ryder*. Wendell’s natalist tract closes in tandem. As though in an overpopulated dystopia, where too many specimens on the planet kill the species, the irony becomes how Wendell’s mania for the future destroys that of his offspring (now left to fend for themselves) and thus indirectly his own. Whether by the bull or ox-hare hybrid (as O’Connor was once described), the virile heterosexual or sterile homosexual haunting Amelia’s dreams, the future recedes into nothingness.

Ladies Almanack more whimsically gestures beyond reproductive futurism. “In the world of *Ladies Almanack*,” Parsons remarks, “it is heterosexuality that causes the degeneration and ageing of the female body, and lesbianism that is the state of pure and virginal womanhood” (46). Men are absent, as Chapter One mentions, and one of the few references to them is overwhelmingly negative (Dame Musset recounting how she was “deflowered by the Hand of a Surgeon” at age ten [24]). So despite cliquy tendencies, petty infighting, airs, indulgences, not to mention, again, Patience Scalpel’s skepticism toward Musset’s ways, lesbians embrace their place outside heterosexual orbits. As Parsons puts it, Musset and her ladies find pleasure “without the consequences of physical pain” (49), that is, the pain of childbirth and undesired penetration. To “stick to the old Tradition is Credulity, and Credulity has been worn to a Thread” (22), Masie Tuck-and-Frill sighs, so a new mythology of lesbianism is framed around immaculate conception (as previously mentioned in Chapter One). The “first Woman born with a Difference” (26) hatches from an egg dropped out of heaven and mothers other lesbians through acts of romantic initiation. Masie goes so far as to translate this half-erotic, half-cultural transmission into literal terms, at least for speculation’s sake. She muses aloud before Musset, “[W]hat is to prevent some modern Girl from rising from the Couch of a Girl as modern, with something new in her Mind? [...] A feather might accomplish it, or a Song

rightly sung, or an Exclamation said in the right Place, or a Trifle done in the right Spirit” (22). Even if “fond Delusion[s]” (22), such alternative reproductive sequences, by promoting a present and future without men, playfully invite us to stray outside “the Medieval way” (22), which has become exactly that: medieval.

Does one venture into this kind of otherworldly queer kingdom or turn back in fear? In *Ladies Almanack*, leaving behind the nuclear family emancipates. In other scenarios, it induces melancholy. In “Prize Ticket 177,” Clochette loses Doik to Du Berry by a trick of fate. The two women switch lottery tickets, inadvertently swapping prizes—one getting spoons where she would have won a husband, the other winning it all. Clochette loves and loses the odd but handsome orphan. There is no glory to be had in singleness here. Before Doik comes to Baxter Street, Clochette “[does] not mind passing on with the fraternity of the Silent Cold” (*Collected Stories* 86). But after his arrival, things change for her. All Clochette can do in the end is give the new couple a “little red india rubber teething ring” she won at a previous lottery and leave. “Prize Ticket 177” becomes a bittersweet tale of lovers coming together (Doik selling himself for money only to discover that his bidder is someone he would have chosen anyway), set to start a family, while a third-wheel looks on.

It appears as though an alternative space for outsiders, while real, rouses mixed feelings for Barnes. The male establishment disappoints her, yet total allegiance to Edelman’s death drive necessitates a confidence in queer modes she simply doesn’t possess. A couple’s failure to escape civilization in *Five Thousand Miles* epitomizes her ambivalence. Five thousand miles from home, Henry Allover and Mazie Notataul have been shipwrecked on an island for five years and only just discovered one another. After an astonished reunion, they welcome this opportunity to think “nothing of convention” and live “a free untutored life” (*RS* 121). Their romance rekindles. Henry inquires if she is still his. Mazie responds with an affirmative: “Entirely. As you wanted me to be, five

years ago. Simple, untouched by convention, daring all civilizations, and the savagery we are living in. Five thousand miles from anywhere, willing to face any kind of criticism—yours, before Heaven” (RS 122). Then, an eggbeater is spotted, signaling the intrusion of everything they have left behind: civilization, social mores, shackles, man-made law, tradition. Mazie despairs and breaks off the brief affair, telling Henry, “You must leave me—at once. It’s no use, Henry Allover, we can’t get away from society” (RS 123). Whether or not a ship is nearing the island is of secondary importance to the fact that the eggbeater still possesses enough symbolic weight to terrify Mazie. Five thousand miles may as well be five for all she cares. The distance counts for nothing if the mind carries a radar signal and ships continue patrolling. The pair can never get away from it all, and the invasion of external and internal landscapes stresses the futility of such resistance. Edelman’s call to “Fuck the social order and the Child in whose name we’re collectively terrorized; fuck Annie; fuck the waif from *Les Mis*; fuck the poor, innocent kid on the Net; fuck Laws both with capital ls and with small; fuck the whole network of Symbolic relations and the future that serves as its prop” (29) could almost be a quote from Henry or Mazie (obviously amplified many degrees) who so desperately want to live a different life. Yet Barnes seems to counter every once in a while: if we fuck it all (and at times we should), what do we have left?

Both Edelman and Kristeva can only stay within the realm of theory. To choose the abject over sentient life and its future remains a philosophical gesture, not a literal one. For if we were not once-removed from the abject, we could not speak of it. Abjection must necessarily be pondered by what has not succumbed to it—only attains meaning for a still-functioning subject. This reciprocal logic finds its way into Edelman’s and Kristeva’s ongoing emphases on the figurative. Edelman takes pains to reiterate that queerness

embodies the death drive. To “*figure* the undoing of civil society, the death drive of the dominant order,” he insists, “is neither to be nor to become that drive; such being is not the point. Rather, acceding to that figural position means recognizing and refusing the consequences of grounding reality in denial of the drive” (17). Those consequences Edelman alludes to are too real. His reference to Matthew Shepard’s 1998 murder says enough.¹⁶ From the safe distance of her academic chair, Kristeva similarly experiences the abject most keenly in literature, which she feels “represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and most serious apocalypses” (208). We lose ourselves in reading and writing, often abjecting what “torments and possesses” (Kristeva 208) us in the process. The imagination wanders through those pages that capture what Kristeva calls the “sublime point at which the abject collapses in a burst of beauty that overwhelms us” (210).

Barnes, as a writer, doesn’t escape the symbolic order either. But her narratives practice what Edelman at long last pulls back from and Kristeva barely grazes. For Edelman doesn’t negate the future for queers per se, only the (particularly stylized) reproductivist future that negates queers and that the queer must symbolically strive to negate. Kristeva vicariously experiences a sense of non-being through literature (not exactly death, which is a possible outcome of abjection), but has nowhere to go, really, afterward—certainly not a call to action. Barnes, however, is the only one out of the three willing to fuck it all in the name of death. If we fuck it all, only death remains. But death proves a better alternative to the suffering defining life *for everyone*, the peculiarities of experiencing homophobic violence or, in a Freudian twist, losing oneself in one’s same-sex lover aside. To know this distinction constitutes wisdom, as the Catholic ethos would

¹⁶ Targeted for his homosexuality, twenty-one-year-old Shepard was violently beaten to death in Wyoming. What made his murder hit national headlines was its brutality: Shepard’s attackers tied him to a fence and left him to die once they finished their assault. For Edelman, Shepard signifies yet another victim, like Brandon Teena, sacrificed to reproductive futurism’s thesis.

have it. It's not for nothing that Miranda, Barnes' alter-ego in *The Antiphon*, tells Augusta, "I've always been obliged to death, indeed. / It is the rate in everything I do. / It is the matter that I turn upon. / It is the hub that holds the staggered spindle. / It is the plumb-bob, piddock, gravity / Of the Surveyor with the cautious hand: / A portion of man's digruty [*sic*], he dies" (195). Life is something to be endured, not enjoyed. The nothingness that follows is a welcome relief from life's hellishness.

Barnes' reaction to Peter Neagoe's disapproval regarding *Nightwood's* depressive character intimately reveals her appreciation of such hard-won wisdoms:

"What has hope and cheer got to do with it? It is far beyond these meager necessities, it seems to me. Wisdom is hope and cheer. There's hope and cheer in the fact that a human being can find these things out. Discovery of whatever kind is hope, the word cheer I will mark out, as I think its [*sic*] pretty silly anyway. Who wants cheer of any kind except truth." (qtd. in Plumb 159; letter to Emily Coleman, 8 Nov. 1935)

Nearly every book in Barnes' oeuvre harnesses the imaginative power made accessible through undoing. Disappointing everyone around them, Wendell and Robin collapse into bestial abjection; Nora faints; Gaya goes catatonic; Musset, Augusta, and Miranda cease to live. In such ways, Barnes would end all of our futures, all consciousness itself—so abject does the entire human enterprise strike her. Abjection looms as a universal condition, not one particular to queers, although the queer, through narcissistic tensions and non-reproduction, remains particularly abject and abject in a particular way.

3

Suffering in *Nightwood*

Everyone suffers, and life is suffering for Barnes. But not everyone luxuriates in suffering the way her queers do in *Nightwood*, Barnes' only text that deals with failed love affairs in an extended way. Given its sheer gravitas and perseverance, the pleasure with which *Nightwood's* characters emotionally wound others and are wounded well accords with the historical exaltation of suffering in the West. Aristotelian attitudes stress the aesthetic delight derived from suffering, whereas Christianity shifts the focus from art to religion, in which suffering in the tradition of Christ proves oneself to the divine. If love, then, is taken as a spiritual order, those lovers who are willing to suffer the most for their faith authenticate their commitment. Queer love, because it is an underdog and has historically entailed suffering, often flourishes among the most dedicated acolytes, those unafraid to expire before love's altar. In Barnes, the overlap between Christianity and queer martyrdom is first made explicit in *Ladies Almanack*, where Dame Evangeline Musset rules as a radical lesbian proselytizer:

“In my day,” said Dame Musset, and at once the look of the Pope, which she carried about with her as a Habit, waned a little, and there was seen to shine forth the Cunning of a Monk in Holy Orders, in some Counry [*sic*] too old for Tradition, “in my day I was a Pioneer and a Menace, it was not then as it is now, *chic* and pointless to a degree, but as daring as a Crusade, for where now it leaves a woman talkative, so that we have not a Secret among us, then it left her in Tears and Trepidation. Then one had to lure them to the Breast, and now,” she said, “You have to smack them, back and front to ween them at all! What joy has the missionary,” she added, her Eyes narrowing and her long Ears moving with Disappointment, “when all the Heathen greet her with Glory Halleluja! before she opens her Mouth, and with an Amen! before she shuts it!” (34)

Dame Musset is likened to the Pope, her listeners to disciples, and her lesbian conquests to the Holy Crusade. Musset's nostalgic reminiscence is steeped in the Judeo-Christian idea that love without suffering rings hollow.

As fanatically religious as she became, Emily Coleman may have been onto something when she re-read *Nightwood* as a Catholic novel in the 1940s (Herring, *Djuna* 254). She wasn't alone in this interpretation. Jane Marcus reports that "Graham Greene (*Tablet*, 14 November 1936) read *Nightwood* as a Catholic novel of spiritual experience by 'a major poet,' as horrible as Webster and Tourneur, 'obscene, though never pornographic' like *Ulysses*" ("Mousemeat" 196). Similarly, an anonymous review in *New Statesman and Nation* (which Marcus speculates Rebecca West may have authored) remarks, "*Night Wood* [sic] is not only a strangely original but [...] an extremely moral work; and I was not surprised to learn that it appears under the aegis of the most eminent Anglo-Catholic poet of the present day [T. S. Eliot]" (17 Oct. 1936; qtd. in Marcus, "Mousemeat" 199). Barnes, although a self-professed agnostic (Herring, *Djuna* 254; O'Neal 44, 175-76), writes with a Catholic enthusiasm for suffering,¹ although she, like Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, perverts Catholicism in that one suffers for aberrant desire, not orthodox faith, in *Nightwood*.

Barnes' linking queer masochism with martyrdom isn't among the therapeutic psychoanalytic practices discussed in Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings*, which charts the transformative implications of self-inflicted violence for queers, but a gesture more in line with Deleuze's sexual politicizing in "Coldness and Cruelty." Barnes isn't so much working through homophobia-related traumas by "acting them out" (see Cvetkovich 86-89) but refusing any healing or closure as such. Her men and women cling to their anguish and spiritually elevate themselves in the process, which, in a symbolic fashion,

¹ See O'Neal 62, 69, and 175-76.

undercuts those institutions that would have them suffer in ignominy and cowardice for all time. According to Kenneth Burke, one way of “recommending a cause” is “in terms of ‘tragic dignification,’ by showing people who are willing to undergo sacrifices in behalf of the cause” (“Version” 253). By those terms, there is no shortage of queer martyrs in Barnes. Barnes’ queers attain a dignity known to few, their unhappiness being so intense. As A. Desmond Hawkins observes in his 1937 *Nightwood* review, “[Barnes’] characters suffer lavishly on the minimum of misfortune. Any vulgar tendency to well-being is repressed, the sources of suffering are removed to second-hand, and we have a stream of superb sentences, of penetrating epigrams lighting up an essentially static scene” (*The New English Weekly*, 29 April 1937; qtd. in Marcus, “Mousemeat” 202). Their spiral downward propels their cause upward, and such reciprocity complicates an otherwise more straightforward exposé on impossible love and being. Barnes, without taking a self-consciously queer activist stance, intervenes in the problem of queer suffering by endowing suffering with a transcendent function. This isn’t to say suffering provides a decisive way out for the queer. Barnes’ despair is too relentless to earn total redemption for her romantic outsiders. Although suffering possesses transgressive potential, happy endings escape everyone in Barnes, straight or gay. Yet a certain spiritual ascent can still be derived through pain.

This shift occurs insofar as Barnes gestures toward Deleuze’s inverted affect regime: the power of punishment to enforce repressive sexual regulations through pain and hence bridle perversion becomes inverted when punishment opens the portal to pleasure, when pleasure relocates to sites of perversion. For Deleuze understands that when we invite pain, we deprive it of its power to instill fear. We negate the negative connotations pain harbors by freeing ourselves from the repressive dictates of conscience traditionally surrounding what is taboo here: sexual liberty. By divorcing pain from punishment, the

masochist reverses the moral order regulating sexuality. “The law is no longer subverted by the upward movement of irony to a principle that overrides it,” Deleuze writes, “but by the downward movement of humor which seeks to reduce the law to its furthest consequences” (88). Masochistic pleasure, then, is not about pain. It never was. Pain is instrumental to but not the end-point of masochism. To elucidate how masochism emphasizes the absurdity of oppressive authorities by assigning pleasure, absurdly, to the perverse, Deleuze nods to Theodor Reik, who meditates, “The purpose to obtain satisfaction *in spite* of all threats develops into the tendency to gain satisfaction *to spite* all threats. [...] What else but a demonstration of absurdity is aimed at, when the punishment for forbidden pleasure brings about this very same pleasure?” (145, 160).

The literary model both men would turn to for evidence is *Venus in Fur*'s Severin von Kuziemski. What distinguishes Severin's case from standard thrill-seekers is his attributing an erotic aspect to Christian martyrdom, an undertaking growing out of a tradition that is antipathetic to erotic indulgence. Addressing his beloved “mistress,” Wanda, Severin asserts, “[T]he martyrs were supersensual beings who found positive pleasure in pain and who sought horrible tortures, even death, as others seek enjoyment. I too am supersensual, madam, just as they were” (172). But this interpretation twists and turns the logic by which the Christian Church, whose gospel, according to Wanda, epitomizes the “struggle of the spirit against the senses” (159), penalizes (or at least discourages) erotic acts that escape the “vanilla” marital bed. The whip or law comes down on our heads to prevent us from experimenting with the flesh, but backfires on itself when reappropriated as the new means for pleasurable experimentation. The transfiguration of pain into transcendent pleasure is consequently made possible, for Deleuze, when the masochist “stands guilt on its head by making punishment into a condition that makes possible the forbidden pleasure” (89). In *Nightwood*, it is in

masochism, not sadism, that an insurgent politics of queer suffering abide. Homosexuals suffer extravagantly at one time or another, yet that is the point. Beyond mere willingness to undergo sacrifices for a cause, the will to pleasure in them informs *Nightwood's* queer rhetoric. Pain as pleasure, pleasure as pain—this contradiction is teased out by *Nightwood's* O'Connor, who grasps that “terror and joy” are linked on a primal level, “wedded somewhere back again into a formless sea where a swan [...] sinks crying” (137).

This chapter considers how queer masochism evolves into a politicized gesture against Puritanism by observing how suffering, in Barnes, possesses a transfiguring element. It does so by first sifting the reversals in power made possible through masochism, as opposed to the spiritual powerlessness sadism culminates in. Matthew's, Robin's, Nora's, and Felix's complicated relation to emotional punishment and forbidden pleasure will be addressed. The second section, “Space,” examines how the idea of bowing down as rising up infiltrates *Nightwood's* spatial aesthetic, with vertical motion connoting the sublime, its horizontal counterpart evoking inertia.

MASOCHISM

The forbidden pleasure in *Nightwood* rests in homosexual desire (anchored on a female bodily imaginary) for Matthew, lesbian gratification for Nora, and an Aryan birthright for Felix. Homophobia perturbs Barnes' queers (albeit in a less explicit way than in Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*), while racism haunts her Jews. Queer and Jewish causes obviously aren't synonymous. I include Felix here, however, not only because the Jew and queer remain tied to the larger issue of minority persecution,² but also because Felix

² See Altman, “Book of Repulsive Jews?”; Benstock 424-29; Kaivola; and, despite its aforementioned

possesses enough sexual idiosyncrasies and queer bonds to warrant a queer reading of his masochism. He's a Jew who seems a bit queer and derives his forbidden pleasure through queer punishment—his wife, Robin. Like Severin, whose masochistic temperament is repeatedly likened to a martyr's,³ *Nightwood's* romantics induct themselves into the martyr tradition. They become martyrs for love.

The stigmatization queer martyrs endure loses polemical force when, again, persecution paves the way for pleasure. That queers must suffer for their being and desiring the forbidden turns upside-down when they themselves embrace suffering in the name of self-dignification. In a similar manner, that racial outsiders should face extinction, especially during the era *Nightwood* was composed, becomes philosophically defied when they will annihilation upon themselves. Pleasuring in agony becomes a statement in this light, a way of validating loss by imbuing it with resistant meaning. The abject preemptively strike against the law by welcoming its punishment with open arms. To that end, O'Connor's masochistically tormenting himself through emotional exhaustion, counseling acquaintances who won't listen to his words or take his troubles to heart, renders redundant the camp queen's angst. Nora's and Felix's triumph similarly lies in their deliberate surrender to the worst: boundless melancholia and death. Not only does Nora's melancholia ennoble lesbian desire by virtue of its protracted intensity, Nora herself holds power over Robin because both reside in Nora's imagination, moving by her moral dictates as a true masochist. Felix, meanwhile, symbolically counters the threat of genocide by wedding a woman who bears him Guido, the "idiot" child who will end the Volkbeins. But Robin, out of the three, remains powerless till the last page, often sadistic yet no real sadist, sometimes half-heartedly masochistic, neither here nor there.

It is fitting that O'Connor be scrutinized first, since his voice encompasses all the

rhetorical excesses (see preface), Marcus, "Laughing at Leviticus."

³ See Sacher-Masoch 148, 178-79, 198, and 212.

others. Matthew presents us with a more expansive masochism than Nora does, since he, lacking a specific love-object, martyrs himself for the world at large, the mouthpiece for everyone's misery. Everyone comes to him for a shoulder to cry on, grieving over Robin or the related issue of her son, Guido. They seek and find some clarity, as oxymoronically obscure are its guises. And O'Connor, a glutton for punishment, wrings himself dry for their futile causes, wallowing in their sorrows, frustrated by their indifference to his plight.

Such martyrdom inverts the logic underlying the sexual deviant's punishment through transgender fantasy. The doctor guiltily desires to be and provide what men truly want: the woman "stupid" enough to be lied to or loved enough to get away with lying (*Nightwood* 19).⁴ Since he is not a woman and neither so stupid nor so loved as to do either, however, he grabs pleasure where he can: on his knees, impressively burdened by the world's collective woes. "I've never asked better than to see the two ends of my man no matter how I might be dwindling" (101) or "I was glad I was simple and didn't want a thing in the world but what could be had for five francs" (104), Matthew is prone to say. But such outward resignation hides a deeper masochistic revolt. The world casts him out, so the pariah throws himself into its existential sinkholes. He breaks bread with everyone who would emotionally starve him, embracing his predicament in that perverse mood quintessentially defining the ideal masochist's quest to spite those hordes eager for his or her comeuppance.

The doctor, like Sacher-Masoch's heroes, approaches suffering as an art form. "[J]ust being miserable isn't enough—you have got to know how" (131), O'Connor says on an occasion, lifting a quip from a certain "Father Lucas." Even one's death should make a grand statement. The self-described "vexatious bastard" (32) with "large melancholy eyes" (32-33) becomes misery's master in the post-mortem fantasy "What an

⁴ For O'Connor's transgendered references, see *Nightwood* 73, 90-91, 100, 143, and 150.

autopsy I'll make [...] my heart that will be weeping still when they find my eyes cold” (101). Claims to melancholic grandeur intensify, as O'Connor recounts to Nora his (alleged) discomfort upon seeing Jenny pursue Robin:

“I began to mourn for my spirit, and the spirits of all people who cast a shadow a long way beyond what they are, and for the beasts that walk out of the darkness alone; I began to wail for all the little beasts in their mothers, who would have to step down and begin going decent in the one fur that would last them their time. And I said to myself: For these I would go bang on my knees [...]” (105-06)

Discomfort can be a muse, though. Suffering inspires this town crier for the condemned (which is to say everyone alive) to new rhetorical heights when Jenny's jealous tears shed over Robin “ma[ke] the doctor sad, with that unhappy yet pleasantly regrettable discomfort on which he usually launched his better meditations” (74). Sadness constitutes O'Connor's imaginative fodder, a pleasure in its own right.

Reinforcing such masochism is Matthew's gloomy aura that cuts through all artifice. “The Baron, who was always troubled by obscenity, could never, in the case of the doctor, resent it,” Barnes explicitly states, “he felt the seriousness, the melancholy hidden beneath every jest and malediction that the doctor uttered” (39). This melancholy is unfeigned, the single truth amidst Matthew's lies, themselves told “to take the mortal agony out of [everyone's] guts” (135) or so the liar says. It follows him everywhere, even during his most unguarded moments. When Felix spots the doctor unawares, the “Baron [i]s shocked to observe [...] that [the doctor] seem[s] old, older than his fifty odd years would account for. He move[s] slowly as if he were dragging water; his knees [...] sagged. His dark shaved chin [i]s lowered as if in a melancholy that had no beginning or end” (110). Yes, this is misery's master, indeed—*Nightwood's* answer to the Bible's Cain.

Nora once tells O'Connor, “You know what none of us know until we have died. You were dead in the beginning” (152). The price of this wisdom born from sorrow is aloneness. Everyone in *Nightwood* ends up alone, yet solitude assumes an edge with

Matthew. He fills the silence oppressing Nora and Felix. He consolingly answers their questions in his own hodgepodge way. Neither returns the spirit behind such favors. The doctor's troubles fall on deaf ears, his audience treating him as a means to an end—a sounding board, a personal radio to pass the hours. That human interest runs one-way in his conversations isn't lost on O'Connor either. Alluding to himself in the third-person, O'Connor mockingly declares, “[T]he reason the doctor knows everything is because he’s been everywhere at the wrong time and has now become anonymous” (82). On another occasion, he frames his thankless state in Edenic terms:

“Ah, yes—I love my neighbour. Like a rotten apple to a rotten apple’s breast affixed we go down together, nor is there a hesitation in that decay, for when I sense such, there I apply the breast the firmer, that he may rot as quickly as I, in which he stands in dire need or I miscalculate the cry. [...] The encumbrance of myself I threw away long ago, that breast to breast I might go with my failing friends. And do they love me for it? They do not.” (153)

In this context, the money the doctor filches here and there covers but a modest fee for his fraying patience and nerves. Nora, for one, ignores Matthew’s advice to stop pining after Robin throughout the chapter “Go Down, Matthew.” She goes on scribbling letters and speaking “as if she had not been interrupted” (140). Exasperated by her obstinacy, Matthew despairs, “[D]on’t cry to me [...] I know no one loves, I, least of all, and that no one loves me” (126, 147). An almost identical exchange (or lack thereof) occurs when O'Connor shares with Jenny his troubled relationship to his father. Absorbed in Robin’s flirtations with others present, Jenny completely ignores him. Such insensitivity provokes Matthew’s outburst “Oh, for the love of God!” (74). His later, more belligerent curse “May they all be damned! The people in my life who have made my life miserable, coming to me to learn of degradation and the night” (161) seems an equally reasonable riposte to those emotional leeches who haunt his step. Perhaps the main reason, the simplest reason, behind O'Connor’s mad rants is frustration: no one ever listens to his

problems for their own sake, so why shouldn't he fill the air with whatever he wants for as long as he wants?

From the soothsayer to the apocalyptic source—we come to Robin. Robin generally plays the sadist to Nora's masochist. Felix returns home one night to even find Robin dozing over “the memoirs of the Marquis de Sade,” with the line “*Et lui rendit pendant sa captivité les milles services qu'un amour dévoué est seul capable de rendre*” (47) significantly underscored. Yet Robin's occasional lapses into masochism and Nora's moments of critical decisiveness reveal the complicated, often counter-intuitive power dynamics between the torturer and the tortured. Like Sade, Robin is egotistical in her pursuit of pleasure, her gratification always taking priority. If Sade physically tortures his victims, Robin emotionally agonizes hers, estranging her lovers over time. Those abandoned by her weep and pace into the night. Sade's belief in total sovereignty explains why Robin “herself is the only ‘position’” (146), as Dr. O'Connor puts it. His words allude to both her intense narcissism and her drive to dominate whatever lies outside her subjectivity. Not only does Robin interest herself the most, she is intent on making that interest everyone's interest, taking pains to ensure that Nora's life, in particular, is hers. “[S]he would sit at home all day, looking out of the window or playing with her toys, trains, and animals and cars to wind up, and dolls and marbles and soldiers,” Nora recollects, “But all the time she was watching me to see that no one called, that the bell did not ring, that I got no mail, nor anyone hallooing in the court, though she knew that none of these things could happen. My life was hers” (147). Robin can go where she will and see whom she may, but never Nora. The solitary sleepwalker, out of spite or forlornness, spreads that same dreaded affliction to others: solitude.

The pleasure in controlling eventually develops into the pleasure in controlling by pain. The same woman who allegedly tells Jenny, “Don't leave the house because I don't

know exactly when I am going to be able to get away, because I can't hurt Nora" (141), proceeds to hurt Nora in multiple ways. Angry when Nora is not up waiting for her as usual, Robin "hurls" their make-shift child, a doll, to the floor "and put[s] her foot on it, crushing her heel into it" (147). When Nora immediately comes "crying behind her" (147), Robin kicks the doll across the floor. The creature of the night sadistically destroys, out of childish vengefulness, an item that her beloved values, because her lover dared to do something other than exist only through and for her. In Nora's memory, Robin's most outwardly sadistic utterance surfaces when she returns from a night out to tell Nora, "I want to make everyone happy. I want everyone to be gay, gay. Only you, only you, you mustn't be gay or happy, not like that, it's not for you, only for everyone else in the world" (155). Robin savors Nora's suffering, always "hoping [Nora] would break [her] heart in safety" (140). Even Jenny, as vulgar as the novel paints her, becomes pitiable when the object of Robin's torture. Jenny, too, endures Robin's sadism when Robin knowingly provokes Jenny's jealous frenzy by slighting her before her niece, Sylvia, and a nameless English girl in "The Squatter."

The discrepancy between "I can't hurt Nora" and "Nora can't be happy" stems from the sadist's masochistic streak. Goading one's life force till it flees is a death wish. "You have got to stay with me or I can't live" (143) becomes "Leave me, so I can die." That being said, Robin's masochism diverges from Sacher-Masoch's or even Sade's, due to her being in a novel that blurs ego boundaries between same-sex lovers and her failure to fully internalize the sadist's vision. Plus, Deleuze's denial of any inherent complementarity between sadism and masochism—his approaching them as individual, not mirror, functions—seems apt to me. Nora's and Robin's role-reversals should therefore not be taken as acting out of character but within it, Nora's sadism differing from Robin's, Robin's masochism differing from Nora's. When Robin smiles and becomes

compliant after being struck by Nora in their apartment lobby, she demonstrates what Deleuze describes as the sadist's unique foray into masochism at the apex of her "glorious infamy" (39). The libertine deliberately undergoes various tortures to flaunt the extent of her crimes, not savor punishment itself and ridicule the law as the true masochist would. As Deleuze puts it, "Through insults and humiliations, in the throes of pain, the libertine is not expiating, but in Sade's words, 'he rejoices in his inner heart that he has gone far enough to deserve such treatment'" (39). Hence, Robin gloats in having successfully provoked Nora to dole out uncharacteristic violence. To be beaten, in this case, is to have triumphed.

Other instances of Robin's masochistic behavior circumvent Deleuzian theory altogether. After all, Deleuze doesn't account for women and partial practitioners of the erotic arts, much less narcissistic tensions between lesbian role-players. *Nightwood's* lesbian terrain eludes Deleuze's theoretical reach, with a character such as Robin slipping through the cracks: someone like a sadist (but not quite) who sometimes enjoys being pained by painning the other. The doctor correctly assesses Robin's conflicted spirit, perceiving Nora's "holding on" as Robin's "only happiness and so her sole misery" (126)—a notion later rephrased by Nora as, "It's why she wants to be loved and left alone, all at the same time" (155). Robin may claim a "desperate anonymity" (168), wandering, animalism, and an existential amnesia for herself, yet she gravitates toward a woman who, while drawn to such stylized degradation, fundamentally resists "the night." In short, Robin sets herself up for failure by chasing and concurrently retreating from "sleep and safety" (139). She recedes into the animal within and denies others on that basis, eventually denying, as Chapter Two mentioned, her own desires for a lasting home and memory. We are told that after Robin departs for America with Jenny, for instance, "it was as if the motive power which had directed Robin's life, her day as well as her night,

had been crippled” (167). Nora, her motivation, is gone.

It is only when we understand how Robin is neither a sadist nor masochist that we can appreciate the nature of her powerlessness and, conversely, that of Nora’s power. It would be an exaggeration to describe Robin as a libertine on the same scale as Sade. She possesses sadistic impulses in her egoism and subsequent disregard for others, but she is no true sadist. The purposefulness and imagination are missing. It is not self-control that distinguishes her pleasures but the lack of it, not the conscious will to power but an unconscious falling back into powerlessness. Robin is almost always related through the speech of others, seldom shown as an active speaker herself.⁵ Whether drunk or sober, Robin drifts helplessly, unable to fend off unwanted caresses in Montparnasse or random marriage proposals. “[A]s if Robin’s life held no volition for refusal” (43), she passively accepts Felix’s hand and bears him a son despite desiring neither him nor children. Robin’s subjectivity is further compromised in that she is featured in Nora’s dreams, appropriated by Nora’s unconscious, while the alternative never takes place. The sleepwalker’s sleep remains inaccessible to us and inert for all we know (“We look to the East for a wisdom that we shall not use—and to the sleeper for the secret that we shall not find” [88-89]). It is Nora who decides how much she will take and how far the testing will go. As Allen points out, it is Nora who formally ends the affair once she has reached her limits (“Erotics” 188).⁶

What sadism Robin possesses, moreover, functions as a self-defeating venture—a kind of failed masochism—in that she sets out to torment others but ends up tormenting herself, all pleasure lost by the wayside. I agree with Bataille’s estimation that pure

⁵ For notable exceptions, see *Nightwood* 35, 54-55, 71, and 75-76. One notices that Robin only speaks in short clauses.

⁶ The novel offers two conflicting accounts of the couple’s breakup. Allen refers to the second episode, where Nora strikes Robin awake from sleep after uttering, “It is over now” (145). Three pages earlier, however, it is stated that only words are exchanged during their split, no blows. Nora returns home from visiting Jenny to tell Robin, “It is over—I can’t go on. You have always lied to me, and you have denied me to her. I can’t stand it any more” (142). Up waiting for Nora’s arrival till then, Robin rushes out of the apartment in response. In either case, Nora initiates the separation.

sadism fails in principle, since Sade's "absolute sovereignty" limits pleasure to the domain of solitary vice, denying us the gratification gained from emotional reciprocity (171-75). No alternative to callousness as a relational mode is given. We are encouraged to indulge ourselves ruthlessly, minus those parts of ourselves that relish communion. The push toward no-limits morphs into its own limitation. If what Jean-Paul Sartre says about individual consciousness and its resistance to total access and conflation is also true, absolute mastery is impossible for two related reasons. Even if I hold the whip, the Other-as-object will always objectify Me with his or her Look, reminding me that I am but a figure in the victim's consciousness and thus subsumed by it (405-06). Secondly, the Other retains an awareness of his or her subjectivity to the very end, no matter the sadist's ploys. In Sartre's words, "[N]o matter what pressure is exerted on the victim, the abjuration remains *free* [...]. The spectacle which is offered to the sadist is that of a freedom which struggles against the expanding of the flesh and which finally freely chooses to be submerged in the flesh" (403-04). There is not one moment in *Nightwood* where we sense we are in Robin's sexual fantasy. Her lack of sustained commitment and self-determination refutes any formal masochism on her part. She is vicariously experienced, always constituting and constituted by another's imagination. Like the female torturers in Sacher-Masoch's fantasies whom Deleuze describes, Robin "is *in* the masochistic situation, she is an integral part of it, a realization of the masochistic fantasy" (41), never the masochist who orchestrates the erotic extravaganza. The dream in which Robin is but a figment belongs to Nora and, to a lesser extent, Felix.

Delivered by O'Connor and so already a child of unhappiness, Nora is an "early Christian" by "temperament" (51), a soul "blood-thirsty with love" (148), "never put[ting] a stop to anything" (102), humorless, and "robb[ing] herself for everyone" (51). She is "the only woman of the last century," Barnes declares, "who could go up a hill with the

Seventh Day Adventists and confound the seventh day—with a muscle in her heart so passionate that she made the seventh day immediate,” not “out of a bewildered entanglement” but for “the beauty of that day alone” (52-53). This is a woman who “may be knocked down, but [she’ll] crawl on for ever, while there’s any use to it” (102), O’Connor states. For such a one, the melancholia Robin inspires is the punishment through which she arrives at her forbidden pleasure: Robin herself and the lesbian gratification she represents.

If, as Nora says, “Suffering is the decay of the heart; all that we have loved becomes the ‘forbidden’ when we have not understood it all” (156), Robin was always a forbidden pleasure in her unknowability. Yet Nora’s melancholic refusal to give up on her love suggests that if we cannot have “gay” endings, at least we’ll dignify their pursuit by nobly exalting in love’s torments. The spiritual force of her melancholia’s masochistic component rests in Nora’s stubborn resistance to transfiguration, such denial constituting, as Deleuze clarifies, its own transfiguration. Emotional ruts, torrential anguish, and the obsession with death coalesce into a vision of stasis that points beyond itself. For Dr. O’Connor, Nora’s misery consequently goes hand in hand with moral triumph:

“You are [...] experiencing the inbreeding of pain. Most of us do not dare it. We wed a stranger, and so ‘solve’ our problem. But when you inbreed with suffering (which is merely to say that you have caught every disease and so pardoned your flesh) you are destroyed back to your structure as an old master disappears beneath the knife of the scientist who would know how it was painted. Death I imagine will be pardoned by the same identification; we all carry about with us the house of death, the skeleton, but unlike the turtle our safety is inside, our danger out. Time is a great conference planning our end, and youth is only the past putting a leg forward. Ah, to be able to hold on to suffering, but to let the spirit loose!” (129-30)

Although cryptic as usual, his speech enunciates pain as that which purifies the flesh by destroying it, culminating in the hyperbolic cry for more suffering, even in the grave. Everyone in the novel luxuriates in melancholia, yet Nora’s melancholia stands out in that its masochistic component so pronouncedly links pleasure with stasis. No matter the

doctor's rhetorical fireworks, she never moves on, never becomes happy, never gains closure. Death provides no exception. Nora's repeated references to "possessing," "finding," or suspending Robin in death push her masochism to its limits, not by alluding to the pair's reunion in the afterlife, but by denying it. The thoroughness of Nora's masochism is such that every punishment must be turned upon itself. The law, as Deleuze dubs coercive sexual pressures, hands out death without the assurance of reunion to condemned lovers. Yet Nora toys with such finality and goes on loving regardless.

In as much as Robin's sadism conceals a death wish, Nora's death wish parades as sadism toward her lover ("[D]ie now, then you will be mine forever" [145]). Classical Freudian theory would reverse this order of internal events: Nora's sadistic introjection of Robin generates Nora's suicidal instincts. Bottled-up hostility one bears for the lost object unleashes against the self that identifies with the beloved, leading to suicide if the "sadism" grows extreme. Ergo, the battering, deprecating, and reviling of the self that is but the specter of another.⁷ Yet Nora's formal masochism ("Everything we can't bear in this world, some day we find in one person, and love it all at once" [135]⁸) and *Nightwood's* corresponding ethos refute the notion of redirected sadism.⁹ The melancholic does not fantasize killing herself to kill the introjected lover, but kills the lover to kill herself.

We give "death and a sword to our lover" (146) at the end of the day, Dr. O'Connor muses. But the sword is for us, and shared entry into oblivion does not promise romantic reconciliation. The afterlife in Barnes remains tenuous. The doctor calls Nora "a

⁷ See Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" 251-52.

⁸ Nora's ongoing declarations such as, "How much of our life do we put into a life that we may be damned?" (140) or "Suddenly, I knew what all my life had been, Matthew, what I hoped Robin was—the secure torment" (151), underline her masochistic allegiance.

⁹ In "Coldness and Cruelty," Deleuze even devotes an entire chapter, "Psychoanalysis and the Problem of Masochism," to negating any redirection as such. "[W]e must reject as inadequate the [Freudian] formula 'sadism turned around upon the self' as a definition of masochism," Deleuze insists, since he believes Freud leaves out three vital considerations in its conception: aggression must be "resexualized," "the resexualization must be grounded in a new erogenicity," and sexual energy must be projected onto an external, punishment-giving agent (106). See Deleuze 103-10 for more detail. Such theoretical interventions loop back into Deleuze's broader project of dismantling the sadomasochistic complex.

religious woman without the joy and safety of the Catholic faith” (60), more for her doubting the eternal than for her sexual deviancy. In Nora’s own words, “There is no last reckoning for those who have loved too long, so for me there is no end” (156). Equally ominous is the episode where Robin, inadvertently but significantly, rejects Nora’s longing to “resurrect” their love in death. “In death Robin would belong to her,” Nora hopes, “Death went with them, together and alone; and with the torment and catastrophe, thoughts of resurrection, the second duel” (58). But what could have been an example of suffering as a kind of sublime quickly unravels. Hearing Robin preparing to go out at night, Nora speaks to herself, “In the resurrection, when we come up looking backward at each other, I shall know you only of all that company” (58). Denoting her late return and the more distant matter of their eternal fate, Robin’s impeccably timed “Don’t wait for me” (59) breaks Nora’s reverie. No reconciliation can occur when fundamental incompatibilities exist between the role-players of *Nightwood*’s masochistic scenario. Robin “only [tells] of herself in a preoccupation that [i]s its own predicament” (47), while Nora remains “endlessly embroiled in a preoccupation without a problem” (53). Ultimate gratification eludes everyone when the masochist adheres to her role—hence “a preoccupation without a problem”—but the chosen torturer, Robin, muddles all roles.

After Nora, Felix suffers the most at Robin’s hands, meeting grace and ruin in his vacant (and vacating) wife. A masochist like Nora, Felix is the man the Bible’s Job would have been had he exchanged his resignation to suffering for revelation through it. “Engrossed” by what “disquiet[s]” him (36), Felix adores the circus as “a loved thing that he could never touch, therefore never know” (12), much as he takes to Robin for her elusiveness. He gravitates toward inherently forbidden pleasures by craving what he cannot have or really be a part of—the circus, the church, Robin. Even the doctor appeals to Felix for intriguing yet repulsing him. Spying Matthew stealing a hundred franc note

from Robin's hotel table, Felix "knew that he would continue to like the doctor, though he was aware that it would be in spite of a long series of convulsions of the spirit" (36). The two men, in fact, may share more than just social alienation. *Nightwood* confers a certain queerness upon Felix himself, referring to his mouth as one "sensuous from lack of desire" (8) and Vienna's army, which Felix enthusiastically follows, as "the celibate's family" (18). "There's something missing and whole about the Baron Felix—damned from the waist up" (26), O'Connor speculates, since Felix's impotence is not literal but imaginative, more asexual than strictly homosexual. Equally tellingly, when O'Connor lectures Felix on what men truly desire when it comes to love and women, Felix comments, "I was not thinking of women at all" (19). To this provocative remark, O'Connor responds, "Neither was I" (19).

For someone so prone to sensuous contradictions, Felix's greatest act of masochism becomes wedding Robin, the living embodiment of loss, so as to wipe out his Jewish lineage. Felix rises above the implicit threat of anti-Semitic violence by reveling in its most inhuman culmination: genocide. Pleasuring in that possibility and trying to render it real invert, through an almost unbearable grotesqueness, the political pyramid upon which the irrational fear of Jews as cultural interlopers is based. (This grotesqueness may well be part of the "humour" that O'Connor admiringly attributes to Jews, a sensibility that partly accounts for their precarious status: "[E]very nation with a sense of humour is a lost nation" [15].) Equally seriously, discontinuing the family line circuitously achieves the Volkbeins' European dream: only household artifacts would remain without their owners to betray them. The dead cannot be brought to task for forging stories of themselves. In the best-case scenario, the Volkbein barony may even persist as dubious rumor or what O'Connor extols as "legend," the "unexpurgated" stories "that are forgotten in spite of all man remembers (unless he remembers himself) merely because they befell him without

distinction of office or title” (15).

Robin, thus, provokes mixed feelings in Felix from the start, because to the outward eye, she is the mother who will give birth to future generations, but in his heart, he pleurably intuits she is the void that will end them: “Yet, if I tell the whole truth, the very abundance of what then appeared to me to be security, and which was, in reality, the most formless loss, gave me at the same time pleasure and a sense of terrible anxiety, which proved only too legitimate” (113). In choosing her—“infected carrier of the past” (37), portal to legend—Felix exerts an uncharacteristic willfulness.

A Jew’s undoing is never his own, it is God’s; his rehabilitation is never his own, it is a Christian’s. The Christian’s traffic in retribution has made the Jew’s history a commodity; it is the medium through which he receives, at the necessary moment, the serum of his own past that he may offer it again as his blood (10)

the narrator once writes. Felix breaks out of this cycle to be responsible, finally, for his own “undoing.” Like the protagonist in O’Connor’s story who “has at once a singular and terrible attraction” toward a degenerate “invert” (137), Felix is drawn to an anonymity that threatens his prayers for the eternal. “[H]e knew that he was not sufficient to make her what he had hoped” (44), yet he still pursues her, finding Robin’s “presence painful, and yet a happiness” (41). At least like recognizes like. He too is anonymous (“the Jew seems to be everywhere from nowhere” [7]), solitary, itinerant, melancholy, and conflicted, always “tailored in part for the evening and in part for the day” (8).

The rift between what Felix wants to want and what he actually wants is nowhere as clear as when he walks beside Robin in Paris shortly after their marriage. He babbles to her of how “she might bear sons who would recognize and honour the past. For without such love, the past as he understood it, would die away from the world. She was not listening and he said in an angry mood, though he said it calmly, ‘I am deceiving you!’ And he wondered what he meant, and why she did not hear” (45). The deception goes

deeper than a fabricated pedigree. Felix's wonder hints at self-deception. In a Gentile world that "commodi[fies]" (10) the Jewish past, he relinquishes children and therefore a future. The Jewish father contemplates the end of his son's life with, "Do you know, Doctor, I find the thought of my son's possible death at an early age a sort of dire happiness because his death is the most awful, the most fearful thing that could befall me. The unendurable is the beginning of the curve of joy" (117). It is not Guido's death that arouses Felix but the pleasure made accessible, in theory, through such "unendurable" punishment: abandoning his heritage to leave behind an Aryan paper trail, as "futile" and wildly "inaccurate" as it may be (3). The hope for forever ends in fatalism. As O'Connor instructs Felix, "Seek no further for calamity; you have it in your son. After all, calamity is what we are all seeking. You have found it. [...] [F]unny that a man never knows when he has found what he has always been looking for" (119, 121).

Matthew's command to Felix later finds its way into a filicidal anecdote Matthew tells Nora. The story of the widower Don Anticolo, a "young tenor from Beirut" (133), and his ten-year-old son who perishes thinly adapts Felix and Guido's story. Bitten by a rat, the child falls prey to fever. Yet the ease with which Anticolo leaves his son's bedside begs us to question the father's priorities and the story's moral. Though "demented with grief and fear" (133), the don abandons his bedside post to carouse with "the fleet." "But being a father," we're told, "he prayed as he drank the champagne; and he wished his son alive as he chucked over the compass and invited the crew home, bow and sprit" (133). The flimsiness of Anticolo's outing excuse, the military men whose presence encloses that outing in quotation marks, but most importantly, the story's emphasis on the don's extravagant display of grief during his child's funeral ceremony intimate that the son was never meant to live. O'Connor's tale was always heading toward one destination. A father's anticipating and submerging himself in the loss of what he holds most dear prove,

perversely enough, its dearness. A post-mortem dissection of the heart becomes the heart's greatest testimony that it once pulsed.

SPACE

Desire may invoke death, yet Barnes does not retreat from the abyss. To the contrary, she even incorporates the reciprocal relation between suffering and sublimation into her decadent spatial aesthetic. Evoking Sacher-Masoch's sense of suspension and dilapidated luxury, *Nightwood's* spaces are carefully partitioned around vertical and horizontal axes, the former facilitating affective inversions, that is, bowing down as rising up can only unfold along the perpendicular. Nodding to Burke's commentary on the novel's pivotal movement, the literal "*turning*, turning towards or turning away" from homosexual alterity ("Version" 243), this section explores another kind of kinesis: seesawing (or the lack thereof) and its symbolic connotations.

Barnes favors decadent, dimly-lit interiors cluttered with once exquisite objects. *Nightwood's* domestic spaces meticulously reflect this preference, resembling the insides of mausolea more than homes. They showcase what Dana Seitler describes as a "catalog of degeneration, distilling with confused clarity the decomposition of the modern" (548). Ann Larabee goes a step further by categorizing, like Deleuze, such stylized backdrops as "overstatements of the social deviant's idiosyncratic world" (40)—in this case, the masochist's world of "suspended gestures and suspended suffering" (Deleuze 34). *Nightwood's* entire landscape seems to bow down and inward, collapsing upon itself in a flurry of "melancholy red velvet" (40), dust, and rococo furniture. Hedvig delivers Felix "upon a canopied bed of a rich spectacular crimson" (1); Count Onatorio Altamonte

decorates his mansion with “living statues” (13); “heavy velvet hangings” (43) cover hotel windows; Nora’s American property contains “ruined gardens” (52), a “burial ground,” and a “decaying chapel” filled with “mouldering psalm books” (50) and “dusty benches” (169); the Denckman circus animals possess “dusty eyes” (54); a “cloud of dust” (72) rises from carriage upholstery; a faceless woman in an imagined photograph “lean[s] against a drape of Scotch velvet” (102); “velvet dogs, or dolls” (104) sell at a fair; a beggar’s hair is “gray with the dust of years” (144). Everything recedes into darkness, and everywhere becomes a “museum” of some “encounter” (5, 56), because already dead for ages.

Within this graveyard, a downward movement that transmutes into an insurgence against puritanical regimes most poignantly materializes in Nora and Robin’s spatial interactions. Before they even engage, actually, the women move along separate axes. Rather, Robin fails to operate on any axis, being stuck in freeze-frame. She “[can]not offer herself up” (47) since unable to truly abase herself, a creature whose prayers are “monstrous because in [them] there was no margin left for damnation or forgiveness, for praise or for blame—those who cannot conceive a bargain cannot be saved or damned” (47). Nora, by contrast, exists in perpetual descent:

“There is a gap in ‘world pain’ through which the singular falls continually and forever; a body falling in observable space, deprived of the privacy of disappearance; as if privacy, moving relentless away, by the very sustaining power of its withdrawal kept the body eternally moving downward, but in one place, and perpetually before the eye. Such a singular was Nora. There was some derangement in her equilibrium that kept her immune from her own descent.” (51)

Nora’s “immun[ity] from her own descent” arises from an experiential difference: she still falls like everyone who “believe[s] the [Christian] word” (51) must, but experiences that fall differently due to her masochistic constitution. Her masochistic rapture in lowering herself for love distinguishes her descent from that haunting all of humanity since its exile from Eden.

When Nora and Robin collide, the masochistic ritual begins. During their first meeting at the Denckman circus, a lioness goes down before Robin and “as if a river were falling behind impassable heat, [its] eyes flowed in tears that never reached the surface” (54). The animal’s bowing down in sorrow prompts Robin to “r[i]se straight up” (54) and Nora simultaneously to take her hand. The moment by no means cures Robin’s melancholia, yet the animal’s suffering triggers key physical contact between the women, the handclasp spelling their love’s beginning. Bowing down elicits a literal rising up and convergence in this respect. Less literally but equally centered on an alternating motion, when the two begin to drift apart, Nora often dreams about Robin being in danger. Upon waking, Nora would “[go] back through the tide of dreams into which her anxiety had thrown her, taking the body of Robin down with her into it, as the ground things take the corpse, with minute persistence, down into the earth, leaving a pattern of it on the grass, as if they stitched as they descended” (56-57). Being buried in a subterranean cavern, in this case, evokes not nightmarish claustrophobia but an uplifting, reassuring sense of safety. Other safeties, although similarly anchored in the inverse function—the martyr’s prostration that secures his or her salvation—assume a more double-edged form. One yields her safety to ensure another’s. Chapter Two noted how Nora becomes stunned into silence once she catches Robin in Jenny’s arms. But let’s pore over this scene more closely now, with an eye for its vertical detail:

Unable to turn her eyes away, incapable of speech, experiencing a sensation of evil, complete and dismembering, Nora fell to her knees, so that her eyes were not withdrawn by her volition, but dropped from their orbit by the falling of her body. Her chin on the sill she knelt, thinking, “Now they will not hold together,” feeling that if she turned away from what Robin was doing, the design would break and melt back into Robin alone. She closed her eyes, and at that moment she knew an awful happiness. Robin, like something dormant, was protected, moved out of death’s way by the successive arms of women; but as she closed her eyes, Nora said “Ah!” with the intolerable automatism of the last “Ah!” in a body struck at the moment of its final breath. (64)

Nora's messianic qualities come forward here. She figuratively trades in her life (death by heartbreak) to keep Robin safe from death. Such self-sacrifice paves the way for Nora's pleasure, her spirit exalting as her body falls. As though arising from one being nailed to a cross, burned in a ring, pierced with arrows, or stoned, Nora's martyr-like cries intensify this masochistic imagery.

A reversal in sentiment similarly occurs when Nora wanders around Naples and spots a young girl on a chair. From an alley, Nora sees her through an open doorway. The girl sits before a bed "covered with a cheap heavy satin comforter," her room decorated with "gaudy prints of the Virgin" (157) like all the other rooms visible from the street. "Looking from her to the Madonna behind the candles," Nora reflects, "I knew that the image, to her, was what I had been to Robin, not a saint at all, but a fixed dismay, the space between the human and the holy head, the arena of the 'indecent' eternal. At that moment I stood in the centre of eroticism and death" (157-58). She continues, "I knew in that bed Robin should have put me down. In that bed we would have forgotten our lives in the extremity of memory, moulted our parts, as figures in the waxworks are moulted down to their story, so we would have broken down to our love" (158). This is one of the most heroic images of romantic martyrdom that the novel lays before us.

Nightwood's conclusion parodies the Naples incident. It also takes masochistic pleasure to its most extreme outcome. Allen reads "the enigmatic final scene" as a "suggest[ion] that the women cannot live together in the world of the day" ("Erotics" 188). She is right: they cannot. Not in *Nightwood*. But their alienation fails to bar them from initiating one last act of masochistic insurrection. Nora "plunge[s] into the jam of the chapel door" and "at the moment Nora's body str[ikes] the wood, Robin beg[ins] going down" before the Madonna (169). Nora, we assume, loses consciousness, while Robin sinks on all fours to despair. The latter bizarrely emulates Nora's "terrified" dog before

“[giving] up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees” (170). Nora and Robin “go down” before the Madonna, yet their wretchedness becomes so absolute that any upward metaphysical movement seems illusory. Masochistic suspense gives way to nothingness before a religious relic devoid of metamorphosing power, the Madonna embodying religion’s emptiness and the emptiness of *Nightwood*’s religious-seeming romantic quest. Everyone flocks to the Church. None finds salvation.

But it is *because* the Christian law designates homosexuality as a punishable offense that appealing to it on behalf of homosexual love becomes the most absurd, spiteful performance. Mock-soliciting an inherently antithetical institution becomes a gesture of insolence for the sexual outcast. A humorous contradistinction intervenes in the couple’s “bowing down,” as the Church itself becomes the preliminary punishment by which the abject—that psychic excess the French formalize in such eloquent, mysterious terms—is summoned. Both women ironically broach, in their own way, non-being through a virgin responsible for the birth of Jesus, the absolute being. They draw near the pleasure in “reduc[ing] all psychic excitation to zero” (128) that de Lauretis speaks of in her essay on *Nightwood*’s figural inscription of sex as death. The death instinct lurks in the sex drive itself, both sex and death aiming to undo the ego in oblivion. De Lauretis focuses on how *Nightwood* obsesses over this metaphorical overlap, the novel circling the “centre of eroticism and death” (*Nightwood* 158) from start to finish. And no “rebirth” (Deleuze 100) occurs at the end, as it does within Deleuze’s reading of Sacher-Masoch’s men who see the masochistic process of disavowal through to its ideal fruition. Barnes disavows any such spiritual pretensions. *Nightwood*’s masochistic narrative simply terminates in that place, to borrow from de Lauretis once more, “beyond the pleasure principle, that is, beyond satisfaction” (128).

Nora's "incalculable" dream of her grandmother's room, on the other hand, does something else entirely by enacting a rare moment of masochistic failure in Freudian terms. It remains one of the few episodes where masochism's transcendent function vanishes along the vertical pole, as the masochist loses sight of her symbolic affiliations with the ego to ape a super-ego divorced from perversion. The dream lends itself as a psychological projection of masochism and sadism as ego-instincts: Nora and Robin's spatial relation to each other in the house identifies them with different parts of the Freudian psyche. Standing at the top of the house, in "Grandmother's room," Nora stares down at Robin who is "lying among a company below" (62), the super-ego contemplating the id. When Nora invites Robin to join her upstairs, the house elongates, distancing the pair with "a speed that ran away with the two ends of the building, stretching her apart" (62-63). "The louder [Nora] cried out the farther away went the floor below, as if Robin and she, in their extremity, were a pair of opera glasses turned to the wrong end, diminishing in their painful love" (62). Fear, the scent of death, shadows, "the lost presence of [Nora's] grandmother" (63) saturating the dream house, apocalypse—the vision coalesces into one of bewilderment.

The problem presented in this architectural fantasy is Nora's veering away from masochism's formal allegiance to the Freudian ego. Deleuze sensitively reads masochism as partly a narrative of the ego defying the repressive super-ego, representative of the violent Oedipal father, through humor and disavowal. He writes, "[I]n sadism the superego and the process of identification play the primary role, masochism gives primacy to the ego and to the process of idealization" (134). Grounded in an ideology of self-control and institutional anarchy, sadism functions as a male super-ego that seeks to negate, in Deleuze's words, "nature within the ego and outside the ego [...] the ego itself" (29). For Deleuze, the sadist identifies with the father-image and viciously negates the mother,

the child (even former daughter-accomplices), the world. In contrast, Sacher-Masoch's art exalts the ego that overthrows the law by contractually calling upon an ideal mother-figure ("the ideal of coldness, solicitude and death" [Deleuze 55]) to expel the father-likeness within itself. The masochistic ego's aim is to emerge as "the New Man," freed from genital sexuality and earthly interests (Deleuze 100). Nora upsets this chain of masochistic logic by situating herself in the super-ego's plane and inviting the id into that tabooed, eerily dispossessed space. A definitional crisis emerges: the ego-turned-conscience that proscribes taboos tries to break its own rules, arousing guilt—what the masochistic ego lives to overturn. The house elongates as a result of Nora's departure from her masochistic position. If she had dreamed of herself as a sadistic super-ego, she would have no trouble moving Robin into her grandmother's room. No taboos are impossible for the sadist who is above the law. But in the dream, Nora is just a super-ego. Such super-egos lack the radicalness required to subvert conventional mores. Neither a masochistic ego nor sadistic super-ego, Nora finds herself powerless before taboos. The essence of the masochistic contract is further violated by the danger accompanying an id prone to sadism. Whether Robin would morph into a sadistic super-ego or alien construct upon entering Grandmother's room remains speculative, however, given Barnes' equating Thelma Wood, Robin's real-life inspiration, with her paternal grandmother Zadel.¹⁰

An exception to the rule becomes a rule itself along the horizontal plane. The failure to refuse taboos becomes inevitable where no vertical movement can unfold. Felix and Robin's awkward physical relation to one another, for instance, bespeaks their psychological discord. We mentioned earlier that Felix once discovers Robin napping over Sade's memoirs. But what happens afterward becomes just as significant: "She awoke but did not move. He came and took her by the arm and lifted her toward him. She

¹⁰ See Herring, *Djuna* 59 and O'Neal 30, 137.

put her hand against his chest and pushed him, she looked frightened, she opened her mouth but no words came. He stepped back, he tried to speak, but they moved aside from each other saying nothing” (47). The couple’s movement apart, like magnetic poles slowly repelling one another, suggests their romantic mismatch. Within the allegory of masochistic falling and rising, Felix’s will to lift Robin toward him assumes a futility when his wife refuses to be lifted (and lift the Volkbein name), to participate in his disingenuous fantasy of generational uplift and assimilation.

By breaking with the seesaw metaphor as well, Jenny’s exclusively anterior-posterior-lateral movements (her body draws on “two instincts, recoil and advance” [65]) suggest a debased masochism. Unlike Nora and Robin, Jenny and Robin interact with one another in lateral terms, figuring Jenny’s failure to challenge the law on a conceptual level. As one incapable of sustaining authentic feeling, Jenny cannot play out any erotic fantasy with integrity. The political power afforded through perversion evades a woman who only possesses “second-hand,” “incalculable emotions” (68) and therefore “[cannot] participate in a great love [...] [can] only report it” (68). A “squatter” can only intrude upon another’s dream, never construct her own with either the sadist’s nihilistic discipline or the masochist’s carefully orchestrated immersion in suffering. The widow consequently lacks any inkling of how to suffer with finesse, a shortcoming repeatedly emphasized in the novel. O’Connor half-pityingly speaks of Jenny at one point,

“Suffering may be composed wickedly and of an inferior writhing. Rage and inaccuracy howl and blow the bone, for, contrary to all opinion, all suffering does *not* purify [...] It moils and blathers some to perjury; the peritoneum boils and brings on common and cheap praying a great way sunk in pointless agony. [...] Jenny is one of those who nip like a bird and void like an ox—the poor and lightly damned! That can be a torture also. None of us suffers as much as we should, or loves as much as we say.” (138)

Jenny has nowhere to rise, because she has nowhere to fall, her desire circulating as a paltry imitation of the real. Take, for instance, Jenny and Robin’s awkward tilt during

their dinner at the *Bois*:

Jenny leaning far over the table, Robin far back, her legs thrust under her, to balance the whole backward incline of the body, and Jenny so far forward that she had to catch her small legs in the back rung of the chair, ankle out and toe in, not to pitch forward on the table—thus they presented the two halves of a movement that had, as in sculpture, the beauty and the absurdity of a desire that is in flower but that can have no burgeoning, unable to execute its destiny; a movement that can divulge neither caution nor daring, for the fundamental condition for completion was in neither of them; they were like Greek runners, with lifted feet but without the relief of the final command that would bring the foot down—eternally angry, eternally separated, in a cataleptic frozen gesture of abandon. (69)

The narrator's reference to the "relief" promised by downward motion, the descending foot, makes all the more palpable the spiritual vacuity pervading the pair's body language. No downs, no ups—only a desperate approach and retreat transpire.

The tedium equated with Jenny's lateral gestures similarly emerges during a group carriage ride, but with a twist. Incensed by Robin's wandering attentions, Jenny begins striking her guest. What follows is an awkward distortion of the up-and-down:

Robin began to go forward as if brought to the movement by the very blows themselves, as if she had no will, sinking down in the small carriage [...] as she sank, Jenny also, as if compelled to conclude the movement of the first blow, almost as something seen in retarded action, leaned forward and over, so that when the whole of the gesture was completed, Robin's hands were covered by Jenny's slight and bending breast, caught in between the bosom and the knees. (76)

Barnes' language hints that any sinking or rising is an incidental side-effect of the pair's forward momentum. They curl into each other, because they cannot push ahead further. This and the "retarded action," Robin's lack of volition, and the terror this confrontation inspires in the then-present Sylvia deepen the moment's vulgarity. When Nora visits Jenny, even she gets dragged into Jenny's horizontal pattern. Nora recounts to O'Connor, "I said, 'You are Robin's mistress, aren't you?' [...] I wanted to lean forward and laugh with terror. [...] She went to pieces; she fell forward on my lap" (141). Jenny exists in the lateral plane, barred from fall or flight. Those who interact with her become trapped in

that scheme as well.

Out of Barnes' many romantic poems, "In Conclusion" stands out as a lamentation for love, tracing, as does *Nightwood*, the upward counter-pressure of the fall. "So all of us outlive our hearts at last," ends the third stanza. But what follows is the extravagant rallying cry of the romantic martyr: "Yet I who loved, and you who loves and all / Who rose more steeply and were not above / Great human pity and {most} inhuman love, / Will not be found ignoble when we fall" (*Collected Poems* 57). For this Barnes, Deleuze's idea of inverted erotic discourse rings true—bowing down as rising up, lamentation as exaltation. It would be too much to say that Barnes celebrates queerness, but there is no doubt she takes queer suffering seriously. The greatest love story in her oeuvre, after all, is Nora and Robin's tragedy. Through Nora, Robin, Dr. O'Connor, Felix, and Dame Evangeline Musset, among countless others, Barnes points out that those who lead a different way of life may exist in torment, yet such torment is not without value. The focus becomes not *that* we fall, which we all do, but *how*. While the descent itself cannot be averted and *Nightwood's* masochistic situation resembles, thus, a closed loop, the tormented do transmute their pain into a preliminary pleasure. While there's never a way out, there are ways of digging in.

GERTRUDE STEIN

QUEER PHENOMENA

4

Stein and Phenomenology

It isn't easy to follow Stein's stylistic evolution and critical reception over the decades. Stein's formal phases sometimes overlap or recur.¹ Too much material exists in too many scattered editions. There is no equivalent to Faber's *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* for her. In this regard, Stein's oeuvre resembles Pound's more than Eliot's, Barnes', Woolf's, or Joyce's. Teeming with indeterminate articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, pronouns, and split infinitives, Stein's early repetitive mode (what Stein memorably calls "insistence" in "Portraits and Repetition") has been interpreted as cinematic; perimathematical; *battologeo*; quasi-zen chanting to induce alternative psychedelic states; infantile babble; a way to empty words of meaning through sheer exhaustion; shitting or "excreating"; autoerotic; automatic; monologuing; anti-patriarchal because weird-looking; or a dyke cover-up.² Stein's later styles are thought to encompass all this and more, having been described as word-music, cubist, abstract, landscape, expressionist, futurist, solipsistic, anti-lyric, hermetic, autotelic, post-modern, anti-capitalist, deconstructionist, or arbitrary to point out the artifice lurking behind all language.³

¹ For schemes that demarcate Stein's formal progression or modes, see Pondrom lvi-ix; DeKoven 46-147; and Perloff, *Poetic License* 158.

² See Retallack, Introduction 27; Wagner-Martin, Introduction 21; Wagner-Martin, "Favored Strangers" 110, 161; Loy 289-99; Knapp 160; Kostelanetz, Introduction xvi, xxx; Attridge 72-73; Lundell 96; Ruddick 74-92, 90-92, 145-46, 151-52; Dydo 278; Cope 141-43; DeKoven; Ford 40, 48; Watts; Skinner; Walker 121-22; Dickie 36; Bridgman 106; and Mellow 134. "Early repetitive" is Cyrena N. Pondrom's descriptive, applied to "Ada" and "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" in her introduction to Stein's *Geography and Plays*. I've adapted it to classify similarly styled Steinian works composed between 1903-11.

³ See Kostelanetz, Introduction xxiii; Ruddick 178; Perloff, "Poetry as Word-System"; and Ford 41.

Hostile commentators attack Stein's unwillingness to readily communicate, her egotism, "primitivism," and inability (or refusal) to create "authentic" dialogue and character. They form, however, a shrinking minority nowadays, given how modernism's and post-modernism's ongoing influence in the academy has evolved reading and writing practices better suited to Stein's "difficulty." The tasks of sympathetic readers, reversely, have anything but shrunk in number. Besides the perennial undertaking to address the indifference or tedium Stein arouses, the issue has become: how do we read Stein now? Given Stein's unapologetically literal representations of the workings of consciousness (endeavors only considered trite now because those like Stein, Joyce, and Woolf brought them to the public's attention decades ago), especially time-sense and perspectival distinctions; doctrine of essences; connections with George Santayana; and years in Europe during the growth of phenomenology proper, phenomenological criticism on Stein seems apropos.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's and Edmund Husserl's ideas, in particular, historically and philosophically converge with Stein's as she veers away from old-fashioned attitudes toward sex and socializing. More specifically, the phenomenological project and Stein's project both share an intense commitment to the evocation of objects (including abstractions) within consciousness, an endeavor that encompasses the sensuous immediacy, simultaneity, and varying modes of things (the same object can inspire multiple attitudes, for instance, anticipation or dread). Because of this very emphasis on the workings of consciousness, moreover, both projects also broach how consciousness opens out to, and is vitally molded by, the world at large.

Merleau-Ponty's fascination with such embodied subjectivity reminds us that all consciousness arises from the body, so our worldview is, to a certain extent, indebted to bodily habits. Similarly engaged with the meanings behind habituated orientation,

particularly those pertaining to desire and gender, “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene” and “Many Many Women” trace how old habits diminish or die for socially reorienting characters or narrative personas. Not all habits can be left behind, however. Like Husserl who assigns himself the impossible task of bracketing in its entirety the “natural attitude”—for now, what can roughly be understood as that bracing and burgeoning from all the bodily and ideological habits instilled in us from birth—Stein, in reorienting us toward literature and erotic life, envisages perfectly impersonal expressive modes and solipsistic situations for her characters, not least for *Ida*’s Ida. This nomadic heroine deals generously in paradoxes by seeking existential isolation in language, an inherently social medium. Such Husserlian impossibilities likewise circulate in *The Making of Americans*, albeit in more subliminal form. That consciousness cannot self-consciously eliminate *all* preconceptions becomes ironically demonstrated when a “queer,” forward-looking narrator quietly harbors a classist streak.

By playing with how consciousness of the self and others forms within a carefully regulated social matrix and by doing so in a common language, these four pieces became the locus of these last three chapters. “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” “Many Many Women,” *The Making of Americans*, and *Ida* all belong to Stein’s repetitive tradition, which (coincidentally) enacts the notion of socially-constructed sexualities and communal patterns by its very form: repetitiveness. Form and content come together in an arc across time—incantation and the worlds it conjures all evolving together.

The study of phenomenology and Gertrude Stein remains in its early stages. Such critical lags result from phenomenology’s and Stein’s notorious difficulty. The most famous phenomenologists are fairly esoteric, while Stein, with few exceptions, radically breaks with textbook grammar, spelling, and storytelling (nowhere are the usual contextual clues,

chronologies, and character development to invite readers in) to reorder the logic by which the world is rendered into an aesthetic phenomenon. To begin with the former, however, phenomenology's relative inaccessibility begins with its founder Husserl's prose, whose dense, winding sentences and neologisms challenge even trained readers. Structural obscurities aggravate these stylistic difficulties. For someone with a mathematical background, Husserl's approach to philosophy is surprisingly unsystematic. Husserl's oeuvre constantly seems to be revising or reintroducing itself with each constituent work. His individual books may be devoted to specific themes, but how those themes interact with Husserl's broader philosophical system is never explicitly stated. Furthermore, as Maurice Natanson points out, Husserl is often accused of failing to provide enough concrete illustrations of basic phenomenological inquiry that would make its higher-level applications easier to understand. One "complaint against the phenomenologies," he recounts, "is that their proponents are proclaimers of large programs that are vociferously voiced but rarely enacted. They spend much time talking about what they mean to do instead of doing it. Husserl, it is true, wrote several books concerned with the beginning of his discipline; he seemed extraordinarily involved in map making rather than in traveling" (12). Now, Natanson doesn't endorse this attack. But he does recognize its justifiable appeal. For him, Husserl's mature works such as *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* dissect specific phenomena in too much detail to warrant such dismissals. Yet the catch-22 remains that phenomenology requires a phenomenological perspective to really "get it." A classic chicken-before-the-egg, egg-before-the-chicken scenario emerges, a circular conundrum Natanson recognizes as a "hysteron proteron" (13).

The lack of a tight structure and clear examples contributes most significantly to phenomenology's technical ambiguities. Is phenomenology a combination of

introspective psychology and logic or an earlier version of logical semantics? Is Husserl a realist or an idealist? Is Husserl's presenting phenomenology as a "hard" science misguided from the start, a stylistic and conceptual contradiction in terms? Is the phenomenological or transcendental reduction (*epoché*) logically defensible?⁴ How has (or hasn't) Husserl's phenomenology evolved over time? To what extent are Husserl's successors perpetuating or diverging from his notions? Such questions have generated almost a century of debate regarding phenomenology's aims and historical development. The result is a philosophical discipline whose most celebrated thinkers—Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Paul Ricoeur, Roman Ingarden, Emmanuel Levinas, and Alfred Schultz—share few of its founder's emphases (or heavily revise them) and whose critics possess a vociferousness that substantially informs phenomenology's ongoing progress. Decades of grappling with these issues, however, have given readers a better grasp of phenomenology's meaning and value. The philosophical movement that was once so hard to define has become more approachable.

In essence, phenomenology is the study of consciousness from a first-person perspective. Although Husserl defines phenomenology as the "eidetic exploration of imaginative natural data" (*Ideas III*, "Supplement IV" §§7-9) or "*descriptive* eidetic doctrine of transcendently pure mental processes as viewed in the phenomenological attitude" (*Ideas I* §75)—and these are but two explanatory variations of several—David W. Smith and Eric Matthews capture phenomenology most elegantly, I think, when the former describes it as "how the mind (and therewith language) represents things in the world" (Smith, *Husserl* 59), while the latter, "the study of how intentional objects appear

⁴ The phenomenological reduction or *epoché* is the act of suspending the "natural attitude," that is, our instinctive certainty in an external world. This bracketing is not to be confused with Husserl's eidetic reduction (alternately identified as ideation, eidetic intuition, and eidetic analysis), which denotes the conceptual process by which an object's essence is discerned. A series of imaginative variations are directed toward the select phenomenon in order to distinguish its essential as opposed to superfluous characteristics. See Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* §34 for a concise example of this descriptive procedure; Husserl imagines tables in different shapes and colors to apprehend what the word "table" truly signifies. Both the natural attitude and the *epoché* will be detailed in the sixth chapter, only receiving passing mentions here.

to consciousness” (Matthews 7). Intentionality here doesn’t refer to the purposefulness stated in dictionaries, but to the way in which consciousness is directed toward things, real or imaginary. “Consciousness is always consciousness of something,” the slogan goes. In that vein, intentional objects are objects I “intend,” that is, cognize. As Husserl puts it, “In perception something is perceived, in imagination, something imagined, in a statement something stated, in love something loved, in hate hated, in desire desired, etc.” (*Logical Investigations II*, “Investigation V” §10). Husserl adapted intentionality from Franz Brentano, who adapted it, in turn, from scholastic philosophy. It forms the bedrock of Husserl’s thought, which, again, focuses on intentional processes and objects from the first-person vantage-point. What is the essence of the thing intended? What meanings emanate from objects in our intentional field? How and why do we experience things the way we do? What modes of consciousness exist, and how do they affect our perception?

As these questions suggest, phenomenology isn’t so much about the objects out there as how they are “constituted” or acquire meaning in consciousness. Phenomenology leaves the former pursuit to ontology proper (of which existential phenomenology is a variant in practice) and empirical science. What could be understood as a purely ontological exercise, this winnowing out of essences, assumes phenomenological import when essences are deciphered through their meaning. How we consciously experience what is there brings us to phenomenology rather than ontology. To quote Husserl directly, “[T]he actual thing, the actual world, is not a phenomenological datum” (*Internal Time* §1). That phenomenology functions as a philosophy of consciousness is further clarified in *Ideas III*, where Husserl writes,

Only when we describe [all sensuousnesses] with the consciousness-characteristics in which they present themselves as correlate of consciousness, and only when we describe consciousness itself, in which they come to meantness and givenness: only in this involvement, to which, of course, they belong essentially, do we have in the full sense phenomenology of the sensuousnesses. (“Supplement IV” §§7-9)

And lest we give the false impression that phenomenology operates apart from the real, I want to make clear that Husserl's emphasis is on how consciousness opens out to the real. The phenomenologist explores the world through "direct Intuition," which, in this context, denotes unmediated contact with everything presented to consciousness, not gut instinct. Direct intuition leads us, then, to the phenomenological method's ultimate ambition: "the entire work of differentiating essences and of conceptual apprehension of essences" (*Ideas III* §11). Phenomenology consequently deals with the signification(s) attributed to objects. As Smith takes pains to reiterate, particular acts of consciousness are extracted, mulled over, then extrapolated into general principles: "[P]henomenology studies individual experiences only in order to develop laws about consciousness in general. The phenomenologist's interest is not in my experience [...] but rather in the structure of consciousness typical of visual perception – and more general forms of experience such as intentionality" (*Husserl* 255). Phenomenology researches the essence of consciousness through the ways in which consciousness relates to things, not the essences of things themselves. Thus, when Husserl famously declares, "[W]e must go back to the 'things themselves'" (*Logical Investigations I*, "Introduction to Investigation I" §2), he means things-as-intended—what precede things-as-they-are because they comprise the immediate sensory or imaginative material enabling empirical investigation (itself a value-laden process). Thus, phenomenology is pre-reflective and grounds all philosophies for Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, the two phenomenologists whose theories most relevantly relate to Stein's aesthetic concerns. Phenomenology comes first to the extent that it examines how we think about everything, including ontology and epistemology, even though phenomenology as a discipline recruits concepts drawn from other disciplines and falls under philosophy's overarching doctrinal system.

Some phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty being foremost among them, place more priority on embodied subjectivity. In so doing, they draw out the links between consciousness, the body, and how both are shaped by and shape the external world. “[O]ur body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them” (137), Merleau-Ponty writes in *The Visible and the Invisible*. Or beyond the leaf metaphor, which he immediately finds dissatisfying, our body “is Visibility sometimes wandering and sometimes reassembled” (*Visible* 137-38). Merleau-Ponty articulates this onto-phenomenological reciprocity in other places as well—that the sentient body is simultaneously and inextricably a material extension of the world and what turns back upon it—hence *The Visible and the Invisible*’s celebrated chapter “The Intertwining—The Chiasm.” In *The Prose of the World*, for example, he claims, “[V]ertiginous proximity prevents us both from apprehending ourselves as a pure intellect separate from things and from defining things as pure objects lacking in all human attributes” (66). To be conscious is to intake and touch the world with one’s body. It is to *be* a body. My body—and ergo “I”—am in and of the world. My subjectivity necessarily renders my experience of the world as particular to myself, yet it forms from material conditions and ongoing interactions with external stimuli beyond my control: the optical structures allowing my eyes to convert light into electro-chemical impulses, the food I consume to survive, my stomach’s ability to digest food, the language that my parents teach me, my brain’s physiological properties that permit linguistic development, the cultural environments I was raised in, and so forth. While Husserl, too, integrates the subjective, intersubjective, and objective, he tends to focus on ideal meanings rather than how the lived world forms the backdrop for all phenomenological description. This isn’t to say that one impulse is better than the other, but merely that each philosopher possesses different interests within the same field. One might say they inhabit different modes of

consciousness. Husserl can be envisioned as surveying the more abstract levels of awareness, whereas Merleau-Ponty, the more primal (without venturing into Freud's unconscious)—our bodily communion with the world and others.

Phenomenology as addressed and applied in the literary world, however, has lagged behind such inquiries into perception, time, being, morality, knowledge, the body, others, et cetera. Aside from Roman Ingarden's *The Literary Work of Art* (1931) and Norman Weinstein's *Gertrude Stein and the Literature of the Modern Consciousness* (1970), there has been scant discussion of phenomenology's literary applications until the past fifteen years or so (scant, that is, compared to that granted to psychoanalysis or Marxism), when works such as Maurice Natanson's *The Erotic Bird* (1998); Ulrika Maude and Matthew Feldman's jointly edited *Beckett and Phenomenology* (2009); and *Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond* (2010), an anthology arranged by Carole Bourne-Taylor and Ariane Mildenberg, began appearing.⁵ By baring the preconceived meanings behind everyday experience, much as English criticism unearths subtext, phenomenology comes together well with literary studies, particularly those informed by queer theory. Literature is already a phenomenological study in many respects. It temporarily or permanently transfigures our intentionalities toward its subject matter, which includes itself. It stimulates our senses—imaginative, vocal, aural, visual—in an increasingly ultra-sensorial, technocratic world. It is often written from the first-person, tracing various modes of its narrator's consciousness. Literature already dwells on what Husserl calls "noematic content," "noema" referring to both the meaning that can be abstracted from, and our attitude toward, an intentional object (*Ideas I* §§129-33). Characters see, feel, dream, imagine, hallucinate, wish for, are haunted by, remember—the list goes on—different things in different ways. When such intentionalities become

⁵ See also Hejinian 83-105; McCabe; O'Sullivan; Caranfa; Koppen; Mildenberg, "Openings"; and Mildenberg, "Seeing."

patterned and coded, we have themes, motifs, symbols, and the like. More broadly still, with or without phenomenology's jargon and method, everything written bears a phenomenological element because rooted in individual consciousness. Even texts that do not adopt Husserl's tone and contexts can thus loosely be considered as part of phenomenology.

The pertinence of phenomenology to queer literary criticism is a slightly different matter.⁶ Phenomenology, especially Merleau-Ponty's body-oriented phenomenology, locates queer desire beyond the usual constraints of fear and disgust in the phenomenologist's renunciation of the "natural attitude," that is, common-sense. In Husserl's eyes, the natural attitude is the instinctive belief in a pre-given, objective reality: "The *natural* world [...] is, and has been, *there for me continuously* as long as I go on living naturally. As long as this is the case, I am '*in the natural attitude*,' indeed both signify precisely the same thing" (*Ideas I* §28). Sciences that seek to give more "comprehensive," "reliable" accounts of this material universe "*belon[g] to the natural attitude*" (*Ideas I* §30). As the greatest challenge to Husserl's phenomenology, the natural attitude poses a realist-empirical worldview we so intensely take for granted that it never strikes us as partly a philosophical choice. The second we step back, however, from "posit[ing] an Objective spatiotemporal actuality" (*Ideas I* §29) and its constituent value-judgments—Husserl lists "friends," "enemies," "servants," "superiors," "strangers," "relatives," "beautiful," "ugly," "pleasant," "unpleasant," "agreeable," and "disagreeable" as examples (*Ideas I* §27)—we enter the phenomenological attitude. It is to enter an investigative mode that purposefully, and here I quote Husserl again, "*shuts me off from*

⁶ By queer literary criticism, I mean literature-based criticism driven by queer theory, that nebulously broad field that nevertheless finds its contours in deconstructing heteronormative discourse, especially by disassociating biological sex from gender identity and sexual orientation. Bodily norms are taken apart on multiple levels, for instance, the gender binary as such, "gender" as fact versus externally enforced fiction, and fixed sexual preferences. As a result, unlike gay and lesbian studies, queer theory includes heterosexual desires and identity politics, but questions how they should be played out and why. Notable thinkers in this poststructuralist branch of gender-sex studies include Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Michael Warner, Lee Edelman, Leo Bersani, and Lauren Berlant.

any judgment about spatiotemporal factual being” (*Ideas I* §32), including the expectation that human sexuality be straight.

Just how much of a phenomenologist Stein is remains remarkable (and not because she is a writer and queer). Stein wrote her chief works at the same time Husserl was writing his and was probably influenced by Santayana’s Husserlian aesthetic ideas during her Harvard Annex (Radcliffe College) years. In an endnote buried in Perloff’s *Wittgenstein’s Ladder* (which, in a spirit similar to that motivating my Stein chapters, asserts that although Stein never read Wittgenstein, she shares many of his poetic sensibilities), a telling reference to Santayana can be found: “After Stein’s death, when Toklas was asked by Allegra Stewart whether Stein had ever read Wittgenstein, Toklas insisted that she hadn’t. Santayana, James, Whitehead—these, she said, were Stein’s masters. But Wittgenstein was an entirely unknown quantity” (257). Stein’s lifelong interest in transmitting sensory impressions and ideal universals in the most impersonal way possible is nothing if not Santayanian, which is to say, Husserlian. While Stein undergoes several stylistic phases, the preoccupation with an impersonal aesthetic consciousness (writing without regard for an audience, detached from conventional ways of relating to and poeticizing the world) may have begun as early as her Harvard years with Santayana. Stein studied at Harvard from 1893-98. The Spanish-American philosopher and man of letters Santayana was one of Stein’s philosophy instructors there. One of the first serious aestheticians to come out of North America, he was also influenced by William James and either directly inspired by or separately in possession of Husserl’s essence-oriented themes.⁷

⁷ While acknowledging Husserl’s presence in Santayana’s later years, Santayana biographer John McCormick attributes the main inspiration for Santayana’s “theory of essence” to “a lecture on [William] James’s on Herbert Spencer” (57). (For how Santayana read and reacted to Husserl in the 1920s and 30s, see McCormick 311, 319, 470-71, and 479.) The Spencer lecture brought to Santayana’s attention that “things change from forms that for our sense and language would not be recognizable or namable into forms that we can distinguish and name. This happens sometimes, not because things grow more definite, but because our

Stein and Santayana may not have shared a personal rapport,⁸ but evidence indicates a creative exchange occurred. Both were impressed by James' enthusiasm for perceptual immediacy. Santayana once wrote of James,

[W]hat I learned from him was perhaps chiefly things which explicitly he never taught, but which I imbibed from the spirit and background of his teaching [...] a sense for the immediate: for the unadulterated, unexplained, instant fact of experience. Actual experience, for William James [...] possessed a vital, leaping, globular unity which made the only fact, the flying fact, of our being. ("General Confession" 15)

In addition, Santayana's investment in discerning the essence of intentional objects, particularly beauty and its appreciation, presumably made an impression on Stein. As secretary of the Philosophy Club, Stein invited Santayana to read a paper at one of its meetings. He chose to present "Faith and Criticism" (*Letters of Santayana I* 140; McCormick 101; Mellow 28), an early blueprint for *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (1923), his first formal treatise on essences.⁹

One of the few critics to associate Stein and Santayana (most attention has been paid toward the Stein-William James connection), Linda Wagner-Martin points out in her

senses and imagination have a limited range and can arrest one form of things rather than another; so that the world grows definite *for us* when we are able to perceive more parts of it and their relations" (*Persons and Places* 233). It was through James' *Principles of Psychology*, coupled with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that Santayana became interested in ideal universals circulating in consciousness during the late 1880s (McCormick 80). This isn't to say, of course, that Santayana deferred to James at all times in his own philosophizing. See McCormick 85-97 for Santayana's movement away from this notable mentor.

⁸ Despite key similarities—an interest "in discovering and understanding human types" (Santayana, *Middle Span* 23), ethnic outsider-ship, homosexuality—Stein and Santayana weren't particularly intimate, according to McCormick. Decades after Stein had left Harvard, Santayana even confided to a friend that he found Stein's writing to be unsophisticated. Responding to George Sturgis' opinion that *The Realm of Matter* was incoherent, Santayana wrote in a letter, "Of course if you choose the wrong passages, and don't know the vocabulary nor the context, you may sometimes feel a certain cerebral emptiness . . . but that would happen if you were reading an infantile writer like Miss Gertrude Stein" (9 Dec. 1929; qtd. in McCormick 305).

⁹ In a 1917 letter to Logan Pearsall Smith, regarding Smith's efforts to arrange what would become *Little Essays Drawn from the Writings of George Santayana* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1920), Santayana reveals his continuing preoccupation with knowledge: "Having now read over all your selections, and meditated at length on the subject, I should like to propose this: that you let me [...] [make] a *synthesis* of all my books and ideas. It might be called 'Vicissitudes of Human Belief', or 'Experiments in Faith and Criticism', or 'Episodes' in the same, or 'Human Experiments' simply—all these being intended for paraphrases of the 'Life of Reason'" (*Letters of Santayana II* 299). From the informal paper presented at Stein's Philosophy Club in the 1890s to Smith's 1920 compilation to the *Scepticism and Animal Faith* of 1923 is a natural progression, where Santayana's epistemology increasingly assumes a phenomenological sheen by interrogating the perceptual basis by which we come into our knowledge: self-evident "animal faith" (Santayana's rough equivalent to Husserl's "natural attitude"), bodily senses, embodiment, and "matter."

Stein biography that Santayana's theory of aesthetic disengagement potentially foregrounded Stein's artistic method:

The most significant of Santayana's beliefs about writing, for Gertrude, was his theory that the artist made correct choices not through reason but through "contemplation," what he called "the intuition of essences." [...] Santayana believed that the human mind operated in two modes, one of participation ("the sense of existence") and the other of disengagement ("the intuition of pure being"). While most people lived largely in the participatory mode, the artist needed at times to be disengaged in order to create. ("Favored Strangers" 32)

The method of Stein's to which Wagner-Martin refers is the poetics of "entity" or the "human mind," that impersonal aesthetic consciousness we mentioned before that empties the writer of emotions, memory, and social awareness (Chapter Six expands upon this intentional mode). But here we run into some biographical confusion that renders Wagner-Martin's observation rather muddled, if no less important for suggesting an area in need of further research. The only texts Wagner-Martin cites to support her claim are Santayana's *Realms of Being* (1927-40) and *Persons and Places* (1944)—no letters or marginalia—all released decades after Stein left Boston and all suggesting Husserl's immediate influence despite Santayana's protests otherwise.¹⁰ (Only the publication of Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty* [1896] coincided with Stein's time at Harvard.)

The question becomes the timeline of transmission: was Santayana already circulating those ideas that were to be finalized in *Realms of Being* during the late-nineteenth century, preempting Husserl's breakthroughs back in Europe, or is Wagner-Martin guilty of an anachronism? Building on Ralph Barton Perry's and John Passmore's research, John McCormick infers that Santayana was already considering "essences" as early as the 1880s, inspired by Shadworth Hodgson, Georg Simmel, and perhaps Charles Saunders Peirce (270-71). As part of his evidence, McCormick cites a note that Santayana scribbled on his copy of Francis Herbert Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*:

¹⁰ See *Realm of Essence* 168-74 and *Scepticism* viii, ix.

Of course, if “a single whole” means any collection of things I can think of when I say “Reality.” They will certainly have number, coexistence, similarity or difference, and other relations making them pertinent to one another. This applies to the “Reality” I can construct and arrive at. But the other reality which I start with and which eschews capital letters has no conditions, no limits, no entrance examinations, no criterion. And while to call it many would be mythical, just as to call it one is, there is no telling how much of it there may be, or of what character. (qtd. in McCormick 271)

All that can be speculated in fairness is that Stein’s hermetic approach to literature may have been inspired as early on as her Harvard years with Santayana, who dependently or independently (if in much less rigorous form) espoused a kind of phenomenological attitude through his idea of aesthetic detachment, the mode of pure intuition that Wagner-Martin previously identifies and is most clearly delineated in *The Realm of Essence* (1927).

The first book in *Realms of Being*, the four-volume series extending the insights begun in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, introduces the term “essence” as the “[p]latonic or graphic sense of being a theme open to consideration” (41). Most relevantly for this study, *The Realm of Essence* pays attention to the essence of beauty. Beholding beauty induces a strange trance in the Santayanian observer:

[B]eauty has burst upon me and the reins have dropped from my hands. I am transported, in a certain measure, into a state of trance. I see with extraordinary clearness, yet what I see seems strange and wonderful, because I no longer look in order to understand, but only in order to see. I have lost my preoccupation with fact, and am contemplating an essence.

This experience, in modern times, is called aesthetic [...]. (6-7)

Santayana goes on to assert that “the most contemplative minds [...] may survey or foresee action, [but] they do not live in action, because they see it in its wholeness and in its results; as a spectator who sees the plot of a play understands the emotions of the characters; but does not succumb to them” (9-10). The artist must distance himself or herself from the everyday world in order to create works of originality and depth. Otherwise, the artistic mind remains cluttered by the commotion of humdrum life.

Whatever inspiration happened (or didn't) in Boston, Stein moved on, like Husserl, to participate in the West's broader turn-of-the-century reaction against reigning epistemological models. *Three Lives* (1909), *The Making of Americans* (completed 1911; published in 1925 [*Stein Reader* 17]), and *Tender Buttons* (1914) were all composed during the first two decades of the twentieth century—the same time-frame in which Husserl penned his *Logical Investigations* (1901-02) and *Ideas* (1913). Husserl's phenomenology interrogates the dogma of empirical science, which forgets its own subjective origins. Stein's literary avant-gardism sheds the attitudes and techniques characterizing late-nineteenth-century realism and naturalism. Her essays detailing this transitional process, "Poetry and Grammar" and "Composition as Explanation," even recall Husserl's diction. "Nothing changes from generation to generation except the thing seen and that makes a composition" ("Composition as Explanation," *L* 24), Stein reflects. When socio-cultural perceptions change, so do aesthetic modes, the latter intertwined with the former. "Poetry and Grammar" similarly evokes Husserl's "thingy" rhetoric by emphasizing direct contact with the object-world: "And so for me the problem of poetry was and it began with *Tender Buttons* to constantly realize the thing anything so that I could recreate that thing. [...] [T]he noun must be replaced not by inner balance but by the thing in itself and that will eventually lead to everything" (*L* 143, 147). Stein's mantra "A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" becomes a thoroughly phenomenological statement in this light. It resists the type of discursive thought Husserl despises, the overdrawn recourse to prior philosophers—in Stein's case, metaphors. Like Husserl who reminds us of the insights afforded by "intuition," Stein renews our experience of a rose by avoiding the baggage of all the different roses littered throughout literary history. She does so by countering the semantic depletion that metaphoric deferral incurs, where A is equated with B, B with C, C with D, and so on—what Umberto Eco impatiently dubs "hermetic

semiosis” (qtd. in Collini 47). Like “modernism,” “rose” may point to so many things as to mean nothing. So Stein obliterates further analogies: a rose is nothing save itself.

Beyond Husserlian catchphrases, Stein shares many of the central themes characterizing Husserl’s and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology, even if she doesn’t employ their formal vocabulary. More than any other literary modernist, Stein draws out how consciousness directs itself toward objects and their sensuous differences. Not only does she dramatize perceptual experience, she also rethinks the logic holding its concept together. Works like *Tender Buttons*, for instance, rearrange the state-of-affairs between and within intentional objects and modes. And while these topics aren’t new to Stein studies, phenomenological terminology lends a certain precision to their formulation, allowing for subtler distinctions between intuited phenomena, such as language, consciousness, and literature’s all-encompassing role. Introducing such motifs, this chapter considers Stein’s phenomenology of perception, essence, and time. It does so in a general enough manner to establish why we need phenomenology for Stein and vice-versa. Later chapters concentrate on Stein’s queer elements, the fifth chapter dealing with ingrained bodily habits, while the sixth chapter addresses Stein’s failure to imagine purely queer narratives. But this chapter functions as an overture, shall we say, to Stein’s queer refrains. I want to end this segment by saying that in Stein’s ambition to seize life’s substantiality, she erects philosophical impossibilities for herself on par with Husserl’s *epoché*. Pure retinal impressions cannot be transcribed. What Stein calls “identity” or “human nature” cannot be totally bracketed (and Chapter Six treats this subject in detail). As pioneers in their areas, though, Stein and Husserl were two of a kind. What mysticism tinges their ideas may not withstand hard logic, but the art such notions inspired was never beholden to logic anyway.

PERCEPTION

When it comes to Stein's phenomenology of perception, a number of critics have commented on Stein's phenomenological impulses without identifying them as such. Before those like Ariane Mildenberg and Randi Koppen appraise Stein in explicitly phenomenological terms,¹¹ in other words, a phenomenologically inclined tradition around Stein was already somewhat established. *Tender Buttons*, in particular, has invited intense scrutiny for attempting to enact our instantaneous and holistic sphere of consciousness. When we see things, we see things immediately and all at once in our visual field, which has no perceivable edges. For the moment we try to detect where those edges might be, our head turns and the field extends. Merleau-Ponty captures the visual puzzle thus: "Even if it is possible to trace out a perimeter of vision by gradually approaching the centre of the lateral stimuli, the results of such measurement vary from one moment to another, and one never manages to determine the instant when a stimulus once seen is seen no longer" (*PP* 6). In addition, we do not choose what we see when we open our eyes. We simply see the world before us, automatically identifying its contours and adjusting our bodies to match. It requires conscious effort to direct and sustain our attention to specific objects in our

¹¹ In "Seeing Fine Substances Strangely: Phenomenology in Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*," Mildenberg reads *Tender Buttons* as poetically emulating the pre-reflective dimension of experience: "Stein, by virtue of her 'unordered' and 'not resembling' word combinations, in a highly phenomenological manner attempts to '[b]are all the roots' upon which our object-world – our 'Objects,' 'Food' and 'Rooms' – are installed" (269). Stein does so, Mildenberg argues, by bracketing everyday preconceptions around domestic life. Koppen, conversely, advocates a phenomenology-influenced formalist reading of Stein and Fornes that renounces any "reflexive notion of form (that is, of form as a mode and medium of reflection on the processes of perception, consciousness, or the representational apparatus)" (794). Such a theoretical disavowal would seem to reject Mildenberg's interpretation. But much of what Koppen argues in "Formalism and the Return to the Body" recapitulates the points she claims to resist. And she ends up in a place not so far from Mildenberg's. For her observations do not radically revise meta-reflexive notions of form so much as dwell on their lesser-studied variants: embodied consciousness and its consequences for aesthetic representation. Through recourse to Stein's *The Geographical History of America* and *Lectures in America*, Koppen overstates certain authorial remarks to contend that Stein's interest in "framing" circumstances acknowledges "the conditions and competence of the body, or more specifically, the unconscious: sensuous, phenomenal response and a knowledge that admits nonmastery (the knowledge that does not know that it knows)" (806). Because Stein's formalism reflects on the pre-reflective in an inevitably discursive way and because to yoke together phenomenological and psychoanalytic discourses begets its own definitional troubles (phenomenology closing off the unconscious), Koppen's article raises as many questions as it resolves.

visual field. That screening process is what literary realism recreates when it selects certain events, things, or people to narrate over others in sequential order, with any temporal dislocations duly signposted. *Tender Buttons* gestures toward the tumult of our senses before any such ordering has occurred. Its language sidesteps grammatical, spelling, and punctuation rules in order to emulate the instantaneous simultaneity by which we perceive things.

Better yet, *Tender Buttons* deliberately heightens the threshold of comprehension so that the world constantly overwhelms consciousness in a deluge of sights, sounds, smells, memories, anticipations, musings, and so on. Such a spate of unfiltered visual and mental stimuli translates into a highly stylized chaos that Catharine R. Stimpson broaches in pluralistic but not strictly phenomenological terms: “Believing in pluralism rather than monism, [Stein] attends to as many phenomena as possible; to as many simultaneous sensuous, sensible and psychic events and sub-events as she can, and to their relations” (“Humanism” 315). Neil Schmitz similarly testifies to *Tender Buttons*’ play with instantaneous impressions: “Gertrude Stein’s writing of her experience *does* follow; it records, moment by moment, the play of her mind with the world before her” (1206). Regarding the pudding passage from *A Long Gay Book* “All the pudding has the same flow and the sauce is painful, the tunes are played, the crinkling paper is burning, the pot has a cover and the standard is excellence” (*MPGS* 104), Donald Sutherland similarly remarks, “Instead of letting things go at ‘I had a good pudding with sauce piquant for supper’ she gives an equable list of concomitant phenomena, some relevant, some not, to the main practical event, but all of them equally and simultaneously existing in perceptual fact” (12). The recurring Steinian theme for all three critics is clear: everything as perceived at once.

The simultaneous presentation of and equal emphasis on objects within one's intentional field partially explain Stein's ties to Picasso, despite how overworked that cubist analogy has become.¹² Thankfully, critics such as David Antin, Jayne L. Walker, and Marjorie Perloff have substantially refined this verbal-visual parallel. Perloff notes that much cubist jargon is applied haphazardly to Stein: "In discussing Stein's Cubism, critics repeatedly speak of 'non-representational,' or 'abstract' art, of 'flat surface,' 'shifting perspective' and 'interacting planes.' All these are slippery terms" ("Poetry as Word-System" 34). They are slippery because, used without rigor, they can encompass a number of art forms outside cubism, and Perloff goes on to cite Wassily Kandinsky's work and baroque art as examples. Perloff therefore urges us to conceptualize Stein's abstractions more as a play "between reference and compositional game, between a pointing system and a self-ordering system" ("Poetry as Word-System" 34). By illustrating "the arbitrariness of discourse [...] even as countless possible meanings present themselves to our attention," Perloff muses, "Stein's style does parallel, as much as the style of any one art can parallel that of another, the instability, indeterminacy, and incoherence of Cubism" ("Poetry as Word-System" 35). In "Some Questions about Modernism," Antin similarly directs our attention to how Stein rearranges the compositional rules guiding her medium. Stressing that Stein's innovations run parallel to Picasso's (as opposed to deriving from them), he holds up Stein over Pound, Eliot, and Joyce for her startling originality as a linguist. These men are, as he phrases it, "so bogged down with English schoolbook 'high cultural' baggage that you have to struggle to disentangle [their] modernism from the surrounding bric-a-brac" (*n. pag.*). "Gertrude Stein was our only pure modernist," Antin declares, since "[o]f all the writers in English only Gertrude Stein seems to have had a thorough understanding of how profoundly

¹² For examples of Stein-Picasso readings, see Fitz; McMillan; Rose; Steiner; Sypher; Wasserstrom; Scobie; Hoffman; and Dubnick.

Cubism opened up the possibilities of representation with this analysis.” Those possibilities involve not the misguided attempt to transpose visual onto verbal cues but an awakening sensitivity to what lies beyond classical narrative technique—whether literature need follow traditional imagery and plot arcs to be defined as such. Stein is the only one who resolutely and unfailingly upholds modernism’s “single fundamental axiom,” which Antin defines as, “[*T*]hat it is necessary to begin from a radical act of definition or redefinition of the domain of the elements and the operations of the art or of art itself.” Her most cubist gesture, for Antin, becomes her drawing out the “complex combination of conceptual and perceptual elements” that constitutes “the visual image.” This is but another way of saying what we have been saying all along: Stein brackets conventional viewing, reflecting, and writing practices to recreate our sensory collision with the world at its most immediate.

Walker is one of the few readers who apprehend that Cézanne is the point of departure for both Stein and Picasso. Both hold Cézanne as a vital influence and extend his phenomenological legacy in their own ways. From Stein’s end, she explicitly pays homage to Cézanne in, among other places, her 1946 interview with Robert Bartlett Haas, where she tells him,

Cézanne conceived the idea that in composition one thing was as important as another thing. Each part is as important as the whole, and that impressed me enormously, and it impressed me so much that I began to write *Three Lives* under this influence and this idea of composition and I was more interested in composition at that moment, this background of word-system [...]. (“Transatlantic Interview” 15)

In his essay “Cézanne’s Doubt,” Merleau-Ponty, interestingly enough, raises the same point:

Cézanne did not want to separate the stable things which we see and the shifting way in which they appear; he wanted to depict matter as it takes on form, the birth of order through spontaneous organization. He makes a basic distinction not between “the senses” and “the understanding” but rather between the spontaneous organization of the things we perceive and the human organization of ideas and sciences. (*Sense* 13-14)

So too does Stein, in *Tender Buttons* and similar pieces, exaggerate the strangeness of things before they are distilled from their visual panorama and concomitant whirlwind of associations. In Peter Quartermain's words, "Stein's writing assaults clarity by suggesting that clarity is itself an assault upon and hence a violation of the sheer complexity and richness of a sensory world whose 'chaotic plenitude' (Jayne Walker's phrase) cannot be verbally articulated or mapped" (21-22). She brings us the world as if we had never seen it before—a half-emerging, delicately queer thing. It is in this sense that Harry R. Garvin proclaims, "Gertrude Stein throughout her career celebrates the commonplace by seeing it in its strangeness and fineness, and she sees and hears great men and women in a finely ontological ordinariness" (88). Mildenberg concurs, saying, "Stein's unusual 'system to pointing' [in *Tender Buttons*] is highly phenomenological in that it brackets the ordinary and emulates the extraordinary, pre-reflective dimension of experience from which our acts and expressions arise" ("Openings" 60). Like Picasso, Stein seizes what she calls "another reality" buried beneath "habits, schools, daily life, reason, necessities of daily life, indolence" (*Writings* 528). For her, what both are expressing is the poetic essence of spontaneous perception before selective attention and common-sense intervene. Stein believes Picasso's "tomatoe [*sic*] was not everybody's tomatoe," since "his effort was not to express in his way the things seen as every one sees them, but to express the thing as he was seeing it" (*Writings* 509). He draws not the fruit we typically purchase at grocery stores, eat in salads, place in bowls, dry in the sun, or squeeze into ketchup. Picasso's tomato refuses these familiar correlations. In the same way, Stein's "tender buttons" are hardly the buttons we fasten everyday. A pump "pumps other things than water" ("Sonatina Followed by Another," *BTV* 26), and cows can come out "between legs" ("All Sunday," *A&B* 101).

That being said, language can never be a transparent medium that somehow actually delivers raw, unmediated sense-data. Words constitute their own reality or “thingness,” as some critics like to say. But words alone cannot fully reconstitute perceptual consciousness. Lyn Hejinian comments that in *Tender Buttons*, “Stein is probing the fraught relationship between the semantics of perception and the syntax of the language in which it is expressed and described—or in which, perhaps, it actually takes place” (102). This relationship is fraught, indeed, and does not find an easy resolution in Stein’s theories of writing. On Stein’s behalf, Hejinian asks us, “Do the words in which we speak of a thing capture our perception, our thought of it?” (104). Yes and no: while consciousness possesses a linguistic dimension,¹³ the written word cannot bring us the world’s inter-sensory tumultuousness with the same immediacy or breadth.

The notion of everything-at-once-as-if-never-seen-before may entice the writer and critic seeking to exceed stale aesthetic formulations. But it is impossible to realize in principle. Too many years of living, talking, reading, listening, using things, and relating to our surroundings work against us. Walker points out this seemingly obvious barrier but fails to pursue its complicated implications for Stein. She first rightly identifies Stein as part of and extending the tradition of “pure” retinal sensations promulgated by George Berkeley, John Ruskin, William James, and the nineteenth-century impressionists. Like the impressionist artists and their contemporaries working in psychology, James included, Stein is quite taken with Ruskin’s “innocence of the eye,” an aesthetic doctrine derived from Berkeley’s “An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision” (Walker 1-10).¹⁴ In praise of his close friend William Turner, Ruskin extravagantly prioritizes color above all other perceptual considerations, arguing that “[t]he whole technical power of painting depends

¹³ Hans-Georg Gadamer may go too far, though, when he asserts that consciousness is nothing *but* language: “Language is not one of the means by which consciousness is mediated with the world. Rather, in all our knowledge of ourselves and in all knowledge of the world, we are always already encompassed by the language that is our own” (62).

¹⁴ See James 179.

on our recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye*; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify – as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight” (18). In practice, however, such formulations remain unfeasible, especially in the verbal arts, which are discursive and non-representational by nature. Even at its most immediate, the human gaze is always mediated by its subject’s indebtedness to framing circumstances—a particular place, time, history, personality, mood, social conditioning, and so on. One of phenomenology’s aims, as a matter of fact, is to remind us that a view is always a view from somewhere. The disembodied gaze in which Ruskin and empirical science profess faith is the stuff of myth. Nodding toward Heidegger, Clive Bush reminds us that to enter language is already to step back from the world:

In a strict sense the world is not embodied in language. Words do not embody the nature of things. In Heidegger’s words, ‘words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak’. The emphasis is on ‘commerce’. As a pre-packaged commodity language falls away from its relation to the real, because it denies that the real is other than itself. It is in this sense that Heidegger says that ‘the essential nature of language refuses to express itself in words’. (292-93)

Language renders pre-reflective thought impossible because it operates as a system of reflection and abstract relations. Thus, many of Mildenberg’s statements, for example,

Woolf, Stein and Stevens [...] seek to expose the world in its pre-giveness and bring to light a pre-conceptual, unmediated experience of this world, a clue to which lies in Gertrude Stein’s commentary on the work of her friend Pablo Picasso: ‘No one had ever tried to express things seen *not* as one knows them but as they are when one sees them without remembering having looked at them’ (“Openings” 50)

or “By virtue of its grotesque word combinations, the project of *Tender Buttons* attempts to capture primordial experience prior to the structures of grammar and reason, prior to our acts of naming” (“Openings” 64), must be taken poetically, not literally. In the phenomenological sense, Stein’s reduction remains a partial, not complete, suspension of

language-rules and familiar associations. To pretend otherwise becomes willful naiveté or mysticism at its worst. *Tender Buttons*, for one, can never reach beyond itself, a work of art(ifice) to the end.

Walker neatly takes us through Ruskin's fallacy, but curiously draws back from Stein's ongoing ambivalence toward the "innocent" eye. True, it is in the process of reinterpreting Cézanne's life-long ambition to "realize one's sensations" (qtd. in Walker 3) that Stein arrives at her avant-garde "word-systems." But I'm not sure, as Walker appears to be, that Stein fully acknowledges the aesthetic impossibility she sets up for herself: to recreate unmediated sensory experience on the page. The evidence for any such revelation is lacking. The few *Tender Buttons* passages and authorial statements that Walker musters—most memorably: "[I]t was not solely the realism of the characters but the realism of the composition which was the important thing, the realism of the composition of my thoughts" ("Transatlantic Interview" 15-16; qtd. in Walker 13) and "[P]ractice the sign that means that really means a necessary betrayal" (*Tender Buttons*, L 168; qtd. in Walker 142)—can all too easily be countered by other lines pulled from other places. Ruskin's ghost haunts Stein still. "That is the problem—to write things as they are, not as they seem. Our aim must be not to explain things, but to write the thing itself, and thereby in itself be self explanatory," Stein herself admits in a 1935 lecture.¹⁵ She rearticulates this goal in "Portraits and Repetition": "I began again not to let the looking be predominating not to have the listening and talking be predominating but to once more denude all this of anything in order to get back to the essence of the thing contained within itself" (L 119). If these ambiguous comments are interpreted correctly, Stein speaks of essences over appearances, objectivity's triumph over its counterpart. Taken with Stein's theory of

¹⁵ Quotation from Hal Levy's notes featured in Haas' preface to Stein's *How Writing is Written* (n. pag.).

aesthetic production sketched in *The Geographical History of America*, such lines leave us guessing what exactly Stein means.

Stein did grasp the experimental potential lurking within her own medium and did reimagine its conceptual links with the world. Her repeated emphases on the validity of art as art, to be appreciated on its own terms and granted its own existence (instead of being treated as a stand-in for something else), confirm this. Yet whether Stein's texts ever stop trying to transcribe one-to-one perceptual processes remains uncertain. One cannot vouch that Stein is sure she isn't embodying, in Ruskin's sense, the workings of consciousness through language. The essay "Pictures," for instance, teems with conflicting impulses: art as art, art as transparently mirroring life. (On a side note, "Pictures" is also a piece that Walker omits from her book.) When Stein considers art as art, she writes, "Anything once it is made has its own existence and it is because of that that anything holds somebody's attention. The question always is about that anything, how much vitality has it and do you happen to like to look at it" (*LA* 61). An oil painting of the Battle of Waterloo holds our attention by the weight of its existence as an oil painting. It cannot recreate the actual battle, no matter how life-like it may seem. Stein is neither provincial nor delusional enough to make such grandiose claims:

There it all was the things to see but there was no air it just was an oil painting. I remember standing on the little platform in the center and almost consciously knowing there was no air. [...] [I]t just was an oil painting and it had a life of its own and it was a scene as an oil painting sees it and it was a real thing which looked like something I had seen but it had nothing to do with that something that I knew because the feeling was not at all that not at all the feeling which I had when I saw anything that was really what the oil painting showed. It the oil painting showed it as an oil painting. That is what an oil painting is. (*LA* 63)

Other paintings, however, elicit mixed emotions. And Stein's reactions are worded obscurely enough to raise eyebrows. We often lose her or wonder if she is blatantly contradicting herself. An oil painting lives "in and for itself" (*LA* 80), yet when it captures

the world too perfectly, the author wavers. Cazin's wheat fields "discourage" Stein ("One does not like to be mixed in one's mind as to which looks most like something at which one is looking the thing or the painting" [LA 68]), Shilling's American landscapes "bother" her for blurring "the thing seen" with "the thing painted" (LA 69), and Botticellis are so realistic as to appear "artificial" (LA 71). But how can artifice appear more artificial by recourse to the real? Stein explains,

I used to walk in the country and then I concluded that the Botticellis being really so like the flowers in the country they were not the pictures before which one could sleep, they were to my feeling, being that they looked so like the flowers in the country, they were artificial. You know what I mean artificial flowers. And I literally mean just that. (LA 71)

Once we get past her signature abstruseness, I take it she means that the artwork loses its integrity as art if it tries too hard to be life-like. Velasquez and Courbet disturb Stein to no end for this reason. "The Velasquez bothered me as I say," Stein confesses, "because like the Cazins of my youth they were too real and yet they were not real enough to be real and not unreal enough to be unreal" (LA 73). Courbet's realism similarly induces anxiety for "detract[ing] from the reality of the oil painting as oil painting" (LA 75). Courbet's colors so vividly evoke nature that Stein almost mistakes "the Courbets not being an oil painting but being a piece of the country in miniature as seen in a diminishing glass" (LA 75).

Tensions between representation and reality escalate as "Pictures" continues. The root issue remains constant: what is the function and capacity of art? To gesture beyond itself, only toward itself, or all the above? Stein's growing faith that "it made no difference what an oil painting painted it always did and should look like an oil painting" (LA 72), her penchant for Greco and Cézanne—both suggest she pursues art that practices the third option. Greco "excited" her, because his "oil painting was pure it neither moved nor was still nor was it real" (LA 73). Cézanne's objects "were so entirely these things that they were not an oil painting and yet that is just what the Cezannes were they were an oil

painting” (*LA* 77). Art can and should transmit the immediacy of life, yet simultaneously realize and push the dictates of its medium. Antin’s modernist axiom can be traced back, truly, to Stein’s aesthetics.

But Stein makes such breakthroughs only to retract them. After Rosenthal, Millet, Seymour Hayden, Whistler, Zorn, Meryon, Japanese prints, Cazin, Daubigny, Rousseau, Corot, Shilling, Tintoretto, Giotto, Castagna, Botticelli, Mantegna, Rubens, Titian, Velasquez, Greco, Courbet, David, Ary Sheffer, Greuze, Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, Leonardo, and Seurat, Stein shockingly states, “I realized as I had already found out very often that there is a relation between anything that is painted and the painting of it. And gradually I realized as I had found very often that that relation was so to speak nobody’s business” (*LA* 79). Walker believes that, like Cézanne whose “surface designs were conceived in an effort to create a perfect match between the concrete signifiers of painting and the empirical data of perception” (13), Stein “clearly acknowledges that her commitment to the reality of immediate experience was always matched by—if not mastered by—her intense awareness of the separate but equal reality of language” (xiv). One of Stein’s 1940 letters to Haas reinforces Walker’s position by positing “the relation of Description to Imagination” (*LS&W* 402) as one of interchangeability. “[T]here is no real separation of course not, even in dreams of course not” (*LS&W* 402), Stein writes of the pair. Mediated by subjectivity, description involves some level of imagination. Imagination, conversely, is always imagination of something and therefore descriptive. But essays like “Pictures” counter such clarity and leave us floating in a strange place, somewhere between empirical realism and phenomenology.

The relation between Stein’s forms and a phenomenology of the senses has been unnecessarily embroiled in obscurities, because too many critics take at face-value what

Stein says about her writing. As insightful as some comments are, others are misleading in their vagueness, simplicity, falseness, or what Aron Gurwitsch calls “exhibitionist rigmarole” (qtd. in Natanson 11). Gurwitsch refers, here, to Sartre’s word-games in *Being and Nothingness*, but Stein, at her worst, matches Sartre in his taste for Delphic pronouncements. As Richard Kostelanetz confesses, “[Stein’s] essays and speeches on her own work tended to be suggestive and formally interesting but, by critical standards, evasive and incomplete” (Introduction xxx). Walker seconds his concerns: “The lectures and other theoretical works Stein began to write in the late twenties [...] have more polemical force than theoretical precision, systematically refus[ing] to acknowledge how fundamentally both her conception of reality and her evaluation of the powers and limitations of language changed during the early years of her career” (xiv-xv). And these two offer fairly generous responses to Stein’s critical pieces.

Other voices are not as forgiving. Critics as renowned as Kenneth Burke have been driven to impatience by what they see as pretentious meta-analysis. It is the Stein of *Lectures in America* whom Burke dismisses in his essay “The Impartial Essence,” where he accuses her of pseudo-profundity and theoretical inconsistency. Stein’s “doctrine of ‘essence’” hides nothing more than the deification of personal style, Burke argues, since the endeavor to write what “the thing *is*” (187) deteriorates into intellectual masturbation in practice:

You start to write about something, to describe it, to make its portrait. You have a personal style, a set of mannerisms that suit your particular essence, and as you write you gradually get into the swing of them. When you get going, you are “excited.” And since your excitement arises during your description of a thing, you may call this excitement the melody or essence of the thing. You may feel that each subject has its particular essence because you have used a particular combination of words in writing about it. But you feel the “unity” of all subjects because the quality of your excitement is the same in all cases (the way you feel when you get going), and you call this melody of yours the melody of the thing.

If the essence of external things is thus identified with the qualities of your style, you may tend to think of writing (description) primarily as a

monologue act, done with little direct concern for an audience. And since this stylistic circulation about an object obliges you to consider the strategy of expression, you may arrive at the thoughts on the nature of naming that Miss Stein verbalizes as a shifty distinction between prose and poetry (“that is poetry really loving the name of anything and that is not prose”). (188)

For Burke, hypocrisy enters the picture when Stein moves past “monologuing” essences to experiment with narrative and dramatic action without revising “all the initial visionary assertions” (189). Although these last three chapters will hopefully make a case that there is more to Stein’s evolving phenomenological method than the conceptual inconsistencies marking what Burke labels as her “passive” phase, I sympathize with Burke to the extent that I believe Stein’s queer phenomenology cannot be approached solely through Stein.

For after all the hype surrounding Stein’s theories of writing, Stein’s self-explanations can disconcert us, because they are so simple, almost careless. In her “Transatlantic Interview,” for instance, Stein’s commentary on *Tender Buttons* reveals some of her thoughts behind the word-referent relation, a connection she declared was “nobody’s business” only around a decade before. Regarding the subsection “A Little Bit of a Tumbler”—

A shining indication of yellow consists in there having been more of the same color than could have been expected when all four were bought. This was the hope which made the six and seven have no use for any more places and this necessarily spread into nothing. Spread into nothing.

—Stein elucidates,

I have used this idea in more places. I used to take objects on a table, like a tumbler or any kind of object and try to get the picture of it clear and separate in my mind and create a word relationship between the word and the things seen. “A shining indication of yellow . . .” suggests a tumbler and something in it. “. . . when all four were bought” suggests there were four of them. I try to call to the eye the way it appears by suggestion the way a painter can do it. This is difficult and takes a lot of work and concentration to do it. I want to indicate it without calling in other things. “This was the hope which made the six and seven have no use for any more places . . .” Places bring up a reality. “. . . and this necessarily spread into nothing,” which does broken tumbler which is the end of the story. (24-25)

We don't have to wholly accept Stein's remarks, but they do serve as a warning to the over-zealous. Reading Stein requires a delicate touch, a sense for her waffling between theory and practice. The "tumbler" commentary, in particular, tells us four salient things about Stein's creative method at the time: she saw it as visual rather than aural;¹⁶ distinct from automatic writing; resistant to analogies and hence nouns in general; and an amalgamation of essential (the tumbler as an abstract ideal), associative, and visual cues. By conflating multiple intentional modes toward the object—the object I define, I see, I touch, I remember, I imagine, et cetera—what emerges is an original word-collage that invokes a new object entirely: the-object-as-intended-by-Stein. Like Picasso's aforementioned tomatoes, Stein's tumblers are tumblers we have never seen before. But Stein's ingenuity goes beyond aesthetic intent. It derives from her execution, and here is where her literary inventiveness comes in. Stein evokes people and commonplace objects without relying on the same lexi-syntactic glue holding most of the western canon's literature together and without falling back on likenesses—the seemingly interminable analogical chains that drive Eco to exasperation. "While I was writing I didn't want, when I used one word, to make it carry with it too many associations. I wanted as far as possible

¹⁶ Stein often subverts visual-verbal boundaries by claiming that writers write with their eyes and painters paint with anything but (see "Raoul Dufy," *RAB* 72). In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, she clarifies (or is said to clarify through Toklas' fastidiously crafted voice) that her literary interests involve how texts become formally constructed on the page, not how they sound: "I feel with my eyes [...] I don't hear a language, I hear tones and voice and rhythms, but with my eyes I see words and sentences" (*ABT* 70). Similarly, in "A Transatlantic Interview 1946," Stein maintains, "I write with my eyes, not with my ears or mouth. I hate lecturing, because you begin to hear yourself talk, because sooner or later you hear your voice, and you do not hear what you say. You just hear what they hear you say. As a matter of fact, as a writer I write entirely with my eyes. The words as seen by my eyes are the important words, and the ears and mouth do not count" (31). The fierceness behind such reiterations may rise from defensiveness. Stein could be reacting against ongoing accusations that her language is merely primitive sound-play and, as B. F. Skinner's 1934 article deridingly hints, an automatic one at that. Lines such as, "Gertrude Stein never had subconscious reactions, nor was she a successful subject for automatic writing" (*ABT* 79), very much emphasize, therefore, the artistry underlying Stein's pieces. Although language's musicality inspires her (see *ABT* 206 and *BTV* 44, the latter featuring Virgil Thomson's preface to "In"), Stein distances herself from sound-poetry due to, it appears, her low regard for purely phonetic schemes, evidenced in the stray remark "[*Tender Buttons*] is where I was beginning and went on a good deal after that period to make sound pictures but I gave that up as uninteresting" ("Transatlantic Interview" 27). Years earlier, in "Portraits and Repetition," she muses in the same spirit, "I created a melody of words [...] this then began to bother me because perhaps I was getting drunk with melody and I do not like to be drunk I like to be sober" (*L* 119).

to make it exact, as exact as mathematics,” she even states at one point (“How Writing is Written,” *HWW* 157). By conveying things “without calling in other things,” her still-lives exploit a rare discipline.

To read Stein is to try and avoid as much Stein-inspired abstruseness as possible, while still appreciating the gnomic flourishes defining her writing. A few more hermeneutic points should illustrate what I mean. When we consider statements such as, “The time comes when it is natural to realize that solid advantages connect themselves with pages of extreme expression. This is never nervously pale. It is finely and authentically swollen by the time there is any rapid shouting” (“If You Had Three Husbands,” *G&P* 381), confusion abounds. What are the “solid advantages” Stein speaks of? *Tourty or Tourtebattre* goes further by broadening the question to: what is literature itself? “I call literature telling a story as it happens. / Facts of life make literature. / I can always feel rightly about that” (*Stein Reader* 324). Such lines, in conjunction with the declarations “I can look at a landscape without describing it” (*Stanzas in Meditation*, *YGS* 363), “I cannot endure descriptions” (“All Sunday,” *A&B* 116), and “I cannot describe beauty. I cannot describe a square, I cannot describe strangeness. I cannot describe rivers, I cannot describe lands” (“Sonatina Followed by Another,” *BTV* 21), are hopelessly befuddling. Stein hates stories and loves descriptions. But stories related in “the continuous present” are not stories in the conventional sense, and Stein’s descriptive “looking” as a literary gesture accentuates the pre-reflective ground of perception—the resistance to discursive thought, although all language is, again, discursive in that it is once-removed from the real. The same logic underlies “I will not imitate colors” (“Lifting Belly,” *YGS* 19) and “I do not care about the same thing in another way” (“Pink Melon Joy,” *G&P* 376). Of course, Stein is fascinated by colors, genital “pinkness” not least of all. Of course, we daily encounter the objects she speaks of. The point is, however, that

her bracketing derivative language and thought is radical enough to render things constitutionally different for us during our reading experience. So when Stein declares, “I don’t care about lists” and “I cannot count” (“Pink Melon Joy,” *G&P* 366, 376), she alludes to conventionally ordered lists and numerical sequences. “Pink Melon Joy,” therefore, may consist of three parts, but its subsection headings refuse numerical notation and straightforward connections to the stanzas they precede.

ESSENCE

The apotheosis of Stein’s early repetitive phase, *The Making of Americans* proves, for me, the next best point for laying out Stein’s theoretical relations to phenomenology proper, as the entire novel devotes itself to ideal descriptions and what Husserl calls “adumbrations” (*Abschattungen*). To quickly clarify, adumbrations simply denote the “manifold of proper appearances” (Husserl, *Thing* §35) or facets of an object. A single adumbration, then, is a mode of appearance given in perception (Husserl, *Ideas I* §44).

A zealous phenomenologist of human nature, Stein’s narrator tries to compile a dictionary of “every kind of men and every kind of women” (220). He or she does so through prose that seems to minutely, indefatigably record a character’s different and shifting aspects for others. In the most unrepentantly literal fashion, Stein’s repetitive style traces adumbration-upon-adumbration in this sense. The following sample illustrates this kaleidoscopic principle with regard to the younger David Hersland:

He was completely certain of this thing that being existing is not anything. He was almost completely certain of this thing that being existing is not anything. He was completely certain of this thing that being existing is not anything. He was almost completely certain that being existing is something, he was almost completely certain of this thing then when he was a young one, he was almost completely certain that being existing is

something, he was completely certain that he was feeling completely feeling that being existing is something, he was completely certain that being living is something, he was almost completely certain that being living is something, he was almost certain, when he was a young one, that being existing is something, he was completely certain then of this thing that being existing is something, then when he was a young one. (810)

Each repetition, no matter how similar, contains a slightly different emphasis, Stein famously argues. In “The Gradual Making of *The Making of Americans*,” she reminisces,

I then began again to think about the bottom nature in people, I began to get enormously interested in hearing how everybody said the same thing over and over again with infinite variations but over and over again until finally if you listened with great intensity you could hear it rise and fall and tell all that that there was inside them, not so much by the actual words they said or the thoughts they had but the movement of their thoughts and words endlessly the same and endlessly different. (*L* 86)

This idea appears in other essays and creative works. Stein reveals in “Captain Walter Arnold,” “Can you recollect any example of easy repetition. I can and I can mention it. I can explain how by twice repeating you change the meaning you actually change the meaning. This makes it more interesting. If we attach it to a person we make for realization” (*G&P* 260). In “Portraits and Repetition” and “How Writing is Written,” Stein similarly affirms repetition as a means to multifaceted understanding. In the former, she writes, “[I]f you insist you must each time use emphasis and if you use emphasis it is not possible while anybody is alive that they should use exactly the same emphasis” (*L* 100). In the latter: “You will see that when I kept on saying something was something or somebody was somebody, I changed it just a little bit until I got a whole portrait. I conceived the idea of building this thing up. [...] No matter how you say it, you say it differently. It was this that led me in all that early work” (“How Writing is Written,” *HWW* 159). One “builds up” essences through a linguistic device that stores each adumbration, moment by moment, as it flits across the eye.

At times, Stein likens this process to movie-making. Each repetition is analogous to a film frame, both functioning as adumbrative descriptions and leading to an awareness

of the referent as a whole. “I was doing what the cinema was doing, I was making a continuous succession of the statement of what that person was until I had not many things but one thing” (“Portraits and Repetition,” *L* 106), Stein declares. She reiterates a few pages later, “As I told you in comparing it to a cinema picture one second was never the same as the second before or after” (“Portraits and Repetition,” *L* 112). (The cinema metaphor’s impact on Stein’s time-sense, conversely, will be addressed in the next section, with Stein situating the moving image within a present without memory.)

It follows that the more adumbrations are accumulated through repetition, the more comprehensive our knowledge of anything’s essence becomes. Repetition approaches objects from enough perspectives until an essentialist description can be reached. Stein gestures toward this notion of repetition-as-epistemology through repetition itself:

Slowly every one in continuous repeating, to their minutest variation, comes to be clearer to some one. Every one who ever was or is or will be living sometimes will be clearly realised by some one. [...] Slowly every kind of one comes into ordered recognition. [...] Repeating is in them of the most delicate shades in them of being and of feeling and so it comes to be clear in each one the complete nature in each one, it comes to be clear in each one the connection between that one and others to make a kind of them, a kind of men and women. (*Making Americans* 284)

The novel thematically commits to “diagramming” the essences or what Stein calls “bottom natures” of different personality-types, not unlike Husserl who organizes essences into a broader taxonomical system. “I made charts and charts of everybody” (“Portraits and Repetition,” *L* 109), Stein notes, describing the instinct driving her to write at the time. Her narrative persona echoes this ambition to know everyone: “Kinds in men and women. [...] I wish I had a complete record of each one” (*Making Americans* 672). What *The Making of Americans*, its narrator, and its author all seek to discern is: what is the essence of an individual’s personality?

The novel cannot make up its mind as to whether this question has an answer. On one hand, its narrator encounters flashes of Husserlian revelation on this or that character’s

nature. “This one then was one having solid enough dull not very lively [...] fairly dry resisting bottom” (562). “This one was of the engulfing murky resisting kind” (551). “This one [...] had stupid being from a timid feeling” (572). For Husserl, “essences” remain ideal universals as opposed to spatio-temporal entities. They “designat[e] what is to be found in the very own being of an individuum as the What of an individuum” (Husserl, *Ideas I* §3). Thus, the phenomenologist approaches “essence” in terms of abstractions: quantities, qualities, kinds, relations, and so forth. Mirroring this logic, *The Making of Americans* sports few facts, but many qualitative observations: aggressive, sensitive, stupid, excited, lively, emotional, loving, intelligent, et cetera. Names, dates, occupations, ages, physical appearances, or other details commonly given in realist fiction are almost nowhere to be found. No, for Stein, another’s “bottom nature” consists of how that “one” thinks, eats, drinks, loves, begins things, and engages in related everyday acts.

Absolute clarity into others is, at the same time, impossible. Things can always be intended in new ways or have more sides to show us. An object’s intentional horizon can never be fully exhausted for the onlooker. Different times and circumstances generate new profiles for the thing and its perceiver. As Husserl puts it,

If the sense of the physical thing is determined by the data of physical-thing perception [...] then that sense [...] necessarily refers us to continuously unitary concatenations of possible perceptions which, starting from any perception effected, extend in infinitely many directions in a *systematically and rigidly regular* manner and, moreover, extend in every direction without limit, being always dominated throughout by a unity of sense. (*Ideas I* §44)

In *The Making of Americans*, people possess adumbrations they may not even be aware of. They and the “we” who try to sum them up can and do change over time. Encompassing such instabilities, Stein’s writing scatters in a great number of repeated negations: *W* is and is not *X*, *Y* does and does not do *Z*. In the younger David Hersland’s case, “He was going on being existing, he was not going on being existing. [...] He was sad enough. He was not

sad enough” (840, 841). Due to such fluctuations, Stein’s early repetitive texts remain some of the few in literary history whose individual statements are almost meaningless on their own. (For that reason, most of the extracts in this section are relatively lengthy.)

Logical reversals point to the limits of intersubjective knowledge itself. To layer as many adumbrations as possible regarding someone’s character sediments our personal knowledge of him or her (“More and more it is surer that this kind of describing leads to complete understanding of men and women” [*Making Americans* 283]). Yet we can never know others like we know ourselves. If “[e]very one to me just now is in pieces to me” (520), Stein’s narrator despairs, “Why should anything any one keep on going if not ever at any time anything any one will be a whole one” (521). Stein’s bewilderment over the difficulties underlying intersubjective understanding resounds across pages and pages of *The Making of Americans*. Her desolation points to an epistemological difficulty Merleau-Ponty himself profoundly feels: self-knowledge and knowledge of others are never transparent but opaque in that perceptual consciousness lacks “apodeictic certainty” (*PP* 400). “I know myself only in my inherence in time and in the world, that is, I know myself only in ambiguity” (*PP* 402), and everyone has an individual point of view inaccessible to everyone else. Such existential tensions evoke “a queer feeling” for Stein’s narrator: “It is a queer feeling to be really certain that one is not remembering the way another one is remembering, is not seeing the way another one is seeing” (711). It is a queer feeling to imagine assuming another’s perspective and how “I” would vanish if I were to become “You.” Something of Sartre’s antagonistic “look” between oneself and others (mentioned in Chapter Three) enters Stein’s novel here. If I “am completely realising some one else being feeling, seeing, remembering that thing,” then “I am realising that I am not being feeling, seeing, remembering something” (711). More bluntly put, if I were to look out at the world through another’s eyes, my original self would cease

to be. Stein's main point, though, remains not the philosophical annihilation of one's subjectivity if it were to be submerged in another's, but that it is queer if it were to happen and queer because it can never happen.

TIME-SENSE

Although Stein technically defines the "continuous present" as her sustained and unusual use of present progressives to express the "now" in which consciousness literally abides, all of Stein's literary devices stress perceptual immediacy to engage us in the moment. For instance, repetition and the collage effect, that is, the presentation of multiple intentional modes and objects at once (the principle of simultaneity operating in *Tender Buttons*), also fall under Stein's larger project of situating the world in lived time. Repetition hinders narrative progression and, in so doing, symbolically keeps us in the present. Achieving the same end, the hermetic language invoked by the collage effect prolongs the present in the regard that it obstructs our powers of making sense of what was and will be read, Stein's resistance to narrative and figurative treatment focusing our attention on the raw experience of sounding out words and tracing their visual arrangement on the page. All three techniques will be briefly touched upon here, being interrelated and often applied in conjunction by Stein.

Begun in *Three Lives* and developed with *The Making of Americans* and later texts, the "continuous present" works with, in Stein's words, "using everything" (simultaneity) and "beginning again" (repetition) to ward off "the quality in a composition that makes it go dead just after it has been made" ("Composition as Explanation," *L* 29):

Continuous present is one thing and beginning again and again is another thing. These are both things. And then there is using everything.

This brings us again to composition this the using everything. The using everything brings us to composition and to this composition. A continuous present and using everything and beginning again. In these two books [*Three Lives* and *The Making of Americans*] there was elaboration of the complexities of using everything and of a continuous present and of beginning again and again and again. (“Composition as Explanation,” *L* 25-26)

Such statements can be construed as differential amplifiers: the continuous present functions more as a stylistic device, rooted in Stein’s idiosyncratic progressive verb forms, and is therefore distinct from repetition and simultaneity as literary techniques. At the same time, the triad’s synchronized movement implies a certain interdependence. The “continuous present” operates alongside and, when taken more generally, out of the other two gestures.

Anchored in present participles, Stein’s stylized repetitiveness functions as a phenomenological expression of time—where consciousness is always consciousness of the present—and bears marked affinities with Merleau-Ponty’s temporal intuitions. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, the present holds a “privileged” position for Merleau-Ponty, it being “the zone in which being and consciousness coincide” (*PP* 492). Time is pre-reflectively experienced as a unified, self-constituting, continuous phenomenon. As Merleau-Ponty phrases it,

What there is, is not a present, then another present which takes its place in being, and not even a present with its vistas of past and future followed by another present in which those vistas are disrupted, so that one and the same spectator is needed to effect the synthesis of successive perspectives: there is one single time which is self-confirmatory, which can bring nothing into existence unless it has already laid that thing’s foundations as present and eventual past, and which establishes itself at a stroke. (*PP* 489)¹⁷

¹⁷ The continuous present differs from the “transcendent present” Merleau-Ponty develops in *The Visible and the Invisible*, his incomplete and posthumously published last work. It isn’t so much that the latter replaces the former, but that they evoke complementary principles: time can only be apprehended in a unified stream, yet if one tries to distinguish the present from other instances, one loses it. The present evades instantaneous intuition at the moment one resolves to chase it. “[O]ne knows that it is not there, that it was just there, one never coincides with it” (*Visible* 184), Merleau-Ponty ponders, a notion paraphrased by Stephen Priest as “if one tries to pay attention to the present time one finds it impossible to be conscious of it *qua* present but only as just having been” (134).

Being and consciousness are now and can only be in the now for the phenomenologist who traces our immediate awareness of the world.

That insight holds true for the creative author. Modernism as a whole takes an interest in non-linearity. But Stein's early repetitive phase, through the double channels of form and content, disrupts sequential logic with impressive rigor. Stein variously repeats entire sentences or phrasal snippets to create "a space of time that is filled always filled with moving" ("Gradual Making," *L* 98), that is, movement without a sense of its own history. Without ripples or tears, the present literally continues on the level of style—"I had to use present participles, new constructions of grammar. The grammar-constructions are correct, but they are changed, in order to get this immediacy" ("How Writing is Written," *HWW* 155)—and that of narrative, where Stein bypasses a familiar progression of events.

In stylistic terms, Stein admits that "to make a whole present out of something that [...] had taken a great deal of time to find out" ("Gradual Making," *L* 91), she resorts to "a variety of ways": "[M]y sentences grew longer and longer, my imaginary dependent clauses were constantly being dropped out, I struggled with relations between they them and then, I began with a relation between tenses that sometimes almost seemed to do it" ("Gradual Making," *L* 91). Stein performs some of the same modernist gestures as her contemporaries, but with her own distinctive, characteristic bravura. Lines and lines of present participles without any context, no transitions, rapid shifts in attention, indeterminate pronouns, missing (or misplaced) conjunctions—what holds traditional sentences, paragraphs, chapters, or entire books together is systematically excised. The remainder is rearranged to Stein's delight,¹⁸ as a sweeping glance across *The Making of Americans* shows us.

¹⁸ For a helpful guide to this remixing process, see Gass.

- a. Wisdom and dreaming, both good things when shown at the right time by a young grown man, who wants to be succeeding, always, in every kind of living. (17)
- b. It is a queer feeling that one has in them and perhaps it is, that they have something queer in them something that gives to one a strange uncertain feeling with them for their heads are on them as pulling babies heads are always on them and it gives to one a queer uncertain feeling to see heads on big women that look loose and wobbly on them. (79)
- c. Johnson when he forgets his emotion, the emotion he had when he was friendly or loving or fighting, Johnson when he forgets his emotion and declares it to have been all the other one's doing attributes his having yielded to this indulging in loving, fighting, friendly action, to the weakness in him of always yielding. (441-42)
- d. It is certainly a difficult thing to know it of any one whether they have in them a kind of feeling, whether they have in them at some time any realisation that they are hurting some one, whether they had planned doing that thing. (460)
- e. And Julia had known and then was not any longer knowing Charles Kohler, and then there was Arthur Keller whom in a way every one was quite certain would come to be sometime a brother-in-law to her and then there was one she was certainly needing to be one certainly to be existing as being one certainly teaching some one something, Linder Herne, and then there was the whole family that were relations to her, and then there was Florentine Cranach who was a cousin of James Cranach and then there was Hilda Breslau who might come later to be a sister-in-law to her but who really later married another, Ernest Brakes who was a painter, and then there was Selma Dehning who had married into the Dehning family and then had not any love for any one who was not a Dehning and then there was Ella and Fred and their little baby, Robert Housman who came very often to stay with them the Dehnings and with Mrs. Hersland, and then there was Mrs. Conkling the aunt of Selma Dehning and then there was a cousin of Mrs. Conkling and she had five children and they were all girls and all in a way earning their living and very nice girls in home living and Julia liked going out with them. (702)
- f. The one remembering completely remembering something about each one being in the family living has been completely remembering everything about any one being in the family living, is remembering completely remembering everything about some being in the family living, is completely remembering something about every one being in the family living, will be completely remembering everything about some being in the family living will completely remember something about every one being in the family living. (924)

Stein does not theorize in more detail about her use of tenses, but a significant tension develops between the presence of multiple tenses and her idea of the continuous present.

Stein's aesthetic theories stress that although time can be intended in successive terms, we live in the present. We can't escape it. But the integration of multiple tenses within Stein's circular refrains or even a single sentence summons a "continuous present" that, in practice, breaks down into an amalgamation of recollections, immediate sensations, and anticipations. As Stein herself ruminates, "The time of the composition [...] has been at times a present thing it has been at times a past thing it has been at times a future thing it has been at times an endeavor at parts or all of these things" ("Composition as Explanation," *L* 29). Consciousness during the compositional process inevitably consists of past, present, and future impressions. Husserl would agree, holding up our listening to a tune as a parallel experience: "[A]t any given time I hear only the actually present phase of the tone, and the objectivity of the whole enduring tone is constituted in an act-continuum that is in part memory, in smallest punctual part perception, and in further part expectation" (*Internal Time* §7). He goes on to clarify that "memory" and "expectation" in this context are "fuse[d] with the apprehension of the tone that is now appearing and that, as it were, I am now hearing" (*Internal Time* §14). They are so "fused," since they stand for the just-past and just-coming, all integrated into the experience of the now-point—not memories of what happened days ago or anticipation of what will happen in the days to come (*Internal Time* §14). The present moment, in short, consists of "retentions," "impressions," and "protentions" for Husserl (*Internal Time* §24, §39, §40), those fleeting milliseconds that ever so infinitesimally trace the surge of time receding, arriving, and proceeding toward us.

Let's put this Stein-Husserl time differential another way. For consciousness to be continuous (and it is), it must seamlessly consolidate protentions and retentions into each present impression. Perceptual awareness flows in a unified stream that Husserl expresses

as the “one, unique flow of consciousness in which both the unity of the tone in immanent time and the unity of the flow of consciousness itself become constituted at once” (*Internal Time* §39). Husserl’s “one, unique flow” finds support in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*: “[E]ach present reasserts the presence of the whole past which it supplants, and anticipates that of all that is to come [...] the present is not shut up within itself, but transcends itself towards a future and a past” (*PP* 488-89). While Stein’s notion of the continuous present forbears from formally acknowledging retentional-protentional consciousness (nor should it), it does effect, through methodical yet quirky shifts in tense, Husserl’s experiential synthesis of present moments.

Repetition poetically enacts the here and now in that no traditional plot advances. We have no past to mull over or future to anticipate with no predictable narrative pattern in place. Nothing technically “happens” in large chunks of *The Making of Americans*, for instance. Stein herself asserts, “This [book] was one of my first efforts to give the appearance of one time-knowledge, and not to make it a narrative story. This is what I mean by immediacy of description” (“How Writing is Written,” *HWW* 155). Repetition conjures a continuous present by circling around moments, this moment. Repeating “one,” in particular, aggressively opposes the logic of one, two, three, four, ad infinitum. So does scrambling numerical sequences in general. Just as no Aristotelian plot progresses, no linear counting unfolds. As Bonnie Marranca states in her introduction to Stein’s *Last Plays and Operas*, “[Stein] laughed at the idea of acts, scenes, chapters, pages, and volumes, which she spread throughout her plays, frequently disregarding numerical sequences and breaking any linear flow by moving from the exaggerated build-up of some scenes to the brevity of others or to the constant interruption of the curtain” (xiii).

Stein's ridicule of rigid ordering extends to non-theatrical works as well. In *A Novel of Thank You*, the line "Chapter two and chapter twenty-two and then to remember chapter twenty-two" (53) falls under the heading "Chapter Two," which crops up, in turn, between "Chapters XLII" and "XLIII." "Lifting Belly" goes from "Part II" to "II," circling back upon itself. "A Sonatina Followed by Another" plays with its title's sequential implications by organizing itself around subheadings that do anything but follow one another: roman numerals give way to poetic soundbytes, which splinter into often identically titled plays. "I," "II," and "Annex to No. 2 Sonatina Followed by Another Not Yet Sat but Walking" go into "Last Part," which subdivides into *One Sonatina Followed by Another Divided by a Play, A Play, A Play*, and (yet again) *A Play*. The last line of "Dahomy or As Soft a Noise (a serial)" calls "counting" a "mistake" (*A&B* 172). Immediate experience is too raw to be watered down, always after the fact, to a system of intervals. It deserves more from us. Stein's texts, thus, keep their vigil against linearity.

Not only does no story exist in this non-sequential world, no memory does either, since we can't easily remember things that have no beginnings, middles, or ends. Memory flees without discrete events (relayed in a typically intelligible way) to signpost the passage of time. Michel Delville describes the amnesia that Stein's early repetitive poetics invites in terms of sonic looping, a loop being "a structuring device which returns upon itself and thereby undermines traditional expectations regarding narrative, descriptive progression, and closure" (78). The present looms before us, serenely extending in every direction, all-encompassing, unbroken.

Founded on the collage's everything-at-once impulse, Stein's abstract portraits continue the present to the extent that they resist memory. They, too, invoke a kind of readerly amnesia:

Remembering is repetition anybody can know that. In doing a portrait of any one, the repetition consists in knowing that that one is a kind of a one, that the things he does have been done by others like him that the things he says have been said by others like him, but, and this is the important thing, there is no repetition in hearing and saying the things he hears and says when he is hearing and saying them. And so in doing a portrait of him if it were possible to make that portrait a portrait of him saying and hearing what he says and hears while he is saying and hearing it there is then in so doing neither memory nor repetition no matter how often that which he says and hears is heard and said. ("Portraits and Repetition," *L* 106-07)

Marvelously bizarre word-arrangements resist smooth regurgitation. We'd be hard-pressed to recite lines from "Orta or One Dancing," for instance, or companion-pieces that fail to cohere with familiar linguistic and narrative arrangements.

Such failures lessen our chances of abstracting ourselves from the text, either by reflecting on what has or will occur, during the act of reading. This disjointedness between narrative time and experiential time is most evident, for Stein, in the theater. Her essay "Plays" alleges that the theater is a contradiction in terms, since it aims to deliver life's immediacy without allowing audiences to immediately engage in its delivered goods:

Your sensation as one in the audience in relation to the play played before you your sensation I say your emotion concerning that play is always either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play.

This thing the fact that your emotional time as an audience is not the same as the emotional time of the play is what makes one endlessly troubled about a play, because not only is there a thing to know as to why this is so but also there is a thing to know why perhaps it does not need to be so. (*L* 59)

The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas likewise attests to Stein's aversion to the phenomenological slippage between lived and imposed time: "The theatre [Stein] has always cared for less. She says it goes too fast, the mixture of eye and ear bothers her and

her emotion never keeps pace” (*ABT* 75). Consequently, the majority of Stein’s dramatic productions disavow conventional narrative to bridge the gap between our present (real-time) and the presented present (stage-time). As Sara J. Ford points out,

If an audience member or reader is paying attention to the meaning of something that happened ten minutes ago [...] or is paying attention to how the current moment will unfold in the following ten minutes, he or she is not experiencing the present tense of what is on the stage at a particular moment in time. (24)

Insofar as she avoids tidy sentences and storytelling, Stein writes thought-bubbles and acts as they chaotically arise, forgoing traditional accounts that harbor a built-in time lag—the look, then reflection, then recording, with seconds, minutes, hours, years passing by. A language that, to the best of its abilities, facilitates timeless, memory-less sensory intake follows.

Cinema—and not just the silent kind—offers an enticing alternative to the intentional muddle—seeing, listening, feeling, digesting—that the theater inspires in Stein. Its medium supports unique technical experiments that can absorb us in the moment. Its sensory stream disrupts retrospective-prospective projections (not to be confused with Husserl’s retentions and protentions) by featuring, for instance, bizarre super-imposed images and identical sequences. When the aesthetic object is, on multiple sensory levels, so confusing to begin with, audiences are deprived of the time to pause and mull over their confusion. They can only immerse themselves in what confuses. Sheer strangeness begets a potent perceptual immediacy. In “Portraits and Repetition,” Stein describes the cinema thus: “By a continuously moving picture of anyone there is no memory of any other thing and there is that thing existing, it is in a way if you like one portrait of anything not a number of them” (*L* 105). “Plays” more explicitly enunciates how Stein’s questions regarding the theater grew out of movie-oriented ones:

Does the thing heard replace the thing seen does it help it or does it interfere with it. Does the thing seen replace the thing heard or does it help or does it interfere with it.

I suppose one might have gotten to know a good deal about these things from the cinema and how it changed from sight to sound, and how much before there was real sound how much of the sight was sound or how much it was not. In other words the cinema undoubtedly had a new way of understanding sight and sound in relation to emotion and time.

I may say that as a matter of fact the thing which has induced a person like myself to constantly think about the theatre from the standpoint of sight and sound and its relation to emotion and time, rather than in relation to story and action is the same as you may say general form of conception as the inevitable experiments made by the cinema although the method of doing so has naturally nothing to do with the other. (*L* 65-66)

Although Stein claims to be unfamiliar with film (“I doubt whether at that time [of *The Making of Americans*] I had ever seen a cinema” [“Portraits and Repetition,” *L* 106]), her friendships with avant-garde filmmakers—Man Ray, André Breton, Tristan Tzara (Bay-Cheng 40-41)—and sly movie allusions betray the cinema’s ongoing grip on her imagination.

Why Stein aligns her adumbrative and temporal experiments with those of film relates to genre and its interpretation. Plainly, when Stein appropriates cinema as a metaphor for her continuous present, she takes her cue from avant-garde Dadaist films that favor montage sequences, recurrent loops, mirroring, stasis, and other de-familiarizing gestures over linear plotting and classical visual order.¹⁹ Were it not for this implied genre bias, Stein’s movie analogy would be unforgivably provincial. There is no more continuous present in Chaplin’s *The Gold Rush* (1925) than in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, for example, not to say that either is impoverished as a result. We, through no

¹⁹ Sarah Bay-Cheng, in one of the few studies to examine Stein’s avant-garde theater connections (*Mama Dada*), gives incisive examples of avant-garde films whose techniques in fragmentation and repetitiveness resemble Stein’s own: Ferdinand Léger’s *Le Ballet Mécanique* (1924) and Man Ray’s *L’Etoile de Mer* (1928) (32). The former continuously replays a woman-climbing-stairs sequence, while the latter features a shot where, as Bay-Cheng puts it, “multiple images of starfish spinning in glass bottles are juxtaposed with spinning gears and a man repeatedly sheathing and unsheathing a sword” (32). These principles of recurrence and multiplicity find their way into Stein’s second film script, *Deux Soeurs Qui Ne Sont Pas Soeurs* (*Two Sisters Who Are Not Sisters*) (1929), which dedicates itself to image-doubling.

choice of our own, remember things moving or existing in time and space. Stein isn't unaware of this fact, noting,

The trouble with including looking, as I have already told you, was that in regard to human beings looking inevitably carried in its train realizing movements and expression and as such forced me into recognizing resemblances, and so forced remembering and in forcing remembering caused confusion of present with past and future time. ("Portraits and Repetition," *L* 112-13)

But she chases after more fragile poetic truths. In their own ways, literature and cinema accumulate adumbrations, acts that necessarily nod to time passing. But Stein directs our attention toward things in a way that invokes, if only for an instant, a sense of the immediate—fierce enough to border on timelessness, to circumvent time altogether. Stein's continuous present breaks up linear patterns in order to reorient us from our habit of seeking and imposing them. It remains but one re-directional strategy among others, and the next chapter looks at Stein's re-assessing the linear pattern attached to species survival: the heterosexual binary.

5

Reorientation

With greater vigor and detail, I want to return to the natural attitude and Stein's struggle against it. A few comments, then, that situate such tensions within the queer—which isn't the only subject area that, I can't repeat this enough, Stein plays with—will be helpful. Phenomenology's call to rid ourselves of ideological biases and gaze upon the world afresh finds its correlate in queer theory's effort to unsettle sexuality and gender from their default modes. More specifically, Merleau-Ponty's accent on embodied consciousness, the "horizon" of possibilities surrounding the body,¹ and how bodily experiences condition our conception of reality makes him an attractive thinker for queer-feminist theorists. What draws the likes of Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Sara Ahmed to phenomenology is its insistence on lived reality as the basis for revelation. For what is queer theory save the reflection on sex and gender as lived? Or how they should and could be lived? Phenomenology's political significance for queer theory rests in its drive to interrogate the grounds of heteronormativity, expanding the body's horizon as a result.

¹ The phenomenological "horizon" is a Husserlian term that Merleau-Ponty extends in the original sense, signifying the range of intentional possibilities surrounding an object. This range isn't without limits, however, as Husserl makes clear in *Ideas I*: "It is inherent in the essence that anything whatever which exists in reality but is not yet actually experienced can become given and that this means that the thing in question belongs to the undetermined but *determinable* horizon of my experiential reality at the particular time. This horizon, however, is the correlate of the components of indeterminateness essentially attached to experiences of physical things themselves; and those components [...] leave open possibilities of fulfillment which are by no means completely undetermined but are, on the contrary, motivated possibilities *predelineated with respect to their essential type*. Any actual experience points beyond itself to possible experiences which, in turn, point to new possible experiences and so ad infinitum. And all of that is effected involving species and regulative forms restricted to certain *a priori* types" (§47). To give an example of a horizon's definitional criteria that this dense passage suggests, the literal "horizon" of a sexual encounter excludes rendezvous on the sun or other physically unreachable destinations, all extravagant metaphors aside.

To be aware of the socio-cultural pressures shaping sexual awareness is difficult, but that turning-inward is exactly what Ahmed explores in *Queer Phenomenology*. Bodies “acquire orientation through the repetitions of some actions over others,” she writes, since “what we ‘do do’ affects what we ‘can do’” (58, 59).² Our bodies become what we need or train them to be, and queer possibilities have to be imaginable in order to be pursued. Merleau-Ponty’s “body schema” and Pierre Bourdieu’s “*habitus*” are helpful notions here, both denoting the bodily equilibrium gradually instilled by and reinforcing everyday life. Most urgently for this chapter, such terms illuminate how habit and exposure mold sexual existence. Merleau-Ponty’s “body schema” refers to the way “my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task” (*PP* 114). Beyond a sense of posture or movement within space, the body schema indicates our intuitive feel for inhabiting situations, our capacity to effortlessly adjust to whatever environment, cultivated through a life-time of recurring experiences. What the body can and cannot do is, after all, determined by its history and determines the subject’s future. Bourdieu extends this reciprocal logic to the social sphere in *The Logic of Practice*. His *habitus* refers to those “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” wrought from social “conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence” (53). Phrased less densely, the *habitus* indicates a mode of existence conditioned by and perpetuating pre-determined social conditions. Taylor Carman, I think, captures the schema-habitus analogy best when

² In neuroscientific terms, we might call Ahmed’s pronouncement “synaptic pruning.” *New York Times* journalist Robin Marantz Henig nicely sums up this process in her report on the National Institute of Mental Health’s (NIMH) 1999 findings, which suggest that the human brain goes on maturing well into one’s twenties: “As the brain matures, one thing that happens is the pruning of the synapses. Synaptic pruning does not occur willy-nilly; it depends largely on how any one brain pathway is used. By cutting off unused pathways, the brain eventually settles into a structure that’s most efficient for the owner of that brain, creating well-worn grooves for the pathways that person uses most. [...] It is the mechanism of ‘use it or lose it’: the brains we have are shaped largely in response to the demands made of them” (*n. pag.*). Henig draws on neuroscience as part of a larger discussion on bodily habits, brain conditioning, and evolving emotional maturity for twenty-somethings, but her remarks remind us that Husserl’s legacy goes beyond the humanities. For the original NIMH study Henig references, see Giedd et al.

he writes, “The *habitus* is, in essence, the socially conditioned *body schema*. It is not a mental state, a conscious or cognitive attitude, nor even a network of such attitudes, but a set of bodily habits produced and stabilized by the social world, which they in turn reproduce and restabilize” (217). When we bring the body schema, *habitus*, and Carman’s remarks back to the realm of sexual and gendered being, the old nature versus nurture debate finds new momentum. Sexual identity is heavily pre-established by our long-term bodily habits. To a large extent, how we perceive ourselves and others, where we go, what we do, and whom we desire are moderated by which objects, activities, and people we have been accustomed to. The implications, then, of breaking away from straight bodily planes and hence life trajectories become a lesson in reorientation. Straight genealogical lines no longer set the standard.

It is this sense of departure that Stein, with wonderful suggestiveness, intimates in early repetitive pieces such as “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” “Many Many Women,” and *The Making of Americans*. “Furr and Skeene” traces the pull of conventional family arrangements upon emergent “gay” identities. “Many Many Women” mediates tensions between marginal and mainstream ways of life for women through a philosophy of eclecticism or multi-directionality. *The Making of Americans*, on the other hand, lays bare the natural attitude’s pervasiveness by revealing—with its author unawares, I’m sure—a transgendered narrative consciousness entangled in class prejudices despite its effort to “intend” queer phenomena in, as Stein puts it, “vitaly singular” ways. While turning toward new possibilities for women, Stein’s conceptual reorientations from the natural attitude expose how a complete break with it remains impossible—a conversation to be carried on into the next chapter.

“MISS FURR AND MISS SKEENE”

Using “gay” around 140 times (Watts 52) and one of the first literary texts to do so in a contemporary sense (although the term was sufficiently underground to avoid causing a stir), “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene” has been read as a romantic elegy. Ulla E. Dydo reads the short story’s ending as melancholic: “Without a lover, without an echo [Helen Furr’s] stories lose life, her manner rigidifies, and the voice that the two had so carefully cultivated speaks in shrill hysterical repetitions, alone” (*Stein Reader* 254). Referring to this reading, Marjorie Perloff objects, “But one could just as well make the opposite case: now that Helen Furr has learned her way around, has become, so to speak, street-smart in the gay community in which she travels, she becomes the mentor, the teller of tales. No longer dependent upon her ‘pleasant enough’ parents, she is now in the thick of the action” (*21st-Century Modernism* 61). She goes on, “All we can say for certain is that something has changed, that the coming together of Helen Furr and Georgine Skeene has transformed Helen’s life. But the specifics remain elusive” (*21st-Century Modernism* 61). The tenor of that transformation or new social situation is what I want to look at. As Perloff recognizes, no specific plot can be extracted, but a general movement toward another life, with a light touch, can.

Loosely based on the opera singers Maud Hunt Squire and Ethel Mars (*Stein Reader* 254), the short story is Miss Helen Furr’s *bildungsroman*, where she leaves her “pleasant parents” and “pleasant home” to find a new “gay” life in “a place where some were cultivating something, voices and other things needing cultivating” (*G&P* 17). Helen’s gayness, however, isn’t defined by her relationship with Georgine, but her awakening to self-conscious lesbian sociality. For the less Helen returns to her old life, the more she “learn[s] a few more little ways of being in being gay” (*G&P* 21). The more

“little things that are things in being gay” (*G&P* 20) she acquires, the more Helen becomes “gay longer every day than when the two of them had been being gay” (*G&P* 21) and the less she “feel[s] any need of having Georgine Skeene” (*G&P* 21), until her feelings for the other disappear altogether. This shift renders Helen neither “lonesome” nor “astonished” (*G&P* 21). Newly single at last, Helen uses her voice less for technical singing and more for sharing with others the “little ways one could be learning to use in being gay” (*G&P* 22).

This logical chain suggests that gayness does not exist solely through the lover, but also through the cultivation of what Ahmed dubs the “‘queer effect’ of oblique or diagonal lines, created by bodies out of place” (61). According to Ahmed,

Sexuality would not be seen as determined only by object choice, but as involving differences in one’s very relation to the world—that is, in how one “faces” the world or is directed toward it. Or rather, we could say that orientations toward sexual objects affect other things that we do, such that different orientations, different ways of directing one’s desires, means inhabiting different worlds. (68)

Sexual orientation remains but one consequence of an individual’s body schema conditioned from birth. Since the body absorbs and perpetuates the normative behaviors instilled over time, it requires conscious effort to break away from such cycles. Helen does. Georgine does not or perhaps cannot imagine such an alternative. Georgine still needs to visit her brother who “had quite some distinction” (*G&P* 19), maintaining ties with the respectably straight world he represents. Yet Helen eventually suspends her family visits. A disparate commitment to deviant sexuality (including bisexuality, the story potentially implies, when Helen and Georgine “sat regularly” with groups of men) and mores sets Helen’s way of “being gay” apart from Georgine’s. When Georgine is present, Helen’s “cultivated” self even wavers: “[Helen] would always be gay in the same way, when Georgine Skeene was there not so long each day as when Georgine Skeene was away” (*G&P* 22). One could say Georgine obstructs Helen’s complete reorientation

toward a queer way of life. Because Georgine's queer horizon hasn't widened like Helen's, because Georgine only knows a few ways of being gay, their relationship peters out.

The related issue of what the queer horizon encompasses does not go unexplored in "Furr and Skeene" either. Whether queerness is an act, identity, or mixture of both is by now a familiar subject in gay and lesbian studies, but it certainly wasn't in Stein's day. "Furr and Skeene" seems to raise this question through its obscure "gay" time-frame. The story, although set in the past, deploys a blend of simple past, past progressive, and past perfect simple tenses to play off *gay*'s double entendres. If gayness is a form of sociality and being, it is not a one-time act. Yet the phrase "they were gay" or "she was gay" freezes queerness into a moment within a larger sequence. The simple past tense insinuates that gayness functions either as an isolated emotion or act. To take one line as an example, Stein relates the beginning of Helen and Georgine's affair with:

To be regularly gay was to do every day the gay thing that they did every day. To be regularly gay was to end every day at the same time after they had been regularly gay. They were regularly gay. They were gay every day. They ended every day in the same way, at the same time, and they had been every day regularly gay. (*G&P* 18)

The adjective "regularly" complicates "gay" puns by gesturing toward the then mainstream definition as well as the deviant. More importantly, however, compare the above passage with the more temporally open-ended paragraph series placed toward the narrative's end. After it is established that Helen no longer desires Georgine,

[Helen] was gay exactly the same way. She was never tired of being gay that way. She had learned very many little ways to use in being gay. Very many were telling about using other ways in being gay. She was gay enough, she was always gay exactly the same way, she was always learning little things to use in being gay, she was telling about using other ways in being gay, she was telling about learning other ways in being gay, she was learning other ways being gay, she would be using other ways in being gay, she would always be gay in the same way, when Georgine Skeene was there not so long each day as when Georgine Skeene was away.

She came to using many ways in being gay, she came to use every way in being gay. She went on living where many were cultivating something and she was gay, she had used every way to be gay.

They did not live together then Helen Furr and Georgine Skeene. (*G&P* 21-22)

The last sentence marks the start of the story's final paragraph. The spike in past progressives beforehand signals a revelatory emotional acceleration rendered possible through Helen's drifting away from Georgine, their falling-out loosening gayness from some sequential constraints (the simple past tense), though not all. For instance, we're still in a post-mortem meditation on a love affair like *Nightwood's*. Yet Helen no longer remains trapped inside hypothetical infinitives ("To be regularly gay") or stagnant episodes ("They ended every day in the same way"). She circulates, rather, as a more active wisp, glimpsed in the middle of actions ("was always learning," "was telling," "came to using," "went on living") and ritual ("would always"), more engaged with possibilities than the old certainties—an embodiment of the queer conditional ("she would be using other ways in being gay").

"MANY MANY WOMEN"

As its title suggests, "Many Many Women" circles around an aggregation of women's lives in the domestic sphere. Running parallel to Stein's interest in individual portraits like "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" and "Ada" was her enthusiasm for groups. If there is one, there are others. When it comes to marriage, housekeeping, and childrearing, who conforms to social expectations, who does not, and who remains queer despite having chosen to conform arise as matters of primary importance now. Unlike in *Three Lives*, though, Stein refrains from arriving at a verdict either way here. "Ones" oriented toward the straight and narrow are not necessarily lost causes, although they may be. Their queer counterparts similarly are not guaranteed a spiritual revelation by virtue of their queerness.

Instead, multi-directionality assumes moral weight as the means by which a new kind of “courage” is invoked.

More elaborate and impersonal than “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene,” “Many Many Women” sustains momentum through eclecticism and anonymity. Gone are all proper and most common nouns. What takes their stead is the paradoxically anonymous yet individual “one” beyond both metaphor and internal splintering. “Each one is different from any other one of them [...] Each one is like some” (*MPGS* 124, 125). Although her theories of writing change over time (from gathering adumbrations frame-by-frame to scrambling all the frames together with foreign objects conceptually pasted in, from such static portraiture to pure sound play in theatrical play format, and so on), in “Many Many Women,” “Men,” and, to a lesser extent, *The Making of Americans*, Stein is still very much interested in a personality’s instantaneously rendered unity. Sentences from “Men” such as,

Any one of the three was meaning being such a one. Any one of the three was one meaning something in being such a one. Any one of the three of them was being one being such a one. Each one of the three of them was being one being of a kind of a one. Each one of the three of them was of a difference kind than any other of the three of them. Each one of the three of them was such a one (*Two* 315)

sound virtually identical to “Many Many Women”’s incantatory

Each one is one, there are many of them. Each one is one. Each one is that one the one that one is. Each one is one, there are many of them. Each one is one (*MPGS* 129)

and

Any one and any one, one and one and two, and one and one and one, and one and many, and one and some, and one and any one, and any one and any one, any one and any one is one and one is one and one is some one and some one is some one, any one and one and one and one, any one is that one and that one is that one and any one and one, and one and one, any one is the one and the one who is the one is that one. The one who is the one who is that one, any one and any one is one, one is one, one is that one, and any one, any one is one and one is one, and one and one, and one and one and one and one. (*MPGS* 197-98)

“Each one is one” forcefully realizes the holism that so influences Merleau-Ponty throughout *Phenomenology of Perception*. In the same way “the unity of the thing in perception is not arrived at by association, but is a condition of association, and as such precedes the delimitations which establish and verify it, and indeed precedes itself,” the unity of the individual “is recognizable in an unchallengeably self-evident way, before I ever succeed in stating the formula governing his character, because he retains the same style in everything he says and does, even though he may change his place or his opinions” (*PP* 19-20, 381-82). For Stein, the unity of one’s personality imparts itself through repeated behavioral or psychological patterns. Even when women conduct themselves erratically, such inconsistencies comprise their own overarching order.

A vital part of an individual’s unity is her perceptual precedence over constituent associations. We know her as a whole and therefore can associate certain characteristics with her, not the other way around. Merleau-Ponty is especially adamant about this point, as when he declares, “If we confine ourselves to phenomena, the unity of the thing in perception is not arrived at by association, but is a condition of association, and as such precedes the delimitations which establish and verify it, and indeed precedes itself” (19-20). “Many Many Women” expresses the holistic aspect of intended objects in its own way, not through dramatic events but rhetoric. That the individual exists prior to and has priority over her subsidiary parts crystallizes in her linguistic self-containment. Stein refuses to metaphorically associate “one” with anything else or relegate her to the sum of X metaphors. A, B, and C cannot automatically be associated with “one,” who, in turn, cannot be conceptually linked to another “one” before the latter is grasped in her entirety as well. To a certain extent, “Each one is that one the one that one is” (*MPGS* 129) anticipates “Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose” in that both objects denote nothing save themselves. In the wake of all these dispelled metaphors, “Of course you might say why

not invent new names new languages,” Stein contemplates, before concluding, “but that cannot be done” (“Poetry and Grammar,” *L* 142). Neologisms would only be new for so long before succumbing to the same stultification plaguing all language. No, the answer lies elsewhere. In “Many Many Women,” Stein’s way out of tired wholes-reduced-to-parts looms in repetitive tautologies as opposed to metaphors. “One is one” before she can be dissected into particular traits or likened to anything else.

Part of the pleasure in reading Stein remains the diffusive power of her textual patterns. With her, we can easily move from part-whole patterns to, in this case, mathematical ones. For to persist in “ones” is not only to persist in self-contained wholes, but also to stray from linear sequences and reenter Stein’s continuous present. Numbers run obsessively throughout Stein, yet formal numerical progression is, as the previous chapter stresses, never taken seriously. *A Novel of Thank You* scrambles chapter headings (“Chapter Two” inserts itself between “Chapter XLII” and “Chapter XLIII”), theater pieces ward off proper chronologies, and the world that Stein’s “many many women” populate revolves around the self-renewing “one one one one.” This incantation is the most vehement and symbolic evocation of the continuous present, as the number one exists, in Luke Carson’s words, “inside and outside the numerical series that it initiates” (82), one being “a whole unto itself even as it is a part serving as a unit to measure other wholes” (83). The tautology of one formally prolongs the present by destroying any narrative development and semantically accomplishes the same end by brandishing an indicant for the “one” time we live out—the time of now.

Stein’s syntax deconstructs the now into its details. It is not enough to say we live in the present. We must ask ourselves how and by which terms. All this talk of the continuous present would lead one to expect a heavy-handed, if not exclusive, use of present progressives throughout “Many Many Women.” Far from it, though. From its

first two pages, the piece integrates a variety of verb tenses to poetically emulate our experiential synthesis of time (*is, having been, has been, being, was, had, could*). Stein doesn't trouble herself with Husserl's millisecond calibrations, again, yet nevertheless explores the swirl of temporal associations overtaking each instant in her stream of compound tenses—simple present, simple past, present perfect, past perfect, future, and future perfect all included. As the following spindle diagram illustrates, a page can feature as many as six different tenses or more (breaks between excerpts are marked):

She	was renewing	what			
	was continuing.				
She	was being		and		
she	was living.				
She	was having	what was enjoying.			
She	was doing	what was collecting.			
<hr/>					
If	there were many		and		
if	there are many,				
	there were many then	some of them	would be satisfying	any one and	
		some of them			
	are not satisfying			any one and	
		some of them			
	are satisfying			any one. And	
				any one who	
	is satisfied by	some of them			
	is satisfied because				
they	are satisfactory			the	ones that
	satisfy	them.			
One to be	satisfying	must	be satisfying.		
<hr/>					
She and she herself	had come to something and was succeeding in				
	having had	what			
she	had given to be needing to be receiving	what			
she was receiving,					
she was not asking				what any one could be answering	
she was asking that					
she should continue to give		what			
she		gave and get	what		
she got. If					
she	were quietly doing	what			
she was doing					
she	would be receiving	what			
she was receiving but					
she	would not be having	what			
she was having and					
she	would not have been asking				
		what			
she	had been	asking.			
She	did give			every one	
she was needing				what	

she was needing to give to them.			
She was feeling		what	
she	came to be feeling when		
she	came to have	what	
she was having.			
She	came to want to be enjoying		
		what	
she was feeling in doing		what	
she was doing.			
She	came to feel that		
she was having		what	
she was having and			
she			might be doing
		what	
she was doing.			

(MPGS 185)

“Many Many Women”’s phenomenology of time, like Husserl’s, suggests that the present isn’t merely an instant, but also a consolidation of past, current, and future impressions. Stein’s verbal inflections may not summon the same immediacy that Husserl’s retentions and protentions do, but they layer the moment in a way that makes vivid its unfurling toward other moments.

Ultimately, Stein’s oneness of the individual in a “now” time leaves behind chrononormativity and heterosexual life paths that abide by its logic. Since marrying means different things for Stein’s flock of women, marriage, singledom, lesbianism, and lesbian singledom in themselves resist becoming feminist statements. As intentional objects, the text suggests, they lack an essential moral substance, no more good or evil than a blade of grass. Humans attribute them with whatever ethical value. So singles, mothers, wives, the straight, the bent—some are happy against the odds, some aren’t, and some waver between the two. We have the “uninteresting” loner:

She was not interesting in not being loving. She was never loving. If she had been loving she would have liked marrying. In almost following some one she came to be one who was not a married one. She was not loving. She was not marrying.

She was not at all marrying. If she had been one continuing to be one staying when she was an uneasy one she might have been one coming to be marrying. She was an uneasy one and that was a strange thing, she was an uneasy one in being an ordinary enough one. She was not interesting in being one not loving. She would not have been loving if she had followed

when she almost followed one. She was not loving when she was being one being living. She was not loving. (*MPGS* 167-68)

And then there are the conventionally pragmatic opportunists:

[S]he was continuing being one having expected to be one being one. In being married she was continuing having what she was expecting to want to be having. [...] [I]n being a married one she was one having been needing what she was taking and using what she was taking she was completing being one carefully taking and carefully using what she was needing. (*MPGS* 148, 151)

Other types join in: the “one forgetting anything” (*MPGS* 120), the “one having children” (*MPGS* 124), the one “large enough to be that one one sitting enough” (*MPGS* 138), the one bereaved (“Before she married the one she was loving she had had a child who had not been born living” [*MPGS* 139]). But the ones “moving in every direction” pose the most urgent questions regarding socio-corporal orientation and its philosophical implications.

“Many Many Women” moves the way a cloud of fish does: dense; circling around a rhetorical center (“Each one is one”); scattering into separates; but always regrouping into a meticulously structured mass. Such an aggregation encapsulates Stein’s interest in the social body, and if we return to our fish metaphor, specifically in shoaling and schooling—sticking together and moving in the same direction. Taken queerly, shoaling and schooling possess counter-intuitive implications for communal situations. If all bodies in a shoal are “odd,” the “oddity effect,” whereby predators target those who stand out, disappears; if everyone schools in an unexpected direction, the standards by which their life coordinates are set become indeterminate. Unlike in “Furr and Skeene,” phenomenological reorientation in “Many Many Women” goes beyond the clockwise or counter-clockwise to broach the multi-directional. The emphasis shifts from the non-normative to the entire socio-sexual spectrum. Stein writes many years later, in *Narration*’s second lecture, that multi-directionality offers an escape from the tedium of “successive” storytelling: “[T]here is at present not a sense of anything being successively

happening, moving is in every direction beginning and ending is not really exciting, anything is anything, anything is happening” (19). But this thought manifests earlier in Stein’s career. In “Many Many Women,” those “moving in every direction” remain within the straight horizon, yet aren’t completely of it in that they go through the motions differently:

She was doing everything in moving in every direction.

She was needing being such a one. She was moving in every direction. She was loving. She was marrying. She was needing doing everything. She was not beginning, she was not suffering, she was not loving, she was not winning, she was going on and that was exciting, exciting enough for any living continuing. She was not sacrificing, she was not seizing, she was not losing, she was not winning, she was winning in every direction, she was not gay then, she was not exciting then, she was moving then moving in every direction, she had courage for that thing, courage for being that one, she had courage in going on living, she had courage in moving in every direction, she had courage in not winning, she had courage in not losing, she had courage in not sacrificing, she had courage in not seizing, she had courage in not being exciting, she had courage in moving in every direction, she had courage in being one loving, she had courage in being one marrying. She had courage. She had courage in being one not being a gay one, she had courage in moving in every direction, she had courage in being one moving in every direction, she had courage in being one going living, she had courage. (*MPGS* 126)

Moving in every direction turns into a study of being everything:

One of them and being all of that one is everything and being everything is exciting. She is not exciting because she is all of that one. She is not exciting because she is everything. She is exciting. She is everything. She is all of that one. This one and she is exciting, this one is feeling and being feeling she is completely exciting and being completely exciting she is everything and being everything she is all of that one. She is all of that one. She is every bit of everything. She is that one the one she is and being that one she is such a one, such a wonderful one, and being such a wonderful one she is that one and she being that one she is every bit that one. She is a wonderful one, she is exciting, she is everything, she is every bit that one. She is the one who is everything. She is the one who is exciting. (*MPGS* 162)

What is so courageous and exciting about these nameless, faceless women? The answer can be glimpsed in their relinquishing age-old binaries. By “moving in every direction” and “being everything,” these women coax out queer spaces for multiple reversals

(was/was not) and un-stereotypical gendered negations (women “not sacrificing” their bodies, livelihoods, desires) to occur, spaces beyond cross-sex versus same-sex longing, winning versus losing, gayness versus despondency, activeness versus passiveness, sacrificing versus withholding.

It’s not what we do or whom we desire, but how we “intend” and engage the world through such motions that matter. *The Making of Americans* alternately expresses this idea as: “It is never facts that tell, they are the same when they mean very different things” (26). In “Many Many Women,” the “ones believing in loving and marrying and having children” (MPGS 124) can be just as self-determined as others who pursue same-sex affairs or celibacy. Stein’s moral barometer is but a broader assertion of Barnes’, quite frankly: not *that* we fall, not *that* we open ourselves to the world, but *how*. “Every one is one telling something in some way” (MPGS 133), and where subjectivity hangs in the balance, the same act can acquire multiple meanings depending on its intent and tone.

THE MAKING OF AMERICANS

A novel where the word “queer” appears roughly 211 times (as an adjective only), *The Making of Americans* was begun a little over a decade before Joyce’s *Ulysses* took shape, but remains nowhere near as critically lauded due to its difficult publication history and disavowal of common high-modernist gestures. It finds its modernism through starkness—gone are the exotic dictional pyrotechnics and arcane allusions of Joyce, Pound, Eliot, and Barnes—and rigorously elliptical syntactical arrangements. Its length (925 pages in the Dalkey edition) and imaginative breadth beg comparisons with *Ulysses*’, but the book cannot rightfully be said to be Stein’s answer to or anticipation of Joyce’s

magnum opus.³ Rather, both tomes surface as parallel experiments within modern(ist) western Europe. Two expatriates dwell on locales left behind, with a gleeful disregard for conventional punctuation and grammar. Both exploit interior monologues, albeit in markedly different ways—Stein favoring a more austere, vague vocabulary set (*ones, some, things*) applied in circular bursts. Both reveal much interest in “obscene” sexual expression, Stein’s artistic meta-reflections, for instance, exuding a rolling exuberance similar to that underlying Molly Bloom’s final soliloquy. Stein’s passage on “Mr. Arragon the musician” becomes a reverie on writing as a kind of erotic purging that recalls Molly’s climax “yes I said yes I will Yes” (732):

Always each thing must come out completely from me leaving me inside me just then gently empty, so pleasantly and weakly gently empty, that is a happy way to have it come out of me each one that is making itself in me, that is the only way it can come to be content for me in me, it can come out fairly quickly very slowly with a burst or gently, any way it feels a need of coming out of me [...]. (*Making Americans* 586)

Such observations aren’t meant to preface a Stein-Joyce comparison, but to situate Stein’s behemoth of a book against its rivals and draw attention to the relative silence surrounding this family saga. Silence can be a boon. Other times, it is a form of evasion, an unjust denial. *The Making of Americans* elevates monotony and the mundane into high art and is perhaps the most difficult modernist masterpiece to read as a result. As Richard Kostelanetz puts it, “[H]er writing reveals her literacy paradoxically—not through echoes and allusions, but through the scrupulous avoidance of them” (Introduction xviii). Let that not deter us, however, from proceeding. “To begin now then” (545), as the book’s narrator oft-repeats.

³ Stein is, of course, still aware of *Ulysses*’ influence, even aligning her narrative breakthroughs with Joyce’s in “Portraits and Repetition”: “A thing you all know is that in the three novels written in this generation that are the important things written in this generation, there is, in none of them a story. There is none in Proust in *The Making of Americans* or in *Ulysses*. And this is what you are now to begin to realize in this description I am giving you of making portraits” (L 110).

Making sense of who is doing what in *The Making of Americans* is almost impossible. Everyday words are densely layered in circular, undulating patterns, where Stein achieves an atmosphere of anonymity through the over-generalized or hyper-specialized. Take, for instance, “He was doing some things then and some others were doing some things then [...] He was sometimes feeling something about some of them” (802, 820) or the equally uninformative

Alfred Hersland and Minnie Mason and Patrick Moore and James Flint and Mackinly Young and David Hersland and George Dehning and Hortense Dehning and Julia Hersland and Theodore Summers and William Beckling and Helen Cooke and James Cranach and Miriam Cranach and Rachel Sherman and Adolph Herman and Charles Kohler and Linder Herne and Arthur Keller and Florentine Cranach and Hilda Breslau and Ernest Brakes and Selma Dehning and Ella Housman and Robert Housman and Fred Housman and Florence Arden and James Curson and Bertha Curson and Hilda Gnadenfeld and Algar Audenried and every one who knew any one of them were sometime being in living, were all their living going on being in living. (718)

Just as daunting for the critic is the challenge of quoting from a book where all statements tend to be contradicted at least once and where the repetitive aesthetic itself undergoes changes as sections progress. Leon Katz and others have noted such stylistic transitions,⁴ but given the book’s sheer breadth, it’s worth giving my own synopsis.

After the first fifty pages or so, *The Making of Americans* moves from *Three Lives*’ intermittently repetitive style to the more intensely repetitive aesthetic characterizing “Miss Furr and Miss Skeen.” This mode persists until page 427, when Phillip Redfern appears. The Redfern interval (which is Stein’s early short story *Ferhhurst* readapted and choppily inserted [Katz, Introduction xxiii-xxix]) draws us back to Stein’s realist phase. But once Martha’s marriage dissolves and Alfred and Julia’s chapter begins, the book drifts into the increasingly obscure, abstract repetitions we find in *Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein with Two Shorter Stories*, the volume containing “Many Many Women.”

⁴ See Katz, Introduction xxviii; Bridgman 60-61; Malcolm 114-21; Bowers 63-82; and Doane 83.

Repetition in general functions through a musical canon-like organizing principle in this giant family chronicle. Narrative snippets are expanded and variegated before usually concluding with a summarizing refrain. The overarching Hersland canon born from the lives of four immigrant women—the first-generation matriarchs of the Dehnings, Herslands, Hissens, and an unnamed fourth family—breaks off into smaller canons that either dribble off or return to the text’s broader interest in repetition as an epistemological method and immortalizing prayer. As an epistemological method (and we broached this in Chapter Four), if everyone’s “bottom nature” slowly “comes to be repeating in them” (299), repetitive language, by mirroring those behavioral patterns, sliver-by-sliver unveils a personality’s essence in real-time for us. As a bid for eternal life, contrastingly, repetition takes on a mystical quality when used to indefinitely delay final outcomes. *The Making of Americans* speaks of “a world without ending” (511). Through repetition, one could say it poetically creates that world. “Nothing is ever ending” (511) when we go in circles. And when we are “completely certain” about what we are circling, the narrator experiences something “universal in [...] feeling, to be like the earth complete and fructifying” (574).

Within this fluctuating linguistic present, the Hersland story touches upon the meaning of consciousness in and of the world. As a phenomenological meditation, *The Making of Americans* could be placed alongside works such as Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* and Sartre’s *Nausea* in its single-minded concern for essence and intentionality. What kinds of people exist, and how do they intend certain objects? In what ways does the narrative “I” intend them, the writing process, and the world the pen bespeaks? “There are many ways of thinking, feeling, knowing, believing in many men and women in all there ever are or were or will be of men and women” (495). “Then there are very many realising objects not as being existing but as being acting one in relation to

another one” (745). With such threads in hand, we move from different intentional modes to different relational energies between things—beyond being, the state-of-affairs.

Like “Miss Furr and Miss Skeene” and “Many Many Women,” *The Making of Americans* ponders how humans, through repetition, become oriented toward certain objects, acts, beings, and lifestyles over others. It does so through a plethora of anecdotes and general musings. For instance, logical semantics becomes a tricky issue when “very well educated intelligent ones” (496) cannot conceptualize rivers flowing north, because “they think of north as up hill when they think of it as water flowing” (496). Walking north does not necessarily mean walking up-hill, but so strong is the association between the direction south and descending gradients that otherwise perceptive “ones” lose their bearings. The same biases creep into gender-sex stereotypes, and the novel occasionally pauses to delineate how natural-seeming orientations require much repeated effort to bring about. What makes respectable middle-class marriages possible are the sisters of the grooms-to-be and mothers of the brides-to-be. Careful negotiations must be undertaken by third parties to perpetuate marital institutions and the middle-class species (68-69). On a similar note, women must be cultivated over time to assume their proper gender roles. In Gossols, Martha is forbidden from going out in the evenings upon reaching adolescence (421, 534). Mary Maxworth and Madeleine Wyman eventually submit to marital pressures, although their maternal narratives become complicated by Mary’s miscarriage and Madeleine’s refusal to keep her adopted daughter. What women “know,” finally, depends on who they keep company with. “One once who was a very intelligent active bright well-read fairly well experienced woman,” the Stein-narrator writes, “thought that what happens every month to all women [...] only happened to Plymouth Brethren, women having that religion” (495). How could this “one” know any better if she only socializes with Plymouth Brethren?

The power that repeated gestures hold infiltrates male consciousness as well. Maleness reinforces itself through homosocial rapport, as Anna, Cora, and Bertha's father suggests in his interactions with Mr. Hersland: "[H]e was a man to feel it in him when another man spoke to him, when another man spoke as a master to him or as just a man to know him; there was then in him a feeling of being a male thing then when Mr. Hersland met him" (98). Such a masculine ethos unfortunately imposes its own macho logic. Repeated often enough, even the most coercive acts become mundane, and Stein offers up incestuous abuse as an example. "It happens very often that a man does something and he does it very often and it is an awful shock to him if sometime some one tells it to him and as I was saying one of such of them was a paralytic from being told it by one of his children in his later living" (491). A father constantly warns his daughter against "disgrace" (489), yet manages, over the years, to rationalize his sexual advances toward her. Even queerness surfaces as a socially-inculcated phenomenon. "It is hard to tell it in one when no one comes close to that one whether it is queerness in that one from the character, or from the life that one is leading, from conditions or to earn a living" (237).

Beyond origins, however, what kinds of queerness exist is the overriding question for Stein. Amidst much "diagramming" (580) of personality-types (or the "sad" failure to),⁵ the novel builds toward a promise of queerly "vital singularity" (21). "It takes time to make queer people" (21), the narrator says, yet we sense their appearance isn't far-off for Stein. The last chapter's reassurance that older generations will pass, new ones will take their stead, and "family living" will evolve in the meantime implies a thorough reorientation away from loving-doing-being rooted in the old ways: "The way of doing what is done and done in a family living is a way that a family living is needing being one

⁵ A pursuit heavily inspired by Weininger's *Sex and Character*. See Katz, "Weininger"; Walker 47; and Retallack, Introduction 23-26.

in a way existing. Sometimes then that family is going on in that way of existing. Sometimes that family living is going on into another way of being existing” (922).

“Family” can encompass a single-parent household, a no-parent commune, or a childless lesbian-marriage in Stein’s personal case. The book even includes the possibility of no family altogether: “There is no time for being in any family living for some being in any family living” (916). Death will cleanse America’s cultural palate, allowing future generations of middle-class immigrants to inch their way toward vitally queer singularity. The lines “Very many are living in family living. Very many have been living in family living. Very many are living. Very many who were living are not living” (919) and “Old ones come to be dead. Any one coming to be an old enough one comes to be a dead one. Old ones come to be dead ones” (923) aren’t dirges for humankind, but openings up of new onto-phenomenological possibilities for the queer. I wouldn’t go so far as to say death spells new life for Stein’s America, only that between families existing and their extinction, between melancholic stasis (“everything keeps on as it was in the beginning” [70]) and shifts, the queer “vitally” evolves.

The narrator’s class biases interestingly complicate this evolution. This is not meant as a Marxist attack against Stein’s or her narrator’s politics, but as a recognition that art simultaneously defies and perpetuates, like all other human artifacts, the natural attitude. For an otherwise progressive narrative persona reveals an underhanded bourgeois elitism that demands queerness be embraced only on the grounds that it is a certain “strain of singularity” (21). Not necessarily one “well within the limits of conventional respectability a singularity that is, so to speak, well dressed and well set up” (21), but an as yet “unknown product” (21). This queerness is “neither crazy, sporty, faddish, or a fashion, or low class with distinction” (21). Different varieties of queerness—servant queerness, governess queerness, poor queerness, Mr. Hersland’s world-embracing queerness—exist in

different intensities for the narrator (not all of them sexual),⁶ but “poor queerness” lacks that unique refinement he or she associates with genuine singularity. A voice that chants of strange and compelling tomorrows remains just as embroiled in yesterday’s attitudes as many of the characters it recapitulates. No matter how eager the phenomenologist is to step back from and study perceptual biases, his or her own view remains subjective to the very end. Literature that interrogates the inevitability of certain orientations takes for granted its own slant against the poor, erecting new barriers as it breaches others. *The Making of Americans* eerily anticipates class divisions within contemporary LGBT circles in this regard, by assuming that the ideal queer America is still a discerning white middle-class one.

In this case, the narrator’s middle-class background cannot be separated from his or her queer agenda. Why a radical vision of “Brothers Singulars” remains tempered by class inhibitions becomes clearer when the self-proclaimed prophet appears to be a third-generation, early-twentieth-century, Judeo-Christian, white, middle-class transgender.⁷ And not just any middle-class persona, but an adamantly class-conscious one. So class-rooted, in fact, that despite his or her liberal attitudes toward unconventional “loving” and “marrying” (see 605-06, 648), the narrator remains oblivious to how class prejudices define his or her vision of queer singularity. *The Making of Americans* “is not just an ordinary kind of novel with a plot and conversations to amuse you, but a record of a decent

⁶ “Some have more, some have less concentration in them, some have very much concentration in them, all of this kind of them have some concentration in them even if like in this one it is only as queerness, enough queerness to hold together the whole of them” (*Making Americans* 239).

⁷ The voice orating the past and future of Stein’s America alternately identifies with and claims intimate knowledge of both sexes. Maleness surfaces in the ongoing “we” of the “Brothers Singulars” and casually sexist remarks such as, “[Women] have simpler reaction in them” (226). Yet a strong feminine presence intrudes from time to time. “I like to tell it better in a woman the kind of nature a certain kind of men and women have in living, I like to tell about it better in a woman because it is clearer in her and I know it better, a little, not very much better [...] I like better to tell it about women the nature in them because it is clearer and I know it better, a little not very much better” (205, 225), the narrator confesses at one point. A similar admission occurs in the last third of Alfred and Julia’s section: “I know then now always very much always more and more the being in women, the being in them when they are young girls coming to be going to be young women. I know always more and more what men are coming to be doing in their living, I do not know very much more now of the being of men when they are young boys coming to be going to be men” (653). See also *Making Americans* 3, 16, 20, and 28.

family progress” (33), that is, “*my* family’s progress” (34; italics my own), the narrator declares. That decent family comes from a class tradition deemed “human, vital, and worthy” (34). “Vital singularity” is a queer offshoot of middle-class vitality, not necessarily constrained by the same sexual conservatism defining the American bourgeoisie but still dignified in a way “the common lot” (438) cannot be. For the narrator always takes pains to distinguish queer singularity from seediness or upper-class decadence. The disdain with which Cora Dounor’s lustful temperament is described (“[B]ut in this shy abstracted, learned creature there was a desire for sordid life and the common lot” [437-38]) signals that queer singularity isn’t graspable in back alleyways, warehouses, opium dens, underground bars, dance halls, or any place where sex plays out in gritty, unimaginative ways. The average bedroom can house “low class” encounters if its visitors exude no special ardor. Mansions can want singularity as well if their inhabitants indulge their desires in a “crazy, sporty, faddish” manner, worn down by *ennui* and thoughtless excess. Here, I return to the Brothers Singularity passage, which situates the “noble” queer somewhere beyond such (self-imposed) extremes:

To a bourgeois mind that has within it a little of the fervor for diversity, there can be nothing more attractive than a strain of singularity that yet keeps well within the limits of conventional respectability a singularity that is, so to speak, well dressed and well set up. This is the nearest approach the middle class young woman can ever hope to make to the indifference and distinction of the really noble. When singularity goes further and so gets to be always stronger, there comes to be in it too much real danger for any middle class young woman to follow it farther. Then comes the danger of being mixed by it so that no one just seeing you can know it, and they will take you for the lowest, those who are simply poor or because they have no other way to do it. Surely no young person with any kind of middle class tradition will ever do so, will ever put themselves in the way of such danger, of getting so that no one can tell by just looking that they are not like them who by their nature are always in an ordinary undistinguished degradation. No! such [*sic*] kind of a danger can never have to a young one of any middle class tradition any kind of an attraction.

Now singularity that is neither crazy, sporty, faddish, or a fashion, or low class with distinction, such a singularity, I say, we have not made enough of yet so that any other one can really know it, it is as yet an unknown product within us. It takes time to make queer people, and to have others who can

know it, time and a certainty of place and means. Custom, passion, and a feel for mother earth are needed to breed vital singularity in any man, and alas, how poor we are in all these three.

Brothers Singulars, we are misplaced in a generation that knows not Joseph. We flee before the disapproval of our cousins, the courageous condescension of our friends who gallantly sometimes agree to walk the streets with us, from all them who never any way can understand why such ways and not the others are so dear to us, we fly to the kindly comfort of an older world accustomed to take all manner of strange forms into its bosom and we leave our noble order to be known under such forms as Alfred Hersland, a poor thing, and even hardly then our own. (21)

To the narrator, a self-identified member of the Singular Brotherhood, the lower and upper classes lack a certain depth, a purposefulness that would singularize their strange acts of love and being. We say lower and upper, but Stein mostly cautions against the poor. Her Joseph-metaphor says enough: the brother who, although unrecognized by his siblings after years of separation, is exalted by birth as Jacob's (and the Hebrew God's) beloved son. This biblical hero is the spiritual prototype for Stein's queers, affirming their innate integrity and separation from age-old libertines or destitute solicitors. "Yes I say it again now to all of you, all of you who have it a little in them to be free inside them," the narrator rallies some twenty pages later,

I say it again to you, we must leave them, we cannot stay where there are none to know it, none who can tell us from the lowest from them who are simply poor or bad because they have no other way to do it. No here there are none who can know it, we must leave ourselves to a poor thing like Alfred Hersland to show it, one who is a little different with it, not with real singularity to be free in it, but it is better with him than to have no one to do it, and so we leave it, and we leave the Alfred Herslands to do it, poor things to represent it, singularity to be free inside with it, poor things and hardly our own in it, but all we can leave behind to show a little how some can begin to do it.

Yes real singularity we have not made enough of yet so that any other one can really know it. I say vital singularity is as yet an unknown product with us, we who in our habits, dress-suit cases, clothes and hats and ways of thinking, walking, making money, talking, having simple lines in decorating, in ways of reforming, all with a metallic clicking like the type-writing which is our only way of thinking, our way of educating, our way of learning, all always the same way of doing, all the way down as far as there is any way down inside to us. We all are the same all through us, we never have it to be free inside us. No brother singulars, it is sad here for us, there is no place in an adolescent world for anything eccentric like us, machine

making does not turn out queer things like us, they can never make a world to let us be free each one inside us. (47)

Real singularity cannot be coarse (“simply poor”) or spiritual vitiated (“bad”), even as it should not be cowardly before rigid middle-class sensibilities. The queer singular subsequently floats in an existential no-man’s land. It adopts a paradoxical stance toward middle-class America by being both of and against it. Stein’s narrator, the Singular Brotherhood’s mouthpiece, bemoans the lack of queer vitality around, yet admires and expresses fondness for the middle-class that brings about this dearth.

Vital queerness hence remains negotiated by classist qualifications. The narrator’s wonder at the courage it takes to “lik[e] things that are low” (463) or “dirty thing[s]” (485), for instance, implicitly patronizes working-class tastes even as it reclaims them under singular queerness. The lowbrow becomes synonymous with the poor. The poor, however, never possess the self-reflective distance or taste to render their aesthetic choices “courageous.” Kitschy objects like clocks “every one thinks only a servant should be owning” (463) or “bright colored handkerchiefs” (487) attain a queerly singular quality only at the hands of an incisive and bold elite. There is no public space for vital singulars to live in this world, the narrator laments. Yet at this rate, we sense that if and when such spaces were to form, working-class or impoverished queers would be barred at their threshold. The idea of queer space appears circumscribed by the right kind of queer, one above the vulgarity associated with “poor queerness.” “There are many ways of having queerness in many men and women” (194-95), but not all are equal or desirable. But to be clear, the novel isn’t insinuating that every “poor” character lacks queer singularity by virtue of his or her class, only that what makes certain types of queerness “low” for true singulars is their negatively-stereotyped working-class attributes.

Poor queerness becomes another name for the ways of the mean and ill-bred bewildering those living elsewhere. While “queer” can, again, be intended in various

ways,⁸ it is most often applied to the “poor,” not actual romantic outsiders like Mary Maxworthing or Madeleine Wyman. And as most of the talk on Gossols’ “queer poor kinds of people” (47) occurs in the book’s first third, “queer” appears most often there as well. In those working-class contexts, the term confers an anonymity and object-hood. One of the Herslands’ “poor queer” neighbors, for instance, is an unnamed family with three daughters: Anna, Cora, and Bertha (the same three whose father most keenly feels his manliness when conversing with Mr. Hersland). The children are granted first names, their mother and father, none. The father is alive but described as being “not really existing” (98). This family’s queerness has to do with its “uncertain ways of being” and disconnectedness from “past or present or future” (100). The same sense of anonymity cloaks the Fishers and Henrys, who are so nondescript as to leave no lasting impression on the Hersland children. The more the narrator speaks of the poor, the more the poor recede from us and the bourgeois come forward. Musings such as,

Mostly in the little houses in the part of the town where no rich people are living the families many of them have such kind of mysteries in them. No one ever talks about them. No one is ever certain with them how many children there are of them, what some of them do to make a living, whether there is a father to them, whether there is a mother to them, how they all come to the money they have for their daily living (96)

say more about the narrator than the neighbors, who become phantoms. Anonymity may not be the sole domain of the poor, as the Shillings’ queerness suggests (“Perhaps really the queerness of them came from there not being enough in each one of them to fill out the inside in them and so they did not have much meaning or any power or any sense of appealing” [81-82]), yet only the poor are rendered anonymous and unremarkably queer through poorness. Their class-rooted bodily habits render them baffling to the upper-

⁸ For instance, servant queerness (not to be confused with “servant girl nature”) stems from solitary living and is usually attributed to foreign servants or governesses who have to be “sent away all of a sudden” (169). From “cooking, from cleaning and from their lonesome living, from their sitting in the kitchen, from having a mistress to direct them, and children to tease them” (170), some servant-women turn “queer, sometimes a little crazy” (169). Such women may not desire other women, but become queer by remaining unwed and childless—outside what Edelman calls, to hearken back to the first two chapters, reproductive futurism.

classes, a cultural divide the narrator even concedes: “I see some kinds of men and women, I look long at some of these kinds in men and women and I see nothing of the way they do their loving. And then I am very much regretting I do not yet know everything” (658). The issue is we do not know “poor” bodily habits. The Herslands, the narrator, and therefore the reader can only piece together the daily routines of poor Gossols households in absentia.

Working-class anonymity ties into the larger motif of working-class historical erasure. The novel’s very format testifies to how Stein’s official record circumvents the poor, as working-class families only enter the picture in relation to the rich Herslands.⁹ Only middle-class family trees are detailed, no matter how obscurely. Outrageous lies, such as, “This is now a history of every kind of them of every kind of men and every kind of women who ever were or are or will be living, of every kind of beginning of them as they are babies and children” (220), keep circulating, yet not all of them perform poetic hyperbole. Firstly, at its most literal, “This” restricts itself to the well-to-do narrator (the novel may just be the longest character study ever) and the Hersland-Dehning union, with bits of working-class garnish thrown in. Sometimes, the book admits this omission: “Sometime there will be written a long book that is a real history of every one who ever were or are or will be living, from their beginning to their ending, now there is a history of the Hersland and the Dehning families and every one who ever came to know them” (285). But, mostly, it goes on promising an ethnological breadth and clarity that never arrive. Secondly and more seriously, because the novel so untiringly insists it presents an all-inclusive history of humanity, it means something when it says of someone, “There was nothing in her to connect her with the past the present or the future, there was not any

⁹ The third Banks brother, one of Alfred’s childhood friends, never merits a career description like his older brothers, since “his later living came when the Herslands did not any longer [...] know what happened to any one in that part of Gossols and so there is not to be any telling of his future living” (531-32). When “poor queer people” make an appearance, it remains brief and subsumed under the Hersland narrative.

history of her” (100). The “her,” in this case, denotes Anna, Cora, and Bertha’s nameless mother. She possesses “character” and the “existence of the useful things around her,” but lacks “importance to any one around her” (100). Her character resembles more an object than embodied subject, which brings us to our next point: the objectification of the poor.

Unlike Mr. Hersland and his kin, the poor Gossols inhabitants float as objects in the narrator’s consciousness. Or put less starkly, the poor appear less embodied in the phenomenological sense than the rich. I quoted Merleau-Ponty near Chapter Four’s beginning to highlight his concept of embodiment—“[O]ur body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them”—and *The Making of Americans*’ working-class descriptions eerily contradict his logic. “[P]oor queer kind of people” (78) resemble objects observed from afar, stripped of names, attributes, histories, subjectivity itself. They assume an impersonal, almost inhuman sheen. The immigrant mother mentioned above is repeatedly described as “wooden” (100-01), present but unimpressive:

[S]he was always existing, she was never important in her feeling, she was never important to anyone who knew them, she was like any article around them, she had strong existence for them she was never in any way important for them, she had not in any way in her any changes for them, she was not important to any one of them. (104)

A “solid thing” (105), one “who ha[s] existence like the useful things about her” (105)—like wood burned for fuel (“her face and body was getting to be wooden all through her” [107])—the mother becomes a metaphor for being without seeing or memory. An object (wood incarnate), the mother sees (as much as stick figures can “see”) her family in the same light. Nothing “ma[kes] a history for her,” even the “changes in the girls with her were like all the objects around her” (101). She figures as life without a sense of its own story.

Mr. Hersland's queerness aggressively contrasts with such "poor queer" thing-ness. If "poor queer people" (156) are queer because they remain objectified and severed from history, the elder David Hersland is queer because he refuses those very conditions, transmitting his "queer ways" (49) to his children and epitomizing embodied understanding. When Stein specifies, "[H]e was as big as all the world around him, he was it, it was in him, there was no difference with it inside him or outside for him" (61), she paints the patriarch's intuitive mediation between insides and outsides, the self constituted by and constituting the world. Ten pages earlier, she begins,

[T]here was something in the manner of him that gave one a kind of feeling that he was as big as all the world about him, one included the other in them, the world and him, the earth the sky the people around him the fruit the shops, it was all one and the same, all of it and him, and this kind of a feeling he always gave to them who saw him walking standing thinking talking, that the world was all him, there was no difference in it in him, and the fruit inside or outside him there were no separations of him or from him, and the whole world he lived in always lived inside him. (51)

Mr. Hersland's "abundant world embracing feeling" (51) derives not from the Kristevan disintegration of ego boundaries discussed in the second chapter. Nor does it spring from the ego of a wealthy patriarch who mistakes the world for his playground. No, Hersland's experiencing the world as an extension of himself and as that which encompasses him renders him the most intensely embodied character in the novel. The "queer ways" that Hersland imparts to his children, in turn, ensure the continuation of family tradition: conspicuous sidewalk talking, the taking of fruit or cakes from shops without first asking, fickleness, and "strange ways of educating" (49). "[H]e would go on with the queer ways in him. Slowly his children learned endurance of him. Later in their life they were queer too like him" (51). Hersland history is made, but what its queer secrets consist of is another matter.

Unlike their poor neighbors, the wealthy Herslands possess fully embodied identities and roots. Why, then, does the prominent family still fall short of vitally singular

queerness and even decline? “[T]his decent family’s progress” (34) culminates in two divorces and one premature death. Weakening into “impatience,” the father loses his fortune. His wife, Fanny Hissen, grows alienated with age, “lost among her children and her husband” (427). Martha separates from Phillip Redfern once he philanders. Alfred’s marriage to Julia Dehning crumbles, as, it is intimated, Alfred spends his father-in-law’s money “dishonestly.” David dies “before he was a middle aged one” (725) from morbidity-induced malnutrition (“He was then being eating only one thing. He came then to be a dead one” [903]). *The Making of Americans* unfolds not unlike a series of Greek tragedies, each Hersland meeting adversity through integral flaws: impatience, frailty, mediocrity, guile, and depression.

Why the Herslands never realize vital singularity becomes inseparable from their proximity to the “poor queer kind of people [...] in that part of Gossols where no other rich people were living” (64). Hersland queerness becomes corrupted by or inextricably linked to poor queerness, with symbolically disastrous results:

Their education was a mixing of hardening, of forcing themselves into a kind of living as if they were poor people and had no one to do things for them, with a way of being very rich, that is having everything the father ever could imagine would do any good to any one of them.

This made a queer mixture in them. They found it a great trouble to them, this past education, when they first began to be young grown men and women. Later in their living they liked it that they had had such a mixing of being rich and poor, together, in them. (52)

The Making of Americans only demands the making of the right kind of Americans. The Herslands become unmade by their ambivalent queerness—those strange living habits wrought through prolonged contact with “queer poor people” (427) around them. Such “queer poor” habits affect the children more than the adults, who are already set in their ways: “More and more then it was then slowly coming to be true of them that the children were more entirely of them, the poorer people who lived around them, than they were of their mother then” (95). If poorness summons low, coarse existence for the narrator, the

queer Herslands become tainted by association. An unspoken something stemming from their hybrid culture hovers over their demise.

This isn't to say that the opposite is true, that "decent" bourgeois living guarantees vital queerness. Far from it. Mrs. Hersland remains too rooted in "right well to do middle class living" (54) to imagine singularly queer being. Yet class bias permeates the novel's queer dead-ends. Mr. Hersland's working-class European origins too intensely linger ("The father David Hersland we cannot count for us, it was an old world that gave him the stamp to be different from the adolescent world around us" [47]). Martha wavers between a stodgy new-world feminism and social displacement ("[S]he was not quite entirely completely, altogether of them [...] not then really interesting to any one" [413]), too queer for the rich, too rich for the poor, lost to both worlds. Alfred's childhood friendships with Gossols locals and adult attachments to poor bohemians and dubious socialites—his second wife, Minnie Mason, being a chief case—disqualify him from any authentically noble queer feeling. Even David, the narrator's "hope" (48), misses "that vital steadfast singularity inside him that custom passion and a feel for mother earth can breed in men" (48). Not coincidentally, the youngest son most closely identifies with his poor neighbors, "so entirely of them when he was in his beginning [...] that in the description of the being in him there will be very much description of the being in many of them" (395). Such a connection deepens David's anonymous qualities. He is the only Hersland who dies young, unwed, and childless, although he never expresses an interest in fatherhood either. The lonesome loner ("He was sometimes wanting to be needing another one. He was sometimes needing another one" [869]) departs without being truly known by another or even himself. The Herslands head for oblivion despite their male potential.

They are not the only ones. By marriage, the Dehnings become yoked with the Herslands' gradual slide downward as well. Julia and Alfred's marriage disintegrates due

to class-based tensions, Julia coming from “rich right American living” (527) incompatible with Alfred’s poor-infused queerness. The Dehnings are as far away from singularly queer sensibilities as a family can be. Like Fanny Hissen in their “very rich very decent right american living” (623), the Dehnings exist “quite pleasantly, quite generously, reasonably honestly, reasonably lovingly, somewhat urgently” (650)—lackluster enough to avoid the heady heights offered by vital singularity or the lows brought on by grueling need. On no terms does Alfred share his wife’s “family living”:

Julia Hersland in married living was expecting different living from Dehning family living, so she was thinking, she wanted a very much more earnest and exciting american living than the Dehning family living and always then it was certain that in her she was certain that she had it in her to be really having Dehning family living as every one reasonably good ones had it to have in them, Alfred Hersland was not really then of Dehning family living, Julia was really then always of Dehning family living. Mr. Dehning was then fairly slowly quite certain that Alfred Hersland was not such a reasonably honest one as Mr. Dehning needed for business living. Julia Hersland had come fairly quickly to be certain that Alfred Hersland was not the kind of a one she needed for fairly honest daily living [...]. (650)

To be clear, Alfred’s “dishonesty” is not attributable to the Herslands themselves, who are inherently middle-class, but to the company they keep and locale they frequent. “Hersland family living was honest enough living for any daily living” (656), Stein clarifies, but Alfred “was never really of the Hersland family living” (654). How can he be when “poor queer” bosom-buddies like Will Roddy set a damaging example, the narrative insinuates?

Frank and Will Roddy often were there in the evening at the Hersland place playing with Albert Banks and Alfred Hersland and David. [...] Frank Roddy later in his living went into the country to earn his living. Will Roddy later went into a cigar stand, clerk, and then later his father died and he had a little money and he came to be a partner and then he and the other one failed and they were not fair then they very much favored one creditor, they had some trouble, later very many years later some of the Herslands happened to hear from some one that Will Roddy was in jail because of something he had been doing. He was supposed not to have been very honest and afterwards he was in jail. He was a little fellow and very quick. (533)

Will Roddy is the only other character who conducts shady financial dealings and falls into a working-class stereotype as a result. His “poor queer” influence on Alfred emerges many pages later, but the omen of an obscure cultural transmission has already appeared.

Torn between a queerly “dishonest” father and “rich right” mother, the fourth generation falters. Out of Alfred and Julia’s three children, the two sons who resemble Alfred are sickly. One dies as an infant. The other “came to be quite a strong enough little one a little later in his living” (671), thanks to a “little” likeness to Julia’s upright brother, George Dehning. The daughter takes after Julia from the outset, conversely, and fits right into “Dehning family living” (671). None become queer singulars and therefore interesting to the narrator: “I am not finding it very interesting knowing what was happening later to the children of Alfred and Julia Hersland” (691). Stein bespeaks a queer America coming into its own, but *The Making of Americans* suggests that transformation will not come about through the Hersland-Dehning union. The vital singularity of the homosexual outcast out of step with his or her time cannot be sought in either the Herslands’ slightly poor-tinged queerness or the Dehnings’ bland respectability. A voice that tells itself, “Now I am going on. Now go on” (664), cannot do so when it comes to the class question.

6

Ida's Interworld

To imagine a purely queer narrative, one insulated from mainstream cultural norms and poetics to an absolute degree, is impossible. The queer finds itself in relation to what it queers and belongs, like everything else, to the “interworld,” which Merleau-Ponty philosophizes as the intersubjective dimension to all human relations that makes humanity conceivable in the first place. Yet Stein’s bisexual heroine *Ida*—a character somewhere between a Husserlian phenomenologist and Edelmanian misanthrope—resists such common-sense, carrying readers through an exercise in futility for much of the surrealist novel *Ida* (1941). Itinerant, attracted to both sexes, and schizophrenic (but unobtrusively so in a schizophrenic piece), *Ida* both embodies Stein’s queerest aesthetic (the hermetic “human mind” or “entity” mode) and attempts to act out its most extreme expression: complete and utter aloneness. She personifies the anti-social energies Edelman aligns with the queer in a more immediate and heroic sense, collapsing not our ties to the future (although childless) but to others for all time. While *Ida*’s desire to recede from society and only speak to herself may be doomed, thus, from the beginning, the cool, spare, yet lyrical prose with which Stein writes *Ida*’s story (a story in the most unconventional respect); the fluidity characterizing the narrative’s elliptical movement; the wispiness of its people and places; and the subtle technique with which Stein effaces character psychology and plot all render *Ida* a classic that has been overlooked, not only in Stein criticism, but also in the phenomenological and surrealist tradition.

THE REDUCTION

Nowhere is Stein more Husserlian than in her metaphysical formulation of “human nature” and the “human mind,” a binary synonymously expressed as “identity” and “entity.”¹ These conflated dualisms were articulated after the commercial success of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, when Stein was afflicted by anxieties regarding what she considered to be selling-out.² They enact Husserl’s phenomenological or transcendental reduction (*epoché*) in the sense that “human nature” and “identity” can be seen to correspond with Husserl’s natural attitude—to repeat, the belief in an objective world that exists independently of human subjectivity—while “human mind” and “entity” suspend their counterparts to achieve an ideal aesthetic consciousness or phenomenological attitude.

To briefly expand Chapter Four’s notes, Husserl’s natural attitude denotes the “general positing, by virtue of which there is not just any continual apprehensional consciousness of the real surrounding world, but a consciousness of it as a *factually existing* ‘actuality’” (*Ideas I* §31). This knowing goes beyond an “articulated judgment *about* existence (*Ideas I* §31). It is the instantaneous, involuntary awareness that “everything which is [...] an object or experiential consciousness issuing, from the natural world – bears, in its total unity and with respect to all articulated saliences in it, the characteristic ‘there,’ ‘on hand’” (*Ideas I* §31). The natural attitude takes for granted the

¹ In *The Geographical History of America*, Stein uses “identity” and “human nature” interchangeably, both terms linked to creative stagnation. See *GHA* 147, 153, 155, 157, 167, 183-86, 190, 193, 198-99, 202, and 210.

² Robert Bartlett Haas explains in his preface to *Lucretia Borgia*, “Returned from her American lecture tour, Gertrude Stein was herself struggling with the problems of identity which publicity and eager audiences had put upon her. [...] The state of mind she preferred over identity was entity, and much of her later writing was done to recapture the innocence of this state of mind at the very time she had achieved her widest fame and audience” (*RAB* 94; italics in original). See also “And Now,” *HWW* 63-66.

world around us that we, by default, abide in and extend. Husserl's controversial *epoché*, in turn, suspends this self-evident knowledge:

We do not give up the positing we effected, we do not in any respect alter our conviction which remains in itself as it is as long as we do not introduce new judgment-motives [...]. Nevertheless the positing undergoes a modification: while it in itself remains what it is, we, so to speak, "put it out of action" we "exclude it," we "parenthesize it". It is still there, like the parenthesized in the parentheses, like the excluded outside the context of inclusion. (Ideas I §31)

Said another way, "[W]e parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being: thus the whole natural world which is continually 'there for us,' 'on hand,' and which will always remain there according to consciousness as an 'actuality' even if we choose to parenthesize it" (*Ideas I §32*). "If I do that, as I can with complete freedom," Husserl continues without pause, "then I am not negating this 'world' as though I were a sophist; I am not doubting its factual being as though I were a skeptic; rather I am exercising the 'phenomenological' ἐποχή which also completely shuts me off from any judgment about spatiotemporal factual being" (*Ideas I §32*). The natural attitude is to be put aside, yet such "*refraining from judgment*" remains, for Husserl, somehow "*compatible with the unshaken conviction of truth, even with the unshakable conviction of evident truth*" (*Ideas I §31*). The world is not to be doubted in earnest, like Descartes' thought-experiment prescribed, but bracketed. The point is not to reach scientific neutrality, but to go beyond science's foundation itself, its external objectivism. Phenomenology thus poses a more radical kind of questioning than the "hard" sciences (formal, physical, life, applied) demand. For it momentarily freezes the realist framework that science works within. When all inquiries into the world go through the first-person, consciousness itself must be studied first. This is where Husserl's *epoché* comes in, putting the world on-hold to transcend our preconceptions inspired by it.

Husserl's will to suspend our ordinary involvement with the world finds its aggressive counterpart in Stein's formal qualities. Most explicitly detailed in *The Geographical History of America* and "What Are Master-pieces and Why Are There So Few of Them," "human nature" or "identity" refers to the socialized, historicized self that possesses a healthy awareness of individual personality, family, and chronological time. This self is the self-evident self molded through memories, group behavior, and discursive knowledge. Since the mode of writing based on nature/identity inevitably operates in relation to an audience, being self-conscious and eager to please, it feels spiritually and creatively vitiated for Stein. (Works representative of nature/identity writing would be *Three Lives*, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, *Paris France*, *Wars I Have Seen*, and "Brewsie and Willie.") Whether the "audience" amounts to family members or strangers, it impedes artistic integrity. For writing for others from a sedimented personality compromises the author, tying him or her down with personal baggage. "I am I because my little dog knows me," Stein deridingly writes of nature/identity, "but, creatively speaking the little dog knowing that you are you and your recognizing that he knows, that is what destroys creation" ("Master-pieces," *L* 148-49). The little dog resurfaces in "Identity a Poem." "I am I because my little dog knows me" goes into sequences such as,

The human mind.	The human mind does play.
The human mind.	Plays because it plays.
Human nature.	Does not play because it does not play again.

(*Selections* 301)

In *The Geographical History of America*, Stein's tone turns sarcastic even: "Thank you for identity even if it is not a pleasure" (*GHA* 155). Mind/entity emanates a playfulness vital for artistic innovation, while nature/identity remains predictable.

Once nature/identity becomes bracketed, we arrive at the "human mind" or "entity." When Brooks Landon describes the "human mind" as the "state of pure creativity, freed from all the distractions of daily life"; the "province of immediate experience"; "serenely

organized sensory data”; and “perception untroubled by human emotion or temporal awareness and totally unconcerned with making any causal connections” (497), he accurately identifies Stein’s mind/entity as a stylized phenomenological attitude toward the world. Stein renders the human gaze as inhuman as possible. The opposite of a favor-currying core strides forth: the anti-social *cogito* (“The human mind lives alone” [*GHA* 196]) entrenched in the present, sentient but not self-reflexive. Mind/entity is the impersonal, anonymous “one.” It remains detached from an audience, “individualism” (*GHA* 55), commercial glory, events, emotions, and memory. The last in the list, memory, particularly impedes art by disrupting its most compelling source: immediate sensation without egotism. To remember, no matter how momentarily, is to lose sight of things themselves. Remembering re-inserts individual personality into the creative act, which overwhelms the resulting text. To remember oneself renders one’s writing more about the writer than whatever true imagination might summon: “If you do not keep remembering yourself you have no identity and if you have no time you do not keep remembering yourself and as you remember yourself you do not create anybody can and does know that” (“Master-pieces,” *L* 154). By achieving a timeless quality, then, mind/entity can compose masterpieces. “There is no identity nor time in master-pieces even when they tell about that” (*GHA* 225). Masterpieces exist for and in themselves, above audience approval and related natural attitudes. When the writer commits to inventing masterpieces, he or she serves “god” over “mammon,” another binary—this time, biblically-inflected—disclosing the conflict between nature/identity and mind/entity. In “What is English Literature,” Stein declares, “If you write the way it has already been written the way writing has already been written then you are serving mammon, because you are living by something some one has already been earning or has earned. If you write as you are to be writing then you are serving as a writer god because you are not earning anything” (*L* 58). God is

authentic, difficult, brilliant art; mammon is the idol of cheap success. While Stein writes what she knows, she does so in such a garbled, opaque way in her most hermetic works—those devoted to the “human mind,” “entity,” “god”—that they can only be deemed autobiographical in the loosest sense. *Stanzas in Meditation* and *Everybody's Autobiography*, for instance, are the kind of texts that Stein takes most pride in as a writer, both books void of traditional character, plot, punctuation, syntax, and lexis—all the linguistic trappings of psychologized nature/identity.

Nature/identity is also destroyed on the level of character. Not only does Stein bracket our nature/identity's writing conventions, she also parenthesizes nature/identity, that is, her version of the natural attitude when she expresses hostility or wariness toward those characters personifying its spirit. Tensions between nature/identity and mind/entity dramatically manifest in Stein's “twinning” pieces, such as *Ida*, *Lucretia Borgia*, *Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters*, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, and *Deux Soeurs Qui Ne Sont Pas Soeurs* (*Two Sisters Who Are Not Sisters*). The “twin” or “sister” figures as the inauthentic, public, and commercially manufactured alter-ego (nature/identity), while the original (mind/entity) retains what she can of spiritual integrity.

Even as early as *The Making of Americans*, this twinning motif appears through Olga, the younger sister of the Herslands' first governess, Martha. Nearly twenty years younger than and “always a little afraid” of Martha (236), Olga exudes an ambiguous queerness like her sister. She is round, pleasant, attention-seeking, and attractive to men. At the same time, she bears a “spinster nature” (240-41) and “vague being,” “so that she was a ways [*sic*] being baffling, always making for herself a stupid escaping, sometimes not an easy escaping, sometimes [...] escape by accusation” (240). Only over three hundred pages later do we discover that Olga possesses an alter-ego named Ida. “Ida the school-teacher” appears on page 578, but it takes us ten pages to figure out that this

woman is “Olga who was Ida the sister of the first governess the Herslands had had living with them” (588)—a woman to whom Alfred Hersland, incidentally, writes a love letter. Olga-Ida is “a queer one to mostly every one knowing her,” since “there was not a history in any one’s knowing her” (589). She remains unknowable because outside the logic of “time creates intimacy.” “[T]here is never any history in any man ever knowing her” (591) when no man stays with her long enough to build a history. Yet the absence of long-term monogamous affairs only partially accounts for how Olga-Ida is “very much a puzzle to very many others” (591). There is something intrinsically aloof and distracted about Olga’s character. Like the 1941 version of *Ida*, Olga-Ida splits into “twin” intentional modes: “actively living” and “passively living” (591). This binary isn’t exactly the same as the nature/mind, identity/entity, or mammon/god oppositions—the passages in which it appears are too brief to provide enough detail—but it bears some semblance to them by adumbrating Olga with both public and private sides. Olga’s active living is “the nervous sexual asking to be object of all loving” (591), while her passive living consists of the “bottom being” hidden away from most eyes, the “stupid resisting, stagnant, dull fairly sensible” self (590) that eludes our general understanding.

We come to *Lucretia Borgia* in 1938. Robert Bartlett Haas points out how Lucretia’s belligerence toward her “twins”—Winnie, Jenny, and Gloria—prefigures Ida’s own animosity toward her “twin,” (another) Winnie. Haas takes the twinning device to symbolize Stein’s struggle against that part of herself desirous of audience approval: “*The killing of the twins seems to represent Gertrude Stein’s attempt to get rid of the sense of audience which had, for a time, disturbed her writing*” (RAB 94; italics in original). One of the alter-egos arouses the primary self’s murderous intent, but who the primary and secondary egos may be becomes ambiguous when Stein hints that Jenny has penned the story itself: “Jenny began to sit and write. / *Lucretia Borgia—an opera*” (RAB 119).

Whether Lucretia and the others remain figments of Jenny's imagination, who kills whom, whether a hated twin can be killed, we cannot say—only that the heroine's desire to eliminate all self-created supporting actors and become “one one one” resounds throughout the short operatic play.

Three Sisters Who Are Not Sisters proceeds from the opposite perspective. Ellen remains persistently anxious that she might be murdered in this play-within-a-play for being (incorrectly) perceived as Helen's twin.³ Even the saints are not without their doppelgangers. Enough saints in *Four Saints in Three Acts* hold multiple identities. “Saint Therese might be Martha” (LO&P 448), “Saint Therese and Saint Therese too” (LO&P 480), “Can two saints be one” (LO&P 448), “There can be two Saint Annes if you like” (LO&P 479), and a longer passage that implies all the saints could be one:

Saint Therese and three saints all one. Saint Settlement Saint Fernande
 Saint John Seize Saint Paul Six. Saint Therese with these saints.
 Who separated saints at one time.
 Saint Therese. In follow and saints.
 Saint Therese. To be somewhere with or without saints.
 Saint Therese can never mention the others.
 Saint Therese to them. Saints not found. All four saints not more than all
 four saints.
 Saint Therese come again to be absent. (LO&P 448)

Saint Therese is herself with others. Saint Therese encompasses all others.

In both versions of *Ida*, the heroine also psychologically splits into multiple selves: Ida and Ida's twin, the beauty pageant queen “Winnie.” Trouble brews as Ida feels Winnie overtaking her sense of self, to which she copes by leaving any scene where Winnie's name is mentioned, resolving to converse only with herself, and emotionally withdrawing from others through sleep as *Nightwood's* Robin does (unlike Robin, however, Ida dreams profusely). Ida's acts of flight, in particular, figuratively bracket Winnie and the natural attitude she epitomizes. When Ida “goes away,” she vacates the “identity” she so despises,

³ Orphaned by different families, Ellen, Helen, and Jenny form a sisterhood through their shared experiences, while Samuel and Sylvester are brothers by blood.

resurfacing as an “entity” committed to silence or soliloquy. Such closed communicative loops, however, can never be absolute. Silence only attains meaning through speech. All soliloquies, moreover, involve others to the extent that language functions as a shared medium. Both silence and self-musings necessitate the existence of speakers who can prompt and appreciate them, since both constructs only become meaningful as idealities to beings within an intersubjective framework. *Ida* can never just talk to herself or live in an existential bubble. To do so is an onto-historical contradiction in terms.

CONTEXTS

Ida's 1941 version remains, to my mind, one of Stein's most mature and formally unified works. The novel is written from a mind/entity standpoint and follows a mind/entity-like figure. Yet its technical innovations are less flamboyant than, say, *Stanzas in Meditation*'s, making the story's timelessness, montage-like happenings, collage effect, and topical shifts seem almost unpremeditated. A short text (less than one hundred pages) split into two halves, *Ida* follows its heroine from birth until an unknown moment in her marriage to Andrew. Events and *Ida*'s personal musings unfold in anything but chronological order, however. What “happens” is a blur of *Ida*'s state-to-state travels, family anecdotes, encounters (to people who may be the same person), marriages, thoughts on dogs, anxieties regarding her “twin,” misanthropic sentiments, and childhood memories. The novel brings together Stein's life-long interests in a way that invites readers in with stark, rhythmic, and rhyming language, while retaining an aloofness through its impersonal atmosphere, carefully understated repetitions, splintering identities, and elliptical time-sense. Readers can hold onto certain threads, as they wander through *Ida*'s shifting

geography and events. There, we have saints; multiple genres, including epigram and nursery tale; the continuous present; autobiographical traces;⁴ a *bildungsroman*; the American character; tongue-in-cheek sexism, as in the flippant dwarf anecdote (“female dwarf bad luck male dwarf good luck, all that is eternal” [L 406]); and a theater of the absurd. The last generates much of the novel’s uncanniness. Contradictions co-exist (“[Andrew] had a nervous cough but he was not nervous. He had a quiet voice but he talked loudly” [L 408]), characters fragment into duplicates, disembodied voices float in the background (“But enough, said some one” [L 377]), and facts get thrown into doubt—for instance, whether three guests who visit Ida’s great-aunt exist or an old woman in a park is a woman. The poetry of life and its paradoxes winds its way through Ida’s world with economy and all the authoritativeness of a fable. This poetry is of the ethereal kind, though, not bogged down by its own weight. It almost melts away as soon as we try to recall it.

The narrative conveys such conflicting impulses—delicacy, whim, forcefulness—by adopting a deceptively simple, Spartan language to deliver, deadpan, grim and strange happenings. Peculiar repetitions, phrases, and lilting nursery rhymes come together without regular punctuation to create original, flowing lines: “She was very young and as she had nothing to do she walked as if she was tall as tall as any one” (L 339). Or: “So Ida did not look foolish and neither she was. / She might have been foolish. / Saddest of all words are these, she might have been” (L 366). Some sentences are so subtly manipulated that Stein’s touch only becomes recognizable after a second look. The mundane clause “They lose track or sight of each other” becomes, in Stein’s hands, “It was a nice family but they did easily lose each other” (L 339). (Such permutations echo those of *Paris France*. In the Francophile memoir, sentences such as, “She was always tired as she

⁴ Ida’s name, for instance, combines “Idea” with “Ada,” a well-known alias for Toklas. The names of Stein’s real-life dogs also find their way into the novel.

cooked with the same perfection,” become molded into: “[S]he always tired as she was cooked with the same perfection” [53].) Other times, Stein’s prose becomes self-consciously obscure (“There whether there whether whether who is not” [L 370]). But *Ida* generally sticks to slanting, sing-songy rhymes—when it does rhyme, that is:

And William, laughed and then he broke into poetry.
At a glance.
What a chance. (L 381)

The road is awfully wide.
With the snow on either side. (L 388)

For a four.
She shut the door.
They dropped in.
And drank gin. (L 400)

An irregular *vers libre* brings together a fluid, rolling rhythm with spontaneous-seeming ticks, stutters, pauses, and repetitions characterizing everyday conversation (“Ida had not yet wanted to marry, but but” [L 380]). Rare metric patterns merge without warning. Above, in the third indented fragment alone (“For a four [...]”), a cretic monometer gives way to an iambic dimeter that turns over, at last, to bacchic monometers. *Ida* remains one of the few novels where near-extinct metrical variations—anapaestic, spondaic, and dactylic monometers (“That she needs / What she has” [L 381]; “Why not. / Dear Ida” [L 398])—casually coexist with unadorned, slightly ungrammatical layman English. Here is wordplay that revels in, for instance, metonymy, homonymy, heteronymy, homographs, punning, alliterations, rhymes (whose legacy can be felt in Charlotte Pomerantz’s children books), and, again, rhyming rhythmic structures resurrected for a new kind of odyssey. This is an odyssey missing a sense of origin and destination, where the most heroic feat is the main character’s attempt to empty herself of “character” as such, to rid herself of what she believes to be a cyclopean blindness when it comes to human relations. Dying verse

forms find second life when applied sporadically within a journey that spans at least two continents and multiple levels of consciousness.

Now, Pomerantz's name was mentioned above, but *Ida* isn't a book that publishers nowadays would pitch to children. Its Mother Goose-like names and phrases, such as "Lady Helen Button" (L 385), "Susan Little" (L 390), and "Oh dear [Ida] often said oh dear isn't it queer" (L 415), contrast with the tale's often very "adult" content: hallucinations, suicide, existential angst, sexual awakening, dogs having to be killed once past their prime, metaphors for barrenness, out-of-wedlock births, still-born twins, failed marriages, child abandonment, and so on. Animal copulation is spoken of in especially endearing terms: "[Mary Rose] loved to tempt other dogs to do what they should not. She never did what she should not but they did when she showed them where it was" (L 394). Stein's clipped, playful lines help effect the matter-of-fact and therefore off-putting tone toward such incidents, sharpening the question of whether *Ida* is a children's fable, grownup yarn, or what categorically collapses both. Stein felt that "[s]entences are not emotional but paragraphs are" ("Poetry and Grammar," L 133), so by favoring concise, indented sentences, she relays, in her eyes, emotional events in an unemotional way. (All this, technically, renders *Ida* neither fit nor unfit for child audiences, because the idealizing light of pure innocence we tend to view them through has no place in a world where anything can happen. Even children cannot be perfectly child-like, as our contemporary sensibility would have it, during their dreams. For even children have nightmares and erotic visions. Such dreams unleash experiences of brutality, uncanniness, risk, thrill, and adventure that children would normally never have access to in their waking hours.)

The novel's impersonal, child-like tone toward sex and death pulls us to the surrealist sensibility. *Ida*'s startling juxtaposition between the "adult" world incompatible with the uptight modern nursery and the Mother Goose language encapsulating that world

situates the story firmly within the surrealist tradition, which Susan Sontag so aptly defines as being upheld “by the idea of destroying conventional meanings, and creating new meanings or counter-meanings through radical juxtaposition (the ‘collage principle’)” (“Happenings” 269). Beyond wild tensions between form and content, the novel’s surrealism gathers force through its play with the fantastic. One cannot speak of *Ida* without addressing its hallucinatory or dream-like quality. A fairytale rooted in the surrealist tradition burgeons, with a bird saying *Ida*’s name “[o]nce upon a time” (*L* 366) and three women (fairy godmother figures) morphing into one upon drawing near *Ida* (*L* 350). Other episodes similarly blur the boundaries between sober wakefulness, dream, and psychedelic states. An unknown man (perhaps Andrew himself) lectures Andrew on tokens associated with good and bad luck. Their conversation culminates in all of the superstitious omens—spiders, cuckoos, goldfish, dwarves—hysterically bickering over one another’s realness. Meanwhile, the voice Andrew listens to fades away, leaving the signs still bickering amongst themselves before Andrew and *Ida* (*L* 403-07).

Ida’s actual dream sequences expand the novel’s surreal terrain. To recount a few, clothes resemble Spanish ice-cream (*L* 375); Andrew perishes as a soldier (*L* 398-99); *Ida* dreams she is a Wyoming-born, water-loving woman named Virginia (*L* 364-65); and a lion devours a boy returning *Ida*’s package (*L* 374), only to reappear in *Ida*’s waking life as a lion-like Pekinese dog named Sandy that gets run over by a car (*L* 391-92). (The reverse order could just as easily be posited, of course: Sandy assumes lion-form in one of *Ida*’s dreams.) But these dream elements—the dog, package, young man, and car—materialized earlier, at the beginning of *Ida*’s part two (first half). While walking home, *Ida* spots a laundry-bearing woman staring at *Ida*’s dog Love’s photograph. Astonished, *Ida* “snatch[s]” the photograph away and jumps into a car, one belonging to two women who have randomly stopped by “to see what was happening” (*L* 347). The unnamed pair get

back into the car, kick Ida out, drive off with Love's photograph, and leave Ida standing with the offending laundress. Ida, then, recovers a package that one of the car's passengers dropped, spots three newcomers (a farmhand, two women), runs into the laundress again, and sights an automobile driving by with its two female owners, the dog Love, and the package Ida picked up earlier all inside. I've omitted a few details, but the general gist can be grasped. Such sequences help cultivate a dream world where everyone switches place with everyone else and duplicates abound. Facts resemble fictions in *Ida*, since we never know where we are, when it is, or whether everyone is really the same one (all the women figuring as Ida, all the men, her husband).

Like much of Stein's oeuvre and as part of its absurdist tendencies, *Ida* features narrative detours for their own sake. A text of attention deficit or surplus, however one wishes to think of it, presents itself, where too little attention to one thing at a time or too much attention to several things at the same time occurs. Starting with the setting, Stein sweeps across an American geography, but it is no America we know. Ida wanders from place to place, meeting people from this state or that. But throughout her travels, no community's local flavor develops. All the places bleed together: Connecticut, New Hampshire, Ohio, Washington, Wyoming, Virginia, Texas, and Boston. After Ida lives with her great-aunt "not in the city but just outside" (*L* 339), she moves in with her grandfather right before she turns sixteen. Few details regarding her age appear beyond this point. Ida lives in a house "on top of a hill" (*L* 341). She turns up in Connecticut (*L* 353). A "cousin of her uncle" (*L* 358) takes her in before Ida resides with a doctor's wife's cousin (*L* 359). Ida shows up in New Hampshire (*L* 363). Accompanied by George Seaton, our heroine settles in another country (presumably England), specifically a place called "Bay Shore" (*L* 385). In between trips, Ida spends substantial time, by her standards, in Washington, D. C.

The men and women Ida shares company with appear equally interchangeable.⁵ An aura of anonymity surrounds male characters, men who are either reduced to names without details (“Gerald Seaton or whoever it was” [L 381]) or details without names (“man with a hat” [L 350]). Women fare no better. Right before Ida begins to contemplate marriage,

She had a friend who was tall and thin and her eyes were gray and her hair was messed up and she dressed in black and she was thin and her legs were long and she wore a large hat. She did not mind the sun but she did wear a wide-brimmed hat. Yes she did. She was like that. Yes she was.

This friend did not interest Ida. She saw her, yes, but she did not interest her. (L 353)

Two pages before the novel ends, with a husband hovering in the background,

[Ida] did meet women. When they came she was resting, when they went she was resting, she liked it and they did not mind it. They came again and when they came again, she was obliging, she did say yes. She was sorry she was resting, so sorry and she did say yes. She thought they liked it and they did but it was not the same as if she had ever said no or if she had not always been resting. (L 421)

Even Ida’s husbands (or husband) arrive and vanish without fanfare: Frank Arthur, Frederick, the pipe-smoker from Montana, Andrew Hamilton (also known as the first Andrew, William, and Handy Andy), and Gerald Seaton. With names that should matter sinking into inconsequence, the rest almost evaporate into thin air. We barely remember Bernard, the “little man” who climbs anything and bears a saint’s name (L 356); Benjamin Williams; Old Man Duncan; Woodward George; Henry and Eugene Thomas; Abraham George; Thomas the Saint; or Mark who dies of meningitis. Sam Hamlin of Connecticut earns a few words, but only for a page (L 353). (Incidentally, he may or may not be one of the three men Ida loves [L 397].)

Ida is also rendered as aloof and inscrutable as possible, which reinforces her status as a mind/entity. Her frequent comings and goings and de-personalized encounters erode

⁵ So do Ida’s pets, specifically the blind dog Love (Love is blind? Love is, quite literally, a son of a bitch?) and his ironically named double, Iris, who sees just fine. See L 364 for their conflation, when Iris becomes described as being blind.

the trappings of nature/identity Stein cautions against. “Ida gradually was a little older and every time she was a little older some one else took care of her. She liked the change of address because in that way she never had to remember what her address was,” Stein says of her heroine’s amnesia, “and she did not like having to remember. It was so easy to forget the last address and she really forgot to guess what the next address was” (*L* 343). Home and warm bodies mean nothing to migrants intent on the road. Yet Ida’s partners exist as anonymities without such charged action, serving only to reflect her movements: “Everybody knew she liked to do favors for them and wanting to do favors for everybody who wanted to have favors done for them it was quite natural that those who could do the favors did them when she asked them to do them” (*L* 378).

Evinced in Ida’s travels and affairs, time goes in loops instead of lines. Stein circles around certain details, slightly adapting them with each round. As a result, it becomes almost impossible to sequentially order Ida’s life events. We are given days of the week (“She was very careful about Tuesday” [*L* 339]), months of the year (“August” [*L* 343]), or occasions (“It was the day before Easter” [*L* 349]), but they do not ground the narrative in specific times or dates, as the vague line “It is not early morning nor late in the evening it is just in between” (*L* 382) suggests. Cutaways and flashbacks often shape the Stein-narrator’s oratory. Two different people tell the anecdote about a girl who eats sugar cubes upon hearing about a dog’s death (*L* 356, 372). Ida’s great-aunt “went away” only to reappear a few pages later (*L* 339, 344). Ida’s grandfather houses her on page 340, then on 343. As a narrative thread, Ida’s teenage whereabouts tie over and under themselves before resettling long enough for us to grasp, then lose. Similar leaps in time happen when Ida marries Frank Arthur. The wedding is alluded to on page 357, but two pages later, we’re told Ida and Arthur part ways as soon as they first meet on the road (*L* 358)—and

two pages after that, Ida has not married anyone yet (*L* 360). Like Frank, Andrew assumes an uncertain role in Ida's life. "Ida often said to herself she never had met an Andrew" toward the start of the novel's second half (*L* 389), but a page before, Stein romantically involves the pair. Before we know it, in the midst of Ida's sojourns and multiple marriages—to many, few, or the one, who knows—"[Ida] was not so young any more" (*L* 371). Like an unnamed "something" that "happened slowly and then it was happening and then it happened a little quicker and then it was happening and then it happened it really happened and then it had happened and then it was happening and then well then there it was and if it was there then it is there only now nobody can care" (*L* 419-20), the entire novel could take place in any given period for any duration and at any speed. Events fast-forward, rewind, elongate, repeat, or become garbled in the Stein-narrator's consciousness.

It would be a mistake, however, to conflate the storyteller's time-sense with the heroine's. There are two kinds of continuous present at work. The narrative persona may not entirely stay within an Aristotelian field, charting Ida's life through quirky loops, but he or she somewhat tinkers with it: Ida ages, marries, visits different states, and owns different dogs. But Ida self-consciously refuses such rhetoric. *Ida* advances in elliptical spurts, there and back again, while Ida remains eternally here. "There was never any beginning or end, but every day came before or after another day. Every day did. Little by little circles were open and when they were open they were always closed" (*L* 410), Stein writes on Ida's behalf. The text's recurring phrase "once upon a time" installs *Ida*, like *Ryder*, in an unspecified American past. Yet Ida places herself outside history, absorbed in the present: "Ida never said once upon a time. These words did not mean anything to Ida. This is what Ida said. Ida said yes, and then Ida said oh yes, and then Ida said, I said yes, and then Ida said, Yes" (*L* 410). A time before time holds no meaning for a mind/entity. Successive relations, no matter how distorted, become phenomenologically subsumed

under Ida's prolonged present. Like Polybe, whose animal consciousness permits (to Stein) no comprehension of causalities ("[H]e never tried to come back. Back meant nothing to him. A day was never a day to Polybe" [L 395]), Ida does not (or tries not to) intuit discrete intervals. Stein writes, "One day did not come after another day to Ida. Ida never took on yesterday or tomorrow, she did not take on months either nor did she take on years. Why should she when she had always been the same" (L 411). When Ida counts to ten, additionally, "It was very hard to remember how many times she had counted ten when once she had counted them because she had to remember twice and then when she had counted a hundred then what happened" (L 350). Counting numbers beyond the self-contained, all-encompassing one becomes an exercise in absurdity for a creature without past or future.

Ida grew out of a noticeably shorter story, "Ida" (1937), the memoir *Paris France* (1940), and the film script *Deux Soeurs Qui Ne Sont Pas Soeurs* (1929) (hereafter referred to by its title's English translation, *Two Sisters Who Are Not Sisters*). The five-page-long "Ida" establishes the twinning conflict, while *Two Sisters* and *Paris France* set the tone for the 1941 novel's surreal incidents and language.

In the short story, Ida possesses two sets of children, two husbands, and, of course, two selves: the outward-turned face that wins "a beauty prize for being the most beautiful one" (nature/identity), the inward-turned face that earns "a prize for not remembering any one or anything" (mind/entity) (*HWW* 45). Within this chronologically-arranged narrative (all seven chapters surprisingly proceeding in order), Ida moves as though in an undead trance, dutifully following her husband's and son's advice. This sense of living one's life on autopilot—"half awake," "half asleep" (*HWW* 43)—carries over into the later novel, with Arthur, one of Ida's husbands, being "never more than half awake" (L 357), Ida often

dreaming in sleep, and a dog, Never Sleeps, earning both male and female pronouns (*L* 395-96), perhaps in homage to the married couple.

Paris France provides much of the basis for *Ida*'s happenings and form. Despite Stein's outward dismissal of the surrealist movement—"That was really the trouble with the sur-realist crowd, they missed their moment of becoming civilized, they used their revolt, not as a private but as a public thing, they wanted publicity not civilisation, and so really they never succeeded in being peaceful and exciting" (*Paris France* 59)—her memoir springs from surrealist energies. (While Stein never explicitly aligns herself with the likes of André Breton, Max Ernst, and Salvador Dalí, in short, abhorring their vulgar self-promotion, what her texts "do" bears resemblance.) Its setting is recounted in especially surrealistic terms. Stein mentions, once, that it requires around seven men to undertake any task in France. The number's randomness becomes the point, one playfully attributed to the twentieth century's inherently surreal nature. Paris' "amusing" arbitrariness becomes "very important because once again this made a background of unreality which was very necessary for anybody having to create the twentieth century. The nineteenth century knew just what to do with each man but the twentieth century inevitably was not to know and so Paris was the place to be" (13). Although the twentieth century as a whole lies awash in the surreal, France constitutes modernity's surreal heart for Stein. What makes "Paris and France the natural background of the art and literature of the twentieth century," Stein spells out, is that "[t]heir tradition kept them from changing and yet they naturally saw things as they were, and accepted life as it is, and mixed things up without any reason at the same time" (17). The French, Stein continues, hold an "acceptance of reality [...] so great that they could let any one have the emotion of unreality" (18). Between the old and the new, unexpected juxtapositions develop, themselves a key ingredient for, again, the general surrealist project. When one

remembers the Second World War looming over Stein's life at the time, surrealism seems a natural choice for capturing the world's irrational self-destructiveness.

In *Paris France*'s case, Stein's most surreal moments become the eerie play-off between war and childhood rambling. Hélène Bouton's or, as Stein translates it, Helen Button's wandering forms the skeleton for *Ida*'s story, Helen being a local French village girl who catches Stein's eye. In the middle of ruminating on childhood memories of France, growing up in Francophile San Francisco, all things French—arts, physique, national character, language, government, fashion, existential philosophy, family relations, pets, class, profession, domestic life, cuisine—both world wars, how France lends itself to expatriate creativity, as well as cultural differences between contemporary and Victorian times, Stein suddenly veers into Helen's everyday activities. Stein has her Steinian reasons: "I have been kind of wondering just what a child's feeling about war-time is. It is very interesting" (80). The master of rapid cutaways and tangents says, "Why not?"

While the novel lifts a number of the memoir's episodes,⁶ Helen Button's is the most important by far. Its language, firstly, stands out from the surrounding text's. Run-on sentences brimming with self-consciously adult references and Stein's "I" both die out. The terse, faux-naïve voice ruling *Ida* enters. Sentences such as,

I always remember coming in from the country to my garage where I usually kept my car and the garage was full more than full, it was the moment of the automobile salon, but said I what can I do, well said the man in charge I'll see and then he came back and said in a low voice, there is a corner and in this corner I have put the car of Monsieur the academician and next to it I will put yours the others can stay outside and it is quite true even in a garage an academician and a woman of letters takes precedence even of millionaires or politicians, they do, it is quite incredible but they do, the police treat artists and writers respectfully too, well that too is intelligent on the part of France and unsentimental, because after all the way everything is remembered is by the writers and painters of the period, nobody really lives who has not been well written about and in realizing that the french show their usual sense of reality and a belief in a sense of

⁶ A shepherd hangs his dogs once they pass their prime (34), a girl feeds some dog sugar cubes (34), someone's great-aunt births still-born twins and buries them beneath a pear tree (99)—such incidents find their way, almost identically, into the 1941 American neo-odyssey. See *L* 338-39, 355-56, and 372.

reality is the twentieth century, people may not have it but they do believe in it (21-22)

become traded for “Helen Button was her name and she lived in war-time. She lived somewhere but the thing that is important is that she lived during war-time” (80-81). If we switched “Helen” with “Ida” in “Helen and her dog William went out every day and almost every evening and they always saw some one” (*Paris France* 83), the line could easily be mistaken for an *Ida* extract. The conversational grammar and lack of punctuation distinguishing *Ida* (“Ida instead of going on the way she was going went back the way she had come” [L 345]) find their template in *Paris France*’s spare, uninterrupted prose: “It was getting darker and beginning to rain and Helen went one way and Emil went another way and each one of their dogs went with the one who owned him” (83). Evidenced in these examples, *Ida*’s style owes much to *Paris France*’s prose.

Aside from style, *Ida* incorporates and further develops the Helen Button segment’s surreal atmosphere. Like Dalí’s *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second Before Awakening* (1944), where tigers erupt from fishes erupting from pomegranates, with sky-high elephants cavorting in the background, *Ida* indulges in the bizarre, showcasing spiders jabbering to cuckoos jabbering to goldfish jabbering to dwarves. A child’s dream-like wandering in war-torn Europe becomes the model for a woman’s dream-like wandering through war-conscious America. Helen often walks along roads with her dog, William; her playmate, Emil; and Emil’s dog, Ellen. Because the war has interrupted regular school schedules, which serve as a child’s primary markers of time, a certain timelessness pervades Helen’s village. No distinction can be drawn between day and night, for Helen, when lessons fail to order the passing hours, weekdays, and seasons. Stein writes on Helen’s behalf, “School did not commence as soon as usual, it always did commence as the days were shorter and now the days were shorter and everything was darker and darker [...] The nights were black and the days were dark and there was no

morning. Not in war-time” (84). As if floating in this timeless vacuum, people drift in and out of sight all too easily, Emil included. Animals blur into enemy soldiers. Helen’s world feels surreal, because war *is*, again, surreal: “War is more like a novel than it is like real life and that is its eternal fascination. It is a thing based on reality but invented, it is a dream made real, all the things that make a novel but not really life” (38). War’s surrealism wafts into the all-American *Ida* through the soldiers its heroine meets and how the entire cast comes and goes without warning at any time and place. Time also distorts for *Ida*, as it does for little Helen.

War’s surrealism also has to do with its warping our intersubjective sensibilities. In *Paris France*, Stein depicts war as a conflict of social interests. Its conditions exaggerate our natural impulses to be alone and with others:

[W]ar brings you in contact with so much and so many and at the same time concentrates your isolation. Undoubtedly that is what a war does and is it unconsciously one of the things that makes wars happen, this thing.

After all human beings are like that. When they are alone they want to be with others and when they are with others they want to be alone and war in a kind of way concentrating all this destroys it and intensifies it. (72)

This is but another way of articulating the artist-audience problem haunting Stein after she became famous for the Toklas pseudo-memoir. Insofar as war aggravates these paradoxical desires—sociality, solitude—and its shadow falls upon *Ida*, *Ida* dips into the surreal discourse of war.

Two Sisters Who Are Not Sisters lends *Ida* another surrealist aspect. Ulla E. Dydo reminds us that *Two Sisters* features the washerwoman-canine-photograph-car-couple-package sequence opening *Ida*’s part two (first half) nearly a decade before *Ida* was completed (422-27). A beauty queen, Winnie’s prototype, even makes an appearance. An experimental film script that was never made into a movie and composed entirely in French, *Two Sisters* runs three paragraphs long (across two pages), a conceptual homage to

doubling and duplication.⁷ A series of bizarre incidents spontaneously erupt. A laundress gazes at a photo of two white poodles. A car stops nearby. Two women dismount and ask to see the snapshot. In that interlude, a beauty queen rushes into the vacated vehicle and starts crying. The original passengers swiftly throw her out, driving off afterward with the poodle picture. A few hours later, a variation of this action string unwinds: the two women show another laundress the same photo, the beauty queen hurls herself at their car again, the duo leave behind a package as they exit. Click-stop, two days later—the reel spins again: the original laundress encounters a lad and the beauty queen, who holds the aforementioned package in her hand; the two women drive by the trio, with an actual white poodle holding the (teleported) package in its mouth. This whirlwind of actions without reasonable causes and spatio-temporal impossibilities reappears in *Ida*. *Ida*, however, assumes the beauty queen’s role, *Ida*’s blind dog replaces the white poodle, and the anecdote’s ending increases in subtlety. If *Two Sisters* closes with, “Les trois sur le trottoir le regarde passer et n’y comprennent rien” (*Operas & Plays* 400),⁸ *Ida* concludes its parallel episode with, “There it all was and the woman with the bundle of wash and the young man and *Ida*, they all stood and looked and they did not any one of them say anything” (*L* 347). Outright bewilderment gives way to silence.

⁷ *Two Sisters*, Bay-Cheng convincingly argues, teases out homoerotic possibilities latent in the cinematic medium itself. She observes, “[H]omosexuality’s sexual doubling echoes cinema’s duplication of the images. Just as cinema repeats nearly identical images in the individual frames of film, the partners of same-sex coupling are thought to repeat each other” (43). By closely adapting the 1929 script’s events and having two women in a car drive off with the blind dog Love’s photograph, only to reappear with the actual pet in tow, *Ida* weaves in a sly lesbian joke: two women who are not sisters possess love, that son of a bitch. Refer back to footnote five.

⁸ “The three standing on the sidewalk look at the poodle passing by and understand nothing” (my translation).

IRREDUCIBLE REDUCTIONS

Ida possesses more than a few “twins” or alter-egos: Ida-Ida, Winnie, Virginia from Wyoming, a mysterious “we” Ida adopts in Washington (“Hello Ida, said some one. And they said, No Ida we are not” [L 370]), Christine who owns a Chinese dog named William, and the quintuplets (L 359). (Ida even merges with Andrew at one point [L 389].) But what begins as a convenient gesture (“I am tired of being just one and when I am a twin one of us can go out and one of us can stay in” [L 340-41]) turns sinister when Winnie et al. threaten to take over Ida’s personality. The budding phenomenologist risks losing herself entirely to the natural attitude. During a conversation with an army officer, Ida experiences no little existential disorientation when he mistakes her for Winnie. He asks her, “What is it that you like better than anything else” (L 351). “I like being where I am [...] I am not here” (L 351), she responds, indicating her detachment from her immediate surroundings. The officer’s next words, however, perturb Ida deeply: “I know what you mean. Winnie is your name and that is what you mean by your not being here” (L 351). This misinterpretation or, more biting, correct assessment makes Ida feel “very faint” (L 351). When did she (want to) become Winnie? This identity crisis actually slips out ten pages earlier, when Ida confides to (her dog) Love, “Love later on they will call me a suicide blonde because my twin will have dyed her hair. And then they will call me a murderess because there will come the time when I will have killed my twin which I first made come” (L 341). If not suicide by killing Winnie-who-is-Ida, the remaining option for herself, Ida feels, is solitude, where creative integrity can be salvaged.

So Ida withdraws into herself—a pure mind/entity, the anti-social queer. From writing letters to Winnie, Ida flees at Winnie’s mention. The escape translates literally (“They said who is Winnie. The next day Ida left Connecticut” [L 353]) and figuratively.

When Ida “goes away” to “liv[e] where she is not” (*L* 371), her mind seems to vacate her body. During these out-of-body moments, our heroine gazes at herself as if from a bird’s-eye view: “Ida saw herself come, then she saw a man come, then she saw a man go away, then she saw herself go away” (*L* 354). Or if Ida isn’t experiencing a sense of disembodiment, she vacillates between silence, sleep, and soliloquy:

Now listen to me, I am here and I know it, if I go away I will not like it because I am so used to my being here. I would not know what has happened, now just listen to me, she said to herself, listen to me, I am going to stop talking and I will.

Of course she had gone away and she was living with a friend.

How many of those who are yoked together have ever seen oxen.

This is what Ida said and she cried. [...] [S]he went over everything that had ever happened and in the middle of it she went to sleep.

When she awoke she was talking.

How do you do she said.

First she was alone and then soon everybody was standing listening. She did not talk to them.

Of course she did think about marrying. She had not married yet but she was going to marry.

She said if I was married I’d have children and if I had children then I’d be a mother and if I was a mother I’d tell them what to do.

She decided that she was not going to marry and was not going to have children and was not going to be a mother.

Ida decided that she was just going to talk to herself. Anybody could stand around and listen but as for her she was just going to talk to herself.

She no longer even needed a twin. (*L* 359-60)

By now, Ida has gone beyond “elsewhere” to enter a solipsistic world, the world of one. This world of one, though, remains an impossible ideal. Ida can neither stay there, it being a fantasy to begin with, nor does she want to, deep down—and we can discern such equivocation in the novel itself and Stein’s related critical writing.

The fantasy of such isolation is the fantasy of bracketing the world to live and write as a mind/entity. It is a queer separatist fantasy. It is also a Husserlian fantasy. Allow me to explain—from Husserl, Stein, then onto the queer. Whether the Husserlian reduction can be fully performed is debated in the phenomenological field to this day. But if we take the *epoché*—the mandate to not make *any* use of our certainty in the outside world as well

as “every assumption, stipulation, and conviction” (Husserl, *Internal Time* §1) founded on that certainty—at face-value, then current philosophy tells us it cannot be executed for three interrelated reasons. Firstly, the *epoché*’s goal is inherently impossible. The conscious mind inevitably overlooks subliminal biases. When old ones get ferreted out, new ones take over. And certain age-old prejudices never go away. For a philosopher who apprehends that “all-sided” insight remains impossible—“[E]very experiential multiplicity, no matter how extensive, still leaves open more precise and novel determinations of the physical thing; and it does so *in infinitum*” (*Ideas I* §3)⁹—Husserl is strangely breezy regarding its logical correlate, “all-sided” neutrality. The reduction ends up being a well-intentioned but impossible game of pretend: humans cannot suspend *all* pre-judgments to arrive at a perfectly objective worldview. Humans cannot, in short, become post-human.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, famously reframes the grounds of this debate—whether all biases can be suspended—by arguing that every act of cognition is an act of interpretation. To perceive is to automatically and irrevocably engage in bias. The subject necessarily sees subjectively. To quote Heidegger directly, “[W]e never perceive equipment that is ready-to-hand without already understanding and interpreting it [...] Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us” (§32). By orienting phenomenology as beginning in and working through interpretative processes, Heidegger expands the discipline to include both hermeneutic and existential phenomenology (although Heidegger would have distanced himself from the term “existential,” preferring “ontological”).

⁹ See also Husserl, *Ideas I* §44; Husserl, *Thing* §33, §35.

Secondly, Husserl's transcendental reduction all-too-slickly glosses over the implications of embodied subjectivity. It overstates the ego's position. Although objects find form through subjectivity's prism, we cannot exclusively "intend" them without considering how those very objects, especially language, shape our intentional faculty itself. The world's appearances cannot be examined without already implicitly confirming its existence, the latter enmeshed in the former. Whether we want to or not, we make use of the natural attitude, since it grounds our ability to comprehend "use" in the first place. In this sense and others, Heidegger, Ricoeur, and their philosophical disciples view the *epoché* as intellectually self-defeating. And Merleau-Ponty, according to Taylor Carman, willfully misreads it to compensate for Husserl's overly idealistic bent (Carman 37-43). In his introduction to *Phenomenology of Perception*, for instance, Merleau-Ponty softens the *epoché* with, "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction" (*PP xv*).

Husserl's twenty-first-century proponents argue that the *epoché* remains grossly misunderstood. According to David W. Smith, H. L. Dreyfus, and Matheson Russell, for instance, the point of Husserl's reduction isn't to seriously put the spatio-temporal world on-hold, but merely to shift the discussion from objects to consciousness-of-those-objects. The *epoché* functions as an administrative maneuver more than anything else.¹⁰ But such disclaimers cannot redeem the weight of Husserl's egocentric rhetoric that offers little by way of compromise. It is daunting to argue away the opinion that "the whole natural world" is "essential[ly] detachabl[e]" from "the domains of consciousness" (Husserl, *Ideas I* §46) in the sense that consciousness would still remain even if "the world of physical things" were "annihilat[ed]" (Husserl, *Ideas I* §49). In his summary of Husserl's major ideas, Russell waters down the reduction to a "mere thought" or "fleeting moment" (70)

¹⁰ See Smith, *Husserl* 167, 240-41; Hopkins 112-14; Smith, *Cartesian Meditations* 18-33; Smith and McIntyre; and Dreyfus. For different but equally sympathetic defenses of the phenomenological reduction, see Zahavi and Mohanty 353-56.

through a television anecdote. In the same way a flicker on a television screen reminds us that we're watching a "simple box filled with a few circuits and a glass tube," Russell proposes, "the mere suggestion of the possibility that the world may be an illusion introduces a flicker" of philosophical detachment for Husserl (70). Is this Husserl's true intent, though? None of his texts profess *as if*, only *let it be thus*. We are to wholeheartedly bracket the natural attitude, not feign to do so. Russell sees as a thought-experiment what is no experiment at all: a reduction that cannot be reduced.

The third and last main argument against the reduction's feasibility lies in how language circulates as an inherently subjective medium. As Lawrence Ferrara makes clear in his phenomenology-influenced *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music*, "[I]n order for the *epoche* [*sic*] to be purely performed, a value-free or neutral *language* would also be required" (156). Such a mandate, alas, can never be met. Ferrara presses on as to why: "[L]anguage grows from and in culture bringing with it culture's inherent prejudices and biases. [...] [A]s soon as an experience is articulated in language, it is already culturized and relativized" (156).¹¹ Ferrara re-articulates an argument begun decades earlier in the phenomenological tradition, most devastatingly by Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. "When an assertion is made, some fore-conception is always implied; but it remains for the most part inconspicuous, because the language already hides in itself a developed way of conceiving" (§33), Heidegger declares in 1927. Nearly forty years later, Gadamer chimes in: "We are always already biased in our thinking and knowing by our linguistic interpretation of the world. To grow into this linguistic interpretation means to grow up in the world" (64). Latent semantic conditions determine what meanings can be garnered from essences, and those very conditions render all philosophical inquiries relativistic.

¹¹ See also Ferrara 79-80.

The transcendental reduction only partially, never absolutely, transcends the natural attitude from which it wells forth. To argue otherwise invites contradictions. My consciousness does grant the world meaning—hence phenomenology’s importance. I grasp the world through *my* consciousness, and the world possesses a subjective dimension because filtered through me. Yet to insist, as Husserl does, that consciousness can perfectly purge its subjective inclinations in its self-examination summons a logical muddle. The Husserlian phenomenologist seeks to surmount subjectivist and objectivist pitfalls, but sinks into their bastard child instead: an impossibly objectivized subjectivity.

Stein’s failure to write from an immaculately impersonal, timeless perspective mirrors Husserl’s failure to actualize a purely phenomenological attitude. In the end, Stein cannot reconcile tensions between nature/identity and mind/entity. She cannot bring herself to, actually. *Quod erat demonstrandum*, the phrase with which Stein secretly started her career (*Q. E. D.*), isn’t proved at all: *Ida* remains an imperfect theorem on mind/entity expression. Far from being airtight, the novel opens out to the world in a way that reflects the impossibility of a complete *epoché*. No matter how far Stein’s mind/entity poetics departs from linear time and narrative, it is still linked with what is left behind: memory, patterned meditation. In *Ida*, the narrative progresses in sectioned intervals (first half, second half), grammar prevails (albeit tenuously), time passes, and the heroine—articulate, self-conscious, socialized—ages. The novel enacts an *epoché* in so far as it greatly sheds literary and social norms, yet this reduction, epitomized in the line “[I]t was not so important that *Ida* was *Ida*” (*L* 389), must be less than total.

Ida’s attempts to withdraw entirely from society are doomed to fail from the outset. Before any words fall from her lips, *Ida* is already situated in a psychosomatically interconnected reality. When *Ida* vows to only talk to and for herself, we are still listening

to her in what Merleau-Ponty calls the “interworld.” Merleau-Ponty cites facial mimicry in infants and similar social instincts that precede conscious thought as evidence of a primordial psychosomatic substratum underlying humanity’s collective consciousness (*PP* 410-14). This pre-reflective, intersubjective dimension we inhabit but do not create is “the one” interworld for Merleau-Ponty.¹² And it is also one out of many “ones” for Stein. While, as Merleau-Ponty phrases it, “The other person is never quite a personal being” (*PP* 411) to me the way I am to myself, all humans necessarily inhabit a social sphere because their bodies co-exist in reality and because language binds them together.

Once Ida’s words escape from her, they do not circulate inside a galactic vacuum but only make sense as part of an expressive system broadening the, to quote from Merleau-Ponty again, “one single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception” (*PP* 411). To talk is, on principle, social. (To talk in the presence of others, regardless of whether our words are directed toward them or not, more so. I know others are listening, their presence subliminally affecting my talking.) There can be no self-contained linguistic mode, since all language possesses an intersubjective element. It is a communicative matrix we enter into and can adapt but do not create beforehand because pre-given. If to be articulate is to be socialized, not only can Ida not be a mind/entity, no one can. “[N]o locutor speaks without making himself in advance allocutory, *be it only for himself*” (*Visible* 154), Merleau-Ponty argues, a sentiment reworded by Gadamer as: “[An] essential feature of the being of language seems to me to be its I-lessness. Whoever speaks a language that no one else understands does not speak. To speak means to speak *to* someone” (65). To the extent that language and the human world are social, then, all writers writing from whatever mindset write for others.

¹² Merleau-Ponty also refers to the interworld as the “thing,” “one single world,” “common ground,” “single fabric,” “consummate reciprocity,” and “common world.” See *PP* 403-25 for more elaboration.

What is strange is that Stein reaches this conclusion in *Narration*'s fourth lecture, but either talks herself out of it or fails to fully absorb its implications by the time she writes *Ida*:

So then although any one can say that they do not write for an audience and really why should they since anyway the audience will have its own feeling about anything nevertheless the writer writing knows what he is writing as he recognizes it as he is writing it and so he is actually having it happen that an audience is existing even if he as an audience is not an audience that is is one not having a feeling that he is an audience and yet that is just what a writer is. As he is a writer he is an audience because he does know what an audience is. (56)

The writer *is* his or her own audience in that he or she self-reflexively “recognizes” his or her own creation. Furthermore, grasping the idea of an “audience” wills it into being: if one knows what an “audience” is, the audience is already present. None of what Stein says otherwise, including her arbitrary division between spoken and written language—“He is not as one is when one is talking and every one is talking and talking is talking because then any one talking is not hearing what an audience is. What makes writing writing is hearing what an audience is that is to say makes recognition while in the act of writing what he is writing” (56)—diminishes this intuition’s forcefulness. Mind/entity brushes against nature/identity the instant it transpires as a thought-bubble in language, the ultimately social(izing) medium. It develops through tensions with its counter-mode from its theoretical inception. (By the same token, pure anti-sociality can only be achieved in death or dreamless sleep, where no consciousness and language exist to pull one back toward the living.)

Stein’s publishing ambitions and *Ida*’s paradoxical desire to cut off *and* foster communication point to this reciprocity. No little posturing is involved when *Ida* and her creator claim utter indifference to audiences. In *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway recollects a Stein who chooses to write unintelligibly by conventional standards, yet nevertheless possesses the very conventional desire to be published and admired by the public. This

desire can be palpably felt in Stein's 1934 radio interview with William Lundell. When Stein tells her interviewer, "Nothing can be the same thing to the other person. Nobody can enter into anybody else's mind; so why try?" he queries, "Then why did you publish manuscripts that were really written only for yourself?" (34). All Stein can say is:

"There is the eternal vanity of the mind. One wants to see one's children in the world and have them admired like any fond parent, and it is a bitter blow to have them refused or mocked. It is just as bitter for me to have a thing refused as for any little writer with his first manuscript. Anything you create you want to exist, and its means of existence is in being printed." (35)

Even the most stubbornly individual writer wants to be heard in a community of writers and readers. Even the most anti-social characters, such as Ida, can become chafed when others ignore or dismiss them. For all her frustrations with conversation and companionship, Ida still "g[ets] very angry" when two men find her "not interesting" and will not listen to her once they know she is "not going to stay" (*L* 363). What happens next is a far cry from those moments when Ida removes herself from society: "You are not listening to me, she said [to them], you do not know what you are saying, if I talk you have to listen to what I say, there is nothing else you can do" (*L* 363). *If I talk you have to listen*—the insistence sharpening this mandate betrays Stein's interest in readers and their interest in her writing.

The interworld has significant implications for the queer. It brings the queer into the wider social stream (as it justly should be) rather than leaving it aside as an obscure, insulated well. The concept of a larger stream (versus lesser or tributary), in fact, becomes passé in this philosophical context, where only a single, all-encompassing stream exists. Stein's phenomenology of the queer, however, forgets the communal ground upon which queerness and straightness arise. In this sense, it hasn't been able to keep up with the lesbian-feminist movement's evolution since the 1960s. Militant tracts such as Valerie

Solanas' *SCUM Manifesto* (1967), which satirically (or perhaps ingenuously) suggests that the male sex be eliminated; separatist groups such as "The Furies Collective" (1971-72); and lesbian communes on "womyn's land" (women-only properties) have largely died out, unable to sustain themselves amidst changing cultural values.¹³ More moderate, socially integrated attitudes have replaced radically separatist ones, with younger generations of men and women tending to shun essentialist distinctions, cloistered lifestyles, and those philosophical impossibilities underlying absolute isolationist ideals. Women cannot perfectly disengage with society at large. The materials they use for shelter, the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the language they speak, and the ideas they brought with them into whatever enclave all inadvertently bespeak the broader social setting against which they formed. Every revolt is defined by what is rebelled against and so bears the mark of that original establishment.

It is this bilateral logic that, in more poetic form, hovers over Ida's separatist impulses and forecloses them. "In so far as I have sensory functions, a visual, auditory and tactile field, I am already in communication with others taken as similar psycho-physical subjects" (*PP* 411), Merleau-Ponty once avows. There is no such thing as a perfectly realized mind/entity against this background. Mind/entity can only be imagined by a nature/identity and only as an impossible reverie at that. Similarly, queer counter-cultures cordon themselves off from "the mainstream," but make no mistake about it: the marginal and mainstream can no more negate one another than dark and light, elements that necessarily define themselves in relation to their inverse.

Everyone is of the interworld—what ultimately encircles all phenomenological thought because its conduit. Such truth is startling for its deceptive simplicity and divergence from modernism's usual resistance to a unified worldview. In Stein's writing,

¹³ See Kershaw for information on "Alapine," a mature lesbian community located in northeast Alabama that is representative of many aging separatist groups unable to attract new members. See also Hoagland and Fougère for additional insight on the rise and fall of radical lesbian separatism within Euro-America.

this sense of the interworld translates into the literary revelation that “no one can have that thing happen and go on living that is continue to be alone” (*Narration 57*). This line becomes followed by: “That is what mysticism is, that is what the Trinity is, that is what marriage is, the absolute conviction that in spite of knowing [...] how any one is never really feeling what any other one is really feeling that after all after all three are one and two are one” (*Narration 57*). “One is not one,” however, “because one is always two that is one is always coming to a recognition of what the one who is one is writing that is telling” (*Narration 57*). Mind/entity writes. Nature/identity recognizes what is written. Therefore, one is always two by virtue of these co-existing intentional modes. Everyone possesses multiple intentionalities and surpasses “one” in that regard. And these notions, their adherents, their opponents, the queer, the straight—everything is together from the beginning in a world where the most extreme anti-social metaphors are, in a sense, untrue.

Something of this communion can be glimpsed in *Ida*'s finale. *Ida*, Andrew, and unnamed others are presented before the narrator and reader for what feels like the last acknowledgment before curtain call:

If she said anything she said yes. More than once nothing was said. She said something. If nothing is said then *Ida* does not say yes. If she goes out she comes in. If she does not go away she is there and she does not go away. She dresses, well perhaps in black why not, and a hat, why not, and another hat, why not, and another dress, why not, so much why not.

She dresses in another hat and she dresses in another dress and Andrew is in, and they go in and that is where they are. They are there. Thank them.
Yes. (*L 423*)

It is as though Andrew and *Ida* primp themselves to walk out onstage (the interior stage of their living room) and receive our applause. The “Yes” belongs to the narrator, the characters, and us—the collective “audience” sharing an affirmative that concludes this drama of the mind/entity as a drama, not the thing itself.

Much in the way Husserl's transcendental reduction crumbles in practice, Stein's mind/entity pose—her version of the phenomenological attitude and Edelman's queer anti-

sociality—remains itself at best: a pose. For whether an object exists or not affects how we intend it, and some personal biases run so deep that they cannot be rooted out or even fathomed. (Plus, new ones keep growing as life goes on.) Similarly, the Steinian writer cannot actually bracket the natural attitude—memory, history, personality, emotions, social awareness—to conjure a narrative somehow floating in an existential vacuum. (In truth, I wonder what such a literary miracle would look like.) No, a complete *epoché* was always a fantasy to begin with, a doomed thought-experiment. Consciousness cannot linger upon itself apart from the primordial backdrop whence it vitally forms. The queer and straight inhabit one world, the interworld.

Afterword

Stein, following William James, believes in conjunctions.¹ So let me end with an “and.” *And* lest the reader think this work, too, glorifies Barnes and Stein without merit, that it performs the very idealizing gestures it warns against, remember that my readings are hedged. For Barnes, the transfiguring potential latent in suffering cannot transcend its circumstances in absolute terms (as the true Christian would have it). The damned remain damned in a predominantly nihilistic imaginative terrain. At least, though, romantic martyrs attain some dignity and inspire much pathos for their self-destructing so heroically. As Lillian Russell wearily confesses to Barnes in an interview, “What, after all, is there great in being beautiful? To be a great woman, a great person, one must have suffered” (*I* 56). As for Stein, she of all the modernists most ambitiously breaks down the English language. She takes distortions in character, plot, grammar, and spelling the furthest. Her phenomenological interests—simultaneous intentionalities, ideal universals, appearances, perceptual immediacy, habituation—leave much to ponder for readers pursuing original and challenging art. But not all of her impulses receive sound and internally consistent theoretical treatment. Stein sometimes erects philosophical impossibilities for herself, which, of course, do not have to render her aesthetic products any less interesting. For Barnes and Stein, then, this summation hardly counts as unequivocal praise for their literary agendas or themes in question. Equally importantly, I am not arguing that such praise can never be directed toward (aspects of) their work—only that our enthusiasm must not feel arbitrary or forced. All literary criticism is a work of persuasion, but persuasion must never cross over into flat-out propaganda. Stein gently reminds us of this distinction

¹ See Levinson.

in her reflection on French civility in *Paris France*: “Propaganda is not French, it is not civilized to want other people to believe what you believe because the essence of being civilized is to possess yourself as you are, and if you possess yourself as you are you of course cannot possess any one else, it is not your business” (56). Once persuasion turns rote, it becomes artless—the death of the critic.

On that note, I return to “and.” And one last thing. Over the course of writing this doctoral thesis, the ways that Barnes and Stein diverge and converge within the issues raised grew more pronounced for me. Due to their distinct sensibilities, for instance, Barnes and Stein approach suffering from opposite points. At certain moments, usually in her earlier texts, Stein nears Barnes’ preoccupation with suffering. In “The Good Anna,” Anna keeps her bond with Mrs. Lehntman discreet, it being “too sacred and too grievous ever to be told” (*Three Lives* 61). Adele’s self-loathing in *Q. E. D.* recalls the inner turmoil haunting countless homosexuals in a homophobic society. One of her lover’s “kiss[es] that seemed to scale the very walls of chastity” prompts “battle and revulsion” in her (*QED* 102), not unlike Jeff’s occasional disgust at Melanctha’s sexual aggressiveness. *The Making of Americans*’ Mary Maxworth and Mabel Linker suffer longueurs in their relationship and dressmaking business due to romantic incompatibilities. Mary “always wanted [Mabel] more than Mabel wanted her,” while Mabel “really only needed the man who married her” (230). Only when both women are married does their enterprise flourish. Meanwhile, the narrator’s uncertainties exacerbate such (intermittent) queer angst:

It makes me a little unhappy that everything and every one is sometime a little queer to me. It makes me a little unhappy that every one seems sometime almost a little crazy. It does make me a little unhappy that every one sometime is a queer one to me. It does make me sometime a little uncertain, it does sometimes make me very uncertain about everything and always then it is perplexing what is certain what is not certain, who is a queer one, what is a funny thing for some one to be wanting or not wanting or doing or not doing or thinking or not thinking or believing or not believing.

It does certainly make me a little unhappy that every one sometime is a

queer one to me. It does certainly make me a little unhappy quite often that every one is really inside them or in thinking, in doing or in feeling or in believing a queer one. It certainly does make me an uncomfortable one and sometimes a little an unhappy, a gently almost melancholy sulky one that every one sometime is a queer one. (482)

For Stein, suffering may not be the central focus as it is for Barnes, yet it nevertheless exists in abundance for Stein's queers.

The suffering queer gradually disappears from Stein's writing as time passes, however. The young Stein is the overwrought student behind *Q. E. D.*'s puritanical horror against sexual alterity and sex, period. The mature, expatriate Stein outgrows such qualms (her turbulent affair with May Bookstaver gives way to a stable partnership with Toklas [Katz, Introduction]) as well as the idea of traditional character and story altogether. A suffering queer cannot be recognized as such the more abstract and disjointed Stein's prose becomes. Even where the queer can be glimpsed, a sense of optimism prevails. Suffering never assumes center-stage, since Stein, while taking suffering seriously, emphasizes joy. It isn't the pleasure, wisdom, or dignity accessed through pain that counts, but joy itself. As Bonnie Marranca notes,

[Stein] was not given to despair or pessimism or nihilism, nor did she search for mystery or transcendence. She manifested no real anxiety of the age or psychological malaise. Unlike many of her contemporaries, she was more interested in the world as paradise than as wasteland, the miraculous not the tragic. Unusually, for her time and milieu, she was absorbed in the study of emotion and beauty and intuition in artistic experience. Stein represented, in her way, a heroic modernism that was still bound to Enlightenment values and even more so to an American optimism. That she loved the things of the world gave her work a special bliss and abundant sweep. In a Whitmanesque way she explored the tension of the self as a world and the self in the world. (xvii)

Even in *Q. E. D.*, Stein's most troubled early text, her exuberance comes to the fore. "I find it difficult to reconcile myself to my own actions, but how is it that you don't resent more the pain I am causing you?" Helen asks Adele (*QED* 128). The question elicits the heated response "[D]on't you see that that is why I used to be so angry with you because

of your making so much of your endurance. There is no question of forgiveness. Pain doesn't count. Oh it's unpleasant enough and Heaven knows I hate and dread it but it isn't a thing to be remembered. It is only the loss of faith, the loss of joy that count" (*QED* 128). Similarly, the queer pride belonging to the "Brothers Singulars" overshadows the "gently almost melancholy" sulkiness that "almost a little crazy" queerness (482) provokes in *The Making of Americans'* narrator. Beyond pride, joy—the voice brims with it even during hard moments, for example, when Martha Hersland feels crushed by her husband's infidelity:

To our new world feeling the sadness of pain has more dignity than the beauty of joy. It takes time to learn the value of happiness. Truly a single moment snatched out of a distracted existence is hardly worth the trouble it takes to seize it and to obtain such it is wasteful to inflict pain, it is only the cultivators of leisure who have time to feel the gentle approach the slow rise, the deep ecstasy [*sic*] and the full flow of joy and for these pain is of little value, a thing not to be remembered, and it is only the lack of joy that counts. (438)

A more explicit contrast with Barnes' ethos would be hard to find. Because Martha possesses "little understanding of the sanctity of joy and hardly a realisation of the misery of pain" (438), desire bewilders her. Stein appreciates the gravity of loss, but prioritizes, still, joy as *the* intentional mode through which the world finds its splendor.

Later works continue this affirmation of life. Against all expectation and parallels, "Reflection on the Atomic Bomb" (1946) maintains a serene tone: "Sure it will destroy a lot and kill a lot, but it's the living that are interesting not the way of killing them, because if there were not a lot left living how could there be any interest in destruction" (*RAB* 161).² Devoted to a less apocalyptic subject but still composed amidst the First World War's violence, "All Sunday" (1915) draws out the joys underlying domestic life rather than the bleakness of its political backdrop: "Mercy and sweetness, fear and authority,

² Compared to the 1965 television documentary *The Decision to Drop the Bomb*, for instance, where J. Robert Oppenheimer recounts that his reaction to the successful New Mexico test-run was one of academic elation and spiritual despair ("Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds"), Stein's note seems decidedly upbeat.

dripping, countenance, money, plans, wretched woods, solid pots and rejoicing” (*A&B* 102). *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* similarly reveals Stein’s sunny disposition through allusions to Picasso:

Because Picasso is a spaniard and life is tragic and bitter and unhappy. Gertrude Stein often comes down to me and says, Pablo has been persuading me that I am as unhappy as he is. He insists that I am and with as much cause. But are you, I ask. Well I don’t think I look it, do I, and she laughs. He says, she says, that I don’t look it because I have more courage, but I don’t think I am, she says, no I don’t think I am. (*ABT* 77)

Even Stein’s repetitiveness, as an artistic gesture, exudes optimism. Philosophically speaking, by insisting that every reiteration is subtly different, an author averts the creative exhaustion or pressure to be original plaguing her literary forebears, contemporaries, and followers in the western canon.

There is also the more conspicuous matter of style. Stein breaks down language all the way to the morphological level; Barnes readapts and synthesizes its older lexi-syntactical forms. Both arrive at obscurity, whether through gibberish or densely textured archaism—the child’s nonsensical prattle or a time-traveling minstrel’s rehashed recital. Despite their disparate emotional registers and formal sensibilities, however, Barnes and Stein share a resistance to the future—heterochronotopia. Repulsed by family narratives and the perpetuation of the human species, Barnes clings to stasis, drowning out action with elaborate, melancholic descriptions. An ambience of spiritual inertia reigns supreme. Symbolically, Stein likewise averts futurity by living in the present. Memories and anticipations vanish into the moment without end. Immediate experience subsumes cause-and-effect logic and linear schemes, including the order by which men and women become conditioned to assume their designated gender roles, pair up, and propagate. Whether by stasis or unceasing movement, the heteronormative future loses force as an ideal.

Barnes and Stein additionally hold in common an interest in failure. If we reframe this afterword’s opening paragraph in terms of failure, it becomes apparent that failure

possesses redemptive elements (not redemption wholesale) for both women. Barnes' queers fail in love, yet their heartbreaks win them a certain nobility. Stein fails to write narratives queerly divorced from "audience writing" and the natural attitude. Stein's openness toward gray areas, however, renders such failures not entirely distasteful to Stein herself. The "great relief" she feels, for instance, upon realizing that Cézanne's paintings are "so entirely [the] things" they portray "that they were not an oil painting and yet that is just what the Cezannes [*sic*] were they were an oil painting" ("Pictures," *LA* 77) fails to resolve the representational crisis on her hands. The purpose and limits of the literary medium continue to puzzle Stein: "This sounds as if it might have been an end of something as being in the nature of a solution but it was not it was just something going on" ("Pictures," *LA* 77-78). A solution never materializes, even declared, again, "nobody's business" ("Pictures," *LA* 79), but its pursuit remains a perpetual source for art.

The pair's most unexpected and profound overlap, however, doesn't lie in anti-futurity or experiments with failure. It occurs in repetition and literature's endless recycling. Barnes' drafts bear striking similarities to some of Stein's finished products. Barnes begins over and over again on a given piece rather than resuming from her last entry. The paper stacks at her New York abode, Patchin Place, mount higher. Recounting this cyclical approach with dismay, Hank O'Neal writes, "She could not begin work on a poem, stop, and begin the next day where she had stopped. She began again and again, each page noted again with her name, address, and date. The result was hundreds of versions of the same poems, all retained and mixed up" (86). For Barnes and Stein, one doesn't write in a straight line. Literature is neither so easily caught nor mechanically apprehended. Rather, one momentarily discovers it through indirection and endless circles. One begins the quest over and over, changing its course ever so slightly or drastically each time around. The quest never stops changing, and one spends a lifetime keeping up.

Bibliography

- Abraham, Julie L. “‘Woman, Remember You’: Djuna Barnes and History.” *Broe* 252-68.
- Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006. Print.
- Allen, Carolyn. “The Erotics of Nora’s Narrative in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*.” *Signs* 19.1 (Autumn 1993): 177-200. Print.
- . *Following Djuna: Women Lovers and the Erotics of Loss*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996. Print.
- . “Writing toward *Nightwood*: Djuna Barnes’ Seduction Stories.” *Broe* 54-65.
- Altman, Dennis. *Homosexual Oppression & Liberation*. New York: New York UP, 1993. Print.
- Altman, Meryl. “A Book of Repulsive Jews?: Rereading *Nightwood*.” Levine and Urquilla 160-71.
- Antin, David. “Some Questions about Modernism.” *Occident* 8 (Spring 1974): 6-39. *University of Pennsylvania Electronic Poetry Center (PEPC)*, 2006 Edition. Web. 18 Mar. 2013.
- Attridge, Derek. “The Movement of Meaning: Phrasing and Repetition in English Poetry.” *Repetition*. Ed. Andreas Fischer. Tübingen: Narr, 1994. 61-83. Print.
- Barnes, Djuna. *The Antiphon*. København: Green Integer, 2000. Print.
- . *The Book of Repulsive Women and other poems*. Ed. Rebecca Loncraine. Manchester: FyfieldBooks/Carcenet, 2003. Print.
- . *Collected Poems: With Notes toward the Memoirs*. Eds. Phillip Herring and Osías Stutman. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2005. Print.
- . *Collected Stories*. Ed. Phillip Herring. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1996. Print.
- . “*I could never be lonely without a husband*”: *Interviews by Djuna Barnes*. Ed.

- Alyce Barry. London: Virago, 1987. Print.
- . *Ladies Almanack*. Normal: Dalkey, 1992. Print.
- . *Nightwood*. New York: New Directions, 1961. Print.
- . *At the Roots of the Stars: The Short Plays*. Ed. Douglas Messerli. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1995. Print.
- . *Ryder*. Normal: Dalkey, 1990. Print.
- . *Vagaries Malicieux: Two Stories by Djuna Barnes*. New York: Frank Hallman, 1974. Print.
- Bashant, Wendy. "Redressing Androgyny: Hermaphroditic Bodies in Victorian England." *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 4 (Fall 1995): 5-27. Print.
- Bataille, Georges. *Eroticism*. Trans. Mary Dalwood. London: Penguin, 2001. Print.
- Baxter, Charles. "A Self-Consuming Light: *Nightwood* and the Crisis of Modernism." *Journal of Modern Literature* 3.5 (July 1974): 1175-87. Print.
- Bay-Cheng, Sarah. *Mama Dada: Gertrude Stein's Avant-garde Theater*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Beard, Rick, and Leslie Cohen Berlowitz, eds. *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1993. Print.
- Benstock, Shari. *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*. London: Virago, 1987. Print.
- Berkeley, George. *Philosophical Works, including the works on vision*. Ed. M. R. Ayers. London: Dent, 1975. Print.
- Berry, Ellen E. *Curved Thought and Textual Wandering: Gertrude Stein's Postmodernism*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992. Print.
- Bersani, Leo. *Homos*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995. Print.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. London: Macmillan, 1995. Print.

- Blyn, Robin. "From Stage to Page: Franz Kafka, Djuna Barnes, and Modernism's Freak Fictions." *Narrative* 8.2 (May 2000): 134-60. Print.
- Blumstein, Philip, and Pepper Schwartz. *American Couples: Money, Work, Sex*. New York: William Morrow, 1983. Print.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1990. Print.
- Bourne-Taylor, Carole and Ariane Mildeberg, eds. *Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010. Print.
- Bowers, Jane Palatini. *Gertrude Stein*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993. Print.
- Brassaï, George. *The Secret Paris of the 30's*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2001. Print.
- Bridgman, Richard. *Gertrude Stein in Pieces*. New York: Oxford UP, 1970. Print.
- Broe, Mary L., ed. *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1991. Print.
- Brown, Patricia Fortini. *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1988. Print.
- Burke, Kenneth. "The Impartial Essence." Kostelanetz, *Gertrude Stein Advanced* 187-89. ———. "Version, Con-, Per-, and In-: Thoughts on Djuna Barnes's Novel *Nightwood*." *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*. Berkeley: UC Press, 1966. 240-253. Print.
- Burns, Edward M. Introduction. *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Carl Van Vechten, Vol. 1: 1913-1935*. Ed. Edward M. Burns. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. 1-12. Print.
- Burns, Edward M., Ulla E. Dydo, with William Rice. "(Appendix IX) Gertrude Stein: September 1942 to September 1944." *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder*. Eds. Edward M. Burns and Ulla E. Dydo, with William Rice. New Haven: Yale UP, 1996. 401-21. Print.

- Bush, Clive. *Halfway to Revolution: Investigation and crisis in the work of Henry Adams, William James and Gertrude Stein*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1991. Print.
- Butler, Judith. Foreword. *The Erotic Bird: Phenomenology in Literature*. By Maurice Natanson. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998. viv-xvi. Print.
- . “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (Dec. 1988): 519-31. Print.
- Caranfa, Angelo. *Proust: The Creative Silence*. London: Associated UP, 1990. Print.
- Carman, Taylor. *Merleau-Ponty*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print.
- Carson, Luke. *Consumption and Depression in Gertrude Stein, Louis Zukofsky and Ezra Pound*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999. Print.
- Caselli, Daniela. *Improper Modernism: Djuna Barnes's Bewildering Corpus*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2009. Print.
- . “‘Tendency to Precocity’ and ‘Childish Uncertainties’ of a ‘Virago at Fourteen’: Djuna Barnes's ‘The Diary of a Dangerous Child.’” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 32 (2002): 186-204. Print.
- Chauncey, George. “Long-Haired Men and Short-Haired Women: Building a Gay World in the Heart of Bohemia.” *Beard and Berlowitz* 151-64.
- Chisholm, Dianne. “Obscene Modernism: *Eros Noir* and the Profane Illumination of Djuna Barnes.” *American Literature* 69.1 (March 1997): 167-206. Print.
- Cole, Merrill. “Backwards Ventriloquy: The Historical Uncanny in Barnes's *Nightwood*.” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 52.4 (Winter 2006): 391-412. Print.
- Collini, Stefan, ed. *Interpretation and overinterpretation: Umberto Eco with Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler, and Christine Brooke-Rose*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1992. Print.
- Cook, Blanche Wiesen. “‘Women Alone Stir My Imagination’: Lesbianism and the

- Cultural Tradition.” *Signs* 4.4 (1979): 718-39. Print.
- Cope, Karin. *Passionate Collaborations: Learning to Live With Gertrude Stein*. Victoria, BC: ELS Editions, 2005. Print.
- Crimp, Douglas. *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002. Print.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. Print.
- Dalton, Anne B. “‘This Is Obscene’: Female Voyeurism, Sexual Abuse, and Maternal Power in *The Dove*.” *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13.3 (Fall 1993): 117-39. Print.
- Davidson, Michael. “Pregnant Men: Modernism, Disability, and Biofuturity in Djuna Barnes.” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 43.2 (Summer 2010): 207-26. Print.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. London: Vintage, 2011. Print.
- The Decision to Drop the Bomb*. Dir. Fred Freed and Len Giovannitti. NBC News and Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, 1965. Film.
- DeKoven, Marianne. *A Different Language: Gertrude Stein’s Experimental Writing*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1983. Print.
- De Lauretis, Teresa. “*Nightwood* and the ‘Terror of Uncertain Signs.’” *Critical Inquiry* 34.2 (2008): 117-29. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Masochism*. New York: Zone, 1989. Print.
- Dellamora, Richard. *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1990. Print.
- Delville, Michel. “Gertrude Stein’s Melodies: In Anticipation of the Loop.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 55.1 (Spring 2013): 72-83. Print.

- D'Emilio, John. Forward. *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*. Eds. Karla Jay and Allen Young. London: Gay Men's P, 1992. xi-xxx. Print.
- Dickie, Margaret. *Stein, Bishop, and Rich: Lyrics of Love, War, and Place*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997. Print.
- Doan, Laura L., and Jay Prosser, eds. *Palatable Poison: Critical Perspectives on the Well of Loneliness*. New York: Columbia UP, 2001. Print.
- Doane, Janice L. *Silence and Narrative: The Early Novels of Gertrude Stein*. Westport: Greenwood, 1986. Print.
- Doughty, Frances M. "Gilt on Cardboard: Djuna Barnes as Illustrator of Her Life and Work." Broe 137-54.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L., with Harrison Hall, eds. *Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982. Print.
- Duberman, Martin B., Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., eds. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. London: Penguin, 1991. Print.
- Dubnick, Randa. *The Structure of Obscurity: Gertrude Stein, Language, and Cubism*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984. Print.
- Dydo, Ulla E., with William Rice. *Gertrude Stein: The Language That Rises, 1923-1934*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2003. Print.
- Dye, Nancy Schrom. "History of Childbirth in America." *Signs* 6 (1980): 97-108. Print.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004. Print.
- Edwards, Justin D. "'Why Go Abroad?': Djuna Barnes and the Urban Travel Narrative." *Journal of Urban History* 29.1 (Nov. 2002): 6-24. Print.
- Ellis, Havelock, and John Addington Symonds. *Sexual Inversion*. Ed. Ivan Crozier. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.

- Faderman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. London: The Women's P, 1991. Print.
- Fere, Charles S. *Sexual Degeneration in Mankind and Animals*. New York: Anthropological, 1932. Print.
- Ferrara, Lawrence. *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music: Bridges to Musical Sound, Form, and Reference*. New York: Greenwood, 1991. Print.
- Fishbein, Leslie. "The Culture of Contradiction: The Greenwich Village Rebellion." Beard and Berlowitz 212-28.
- Fitch, Noël Riley. "'Lightning Bolts' for Djuna Barnes." *Contemporary Literature* 33.1 (Spring 1992): 144-49. Print.
- . *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1983. Print.
- Fitz, L. T. "Gertrude Stein and Picasso: The Language of Surfaces." *American Literature* 45.2 (May 1973): 228-37. Print.
- Ford, Sara J. *Gertrude Stein and Wallace Stevens: The Performance of Modern Consciousness*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Fougère, Myriam, dir. *Lesbiana: A Parallel Revolution*. Groupe Intervention Video (GIV), 2012. Film.
- Franck, Dan. *The Bohemians: The Birth of Modern Art: Paris 1900-1930*. Trans. Cynthia Hope Liebow. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001. Print.
- Freeman, Rosemary. *English Emblem Books*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1948. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Vol. 18*. Ed. James Strachey. London: Hogarth, 1955. 7-64. Print.
- . "Mourning and Melancholia." *The Standard Edition of the Complete*

- Psychological Works, Vol. 14*. Ed. James Strachey. London: Hogarth, 1957. 243-58. Print.
- . “On Narcissism: An Introduction.” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 14*. Ed. James Strachey. London: Hogarth, 1957. 73-102. Print.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. David E. Linge. Berkeley: UC Press, 1976. Print.
- Garvin, Harry R. “The Human Mind & Tender Buttons.” Kostelanetz, *Gertrude Stein Advanced* 85-88.
- Gass, William H. Introduction. *The Geographical History of America*. By Gertrude Stein. New York: Vintage, 1973. 3-42. Print.
- Gerstenberger, Donna. “Modern (Post) Modern: Djuna Barnes among the Others.” Levine and Urquilla 33-40.
- Giedd, Jay N., et al. “Brain development during childhood and adolescence: a longitudinal MRI study.” *Nature Neuroscience* 2.10 (Oct. 1999): 861-63. Print.
- Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar. “‘She Meant What I Said’: Lesbian Double Talk.” *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century, Volume 2: Sexchanges*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Print.
- Gilman, Sander L. *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985. Print.
- Gilmore, Leigh. “Obscenity, Modernity, Identity: Legalizing *The Well of Loneliness* and *Nightwood*.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4 (April 1994): 603-24. Print.
- Goldberg, David Theo, ed. *Anatomy of Racism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990. Print.
- Gordon, Linda. *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right: A Social History of Birth Control in*

- America*. New York: Grossman, 1976. Print.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Gubar, Susan. "Blessings in Disguise: Cross-Dressing as Re-Dressing For Female Modernists." *The Massachusetts Review* 22.3 (Fall 1981): 477-508. Print.
- Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.
- Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
- Halperin, David M., and Valerie Traub, eds. *Gay Shame*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2009. Print.
- Hare, Humphrey. *Swinburne: A Biographical Approach*. New York: Kennikat, 1970. Print.
- Harris, Bertha. "The More Profound Nationality of their Lesbianism: Lesbian Society in Paris in the 1920's." *Amazon Expedition: A Lesbian Feminist Anthology*. Eds. Phyllis Birkby, Bertha Harris, Jill Johnston, Esther Newton, and Jane O'Wyatt. New York: Times Change, 1973. 77-88. Print.
- Harris, Luther S. *Around Washington Square: An Illustrated History of Greenwich Village*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003. Print.
- Hejinian, Lyn. *The Language of Inquiry*. Berkeley: UC Press, 2000. Print.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962. Print.
- Heise, Thomas. "Degenerate Sex and the City: Djuna Barnes's Urban Underworld." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 55.3 (Fall 2009): 287-321. Print.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *A Moveable Feast*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1964. Print.
- . *Selected Letters, 1917-1961*. Ed. Carlos Baker. London: Granada, 1981. Print.
- Henig, Robin Marantz. "What Is It About 20-Somethings?" *New York Times*. New York

- Times, 18 Aug. 2010. Web. 13 March 2013.
- Henry, George W. *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns*. New York: P. B. Hoeber, 1948. Print.
- Herring, Phillip. *Djuna: The Life and Work of Djuna Barnes*. London: Viking, 1995. Print.
- . Introduction. *Collected Stories*. By Djuna Barnes. Ed. Phillip Herring. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1996. 7-24. Print.
- . "Zadel Barnes: Journalist." Levine and Urquilla 107-16.
- Hoagland, Sarah Lucia. *Lesbian Ethics: Toward New Value*. Palo Alto: Institute of Lesbian Studies, 1988. Print.
- Hoffman, Michael J. *The Development of Abstractionism in the Writings of Gertrude Stein*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1965. Print.
- Holbrook, Susan. "Lifting Bellies, Filling Petunias, and Making Meanings through the Trans-Poetic." *American Literature* 71.4 (Dec. 1999): 751-71. Print.
- Hopkins, Burt C. *The Philosophy of Husserl*. Durham, UK: Acumen, 2011. Print.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations*. Trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973. Print.
- . *Ideas I: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982. Print.
- . *Ideas III: Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980. Print.
- . *Logical Investigations, Vol. I*. Trans. J. N. Findlay. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- . *Logical Investigations, Vol. II*. Trans. J. N. Findlay. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- . *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*. Trans.

- John Barnett Brough. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1991. Print.
- . *Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907*. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz. Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1997. Print.
- Hutchison, Sharla. “Convulsive Beauty: Images of Hysteria and Transgressive Sexuality: Claude Cahun and Djuna Barnes.” *symplokē* 11.1/2 (2003): 212-26. Print.
- Ingarden, Roman. *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973. Print.
- James, William. *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. 2*. 1890. New York: Dover, 1950. Print.
- Jay, Karla. “The Outsider among the Expatriates: Djuna Barnes’ Satire on the Ladies of the *Almanack*.” Broe 184-93.
- Jeffreys, Sheila. *Unpacking Queer Politics: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2003. Print.
- Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Ed. Jeri Johnson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.
- Jung, Carl. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Trans. R. F. C. Hull. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Junkerman, Anne Christine. “The Lady and the Laurel: Gender and Meaning in Giorgione’s *Laura*.” *Oxford Art Journal* 16.1 (1993): 49-58. Print.
- Kaivola, Karen. “The ‘beast turning human’: Constructions of the ‘Primitive’ in *Nightwood*.” Levine and Urquilla 172-85.
- Kannenstine, Louis F. *The Art of Djuna Barnes: Duality and Damnation*. New York: New York UP, 1977. Print.
- Katz, Leon. Introduction. *Ferhurst, Q. E. D., and Other Early Writings*. By Gertrude Stein. London: Peter Owen, 1972. i-xxxiv. Print.

- . “Weininger and *The Making of Americans*.” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 24.1 (Spring 1978): 8-26. Print.
- Kaufmann, David. “Desperate Seriousness and Avant-Garde (Mis)recognition in Some of Stein’s Sentences.” *Modern Philology* 97.2 (Nov. 1999): 220-33. Print.
- Kaup, Monika. “The Neobaroque in Djuna Barnes.” *Modernism/modernity* 12.1 (Jan. 2005): 85-110. Print.
- Kershaw, Sarah. “My Sister’s Keeper.” *New York Times*. New York Times, 30 Jan. 2009. Web. 26 September 2013.
- Klaich, Dolores. *Woman + Woman: Attitudes Toward Lesbianism*. London: New English Library, 1975. Print.
- Knapp, Bettina L. *Gertrude Stein*. New York: Continuum, 1990. Print.
- Koppen, Randi. “Formalism and the Return to the Body: Stein’s and Fornes’s Aesthetic of Significant Form.” *New Literary History* 28.4 (Autumn 1997): 791-809. Print.
- Kostelanetz, Richard, ed. *Gertrude Stein Advanced: An Anthology of Criticism*. Jefferson: McFarland, 1990. Print.
- . Introduction. *The Yale Gertrude Stein*. Ed. Richard Kostelanetz. New Haven: Yale UP, 1980. xiii-xxxi. Print.
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. *Psychopathia Sexualis: The Case Histories*. Ed. Domino Falls. Washington, DC: Solar, 2010. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Le séminaire, Livre IV: La relation d'objet et les structures freudiennes (1956-1957)*. Paris: Seuil, 1994. Print.
- Landon, Brooks. “‘Not Solve It But Be In It’: Gertrude Stein’s Detective Stories and the Mystery of Creativity.” *American Literature* 53.3 (Nov. 1981): 487-98. Print.

- Landow, George P. "Swinburne's Philosophy of Androgyny." *The Victorian Web*. George P. Landow, n.d. Web. 4 Sept. 2013.
- Lanser, Susan Sniader. "Speaking in Tongues: *Ladies Almanack* and the Discourse of Desire." Broe 156-68.
- Larabee, Ann. "The Early Attic Stage of Djuna Barnes." Broe 37-44.
- Leavitt, Judith Walzer. *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950*. New York: Oxford UP, 1986. Print.
- Levine, Nancy J. and Marian Urquilla, eds. *Djuna Barnes*. Spec. issue of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13.3 (Fall 1993): 1-253. Print.
- Levinson, Ronald B. "Gertrude Stein, Williams James, and Grammar." *The American Journal of Psychology* 54.1 (Jan. 1941): 124-28. Print.
- Lewis, Jane. "'Motherhood Issues' in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *Delivering Motherhood: Maternal Ideologies and Practices in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Eds. Katherine Arnup, Andree Levesque, and Ruth Roach Pierson. London: Routledge, 1990. 1-19. Print.
- . *The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-1939*. London: Croom Helm, 1980. Print.
- Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2007. Print.
- Loy, Mina. *The Last Lunar Baedeker*. Ed. Roger L. Conover. Highlands: Jargon, 1982. Print.
- Lundell, William. "Gertrude Stein: A Radio Interview." WJZ and NET. 12 Nov. 1934. Print. Transcript. Watts 90-97.
- Malcolm, Janet. *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2007. Print.
- Marcus, Jane. "Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman's Circus Epic." Broe 221-50.

- . “Mousemeat: Contemporary Reviews of *Nightwood*.” Broe 195-204.
- Marranca, Bonnie. Introduction. *Last Operas and Plays*. By Gertrude Stein. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. vii-xxvii. Print.
- Martin, Del, and Phyllis Lyon. *Lesbian/Woman*. San Francisco: Glide, 1972. Print.
- Martins, Susana S. “Gender Trouble and Lesbian Desire in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 20.3 (1999): 115-16. Print.
- Matthews, Eric. *Merleau-Ponty: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2006. Print.
- Maude, Ulrika and Matthew Feldman, eds. *Beckett and Phenomenology*. London: Continuum, 2009. Print.
- McAlmon, Robert. *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930*. Ed. Kay Boyle. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984. Print.
- McCabe, Susan. *Cinematic Modernism: Modernist Poetry and Film*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print.
- McCormick, John. *George Santayana: A Biography*. New York: Knopf, 1987. Print.
- McFarland, Gerald W. *Inside Greenwich Village: A New York City Neighborhood, 1898-1918*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2001. Print.
- McGuigan, John. “Against the ‘Foetus of Symmetry’: Sur-realism and Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*.” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 41.2 (Fall 2008): 18-43. Print.
- McLaren, Angus. *A History of Contraception: From Antiquity to the Present Day*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990. Print.
- McMillan, Samuel H. “Gertrude Stein, the Cubists, and the Futurists.” Diss. University of Texas, 1964. Print.
- McNaron, Toni A. H. “A Lesbian Reading Virginia Woolf.” *Virginia Woolf: Lesbian*

- Readings*. Eds. Eileen Barrett and Patricia Cramer. New York: New York UP, 1997. 10-20. Print.
- Mellow, James R. *Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein and Company*. London: Phaidon, 1974. Print.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge, 1962. Print.
- . *The Prose of the World*. Ed. Claude Lefort. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973. Print.
- . *Sense and Non-Sense*. Trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1964. Print.
- . *The Visible and the Invisible*. Ed. Claude Lefort. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1968. Print.
- Messerli, Douglas. Foreword. “*I Could Never be Lonely Without a Husband*”: *Interviews by Djuna Barnes*. Ed. Alyce Barry. London: Virago, 1987. 3-8. Print.
- Michel, Frann. “Displacing Castration: *Nightwood*, *Ladies Almanack*, and Feminine Writing.” *Contemporary Literature* 30.1 (Spring 1989): 33-58. Print.
- Mildenberg, Ariane. “Openings: *Epoché* as Aesthetic Tool in Modernist Texts.” *Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond*. Eds. Carole Bourne-Taylor and Ariane Mildenberg. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010. 41-73. Print.
- . “Seeing Fine Substances Strangely: Phenomenology in Gertrude Stein’s *Tender Buttons*.” *Studia Phaenomenologica* 8 (2008): 259-82. Print.
- Miller, D. A. *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998. Print.
- Miller, Tyrus. *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars*. Berkeley: UC Press, 1999. Print.

- Mohanty, J. N. *The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl: A Historical Development*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2008. Print.
- Morgan, Thaïs E. "Perverse Male Bodies: Simeon Solomon and Algernon Charles Swinburne." *Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities and Visual Cultures*. Eds. Peter Horne and Reina Lewis. London: Routledge, 1996. 61-85. Print.
- Munt, Sally R. *Queer Attachments: The Cultural Politics of Shame*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. Print.
- Natanson, Maurice. *The Erotic Bird: Phenomenology in Literature*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998. Print.
- Nealon, Christopher. *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001. Print.
- Nordau, Max. *Degeneration*. Trans. George L. Mosse. London: U of Nebraska P, 1993. Print.
- Oakley, Ann. "A Case of Maternity: Paradigms of Women as Maternity Cases." *Ties that Bind: Essays on Mothering and Patriarchy*. Eds. Jean F. O'Barr, Deborah Pope, and Mary Wyer. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. 61-85. Print.
- O'Neal, Hank. "Life is painful, nasty & short . . . in my case it has only been painful & nasty": *Djuna Barnes, 1978-1981, an Informal Memoir*. New York: Paragon, 1990. Print.
- O'Sullivan, Michael. *The Incarnation of Language: Joyce, Proust and a Philosophy of the Flesh*. London: Continuum, 2008. Print.
- Parsons, Deborah. *Djuna Barnes*. Horndon: Northcote, 2003. Print.
- Passmore, John. *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980. Print.
- Perloff, Marjorie. "'Grammar in Use': Wittgenstein/Gertrude Stein/Marinetti." *South Central Review* 13.2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1996): 35-62. Print.

- . *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1990. Print.
- . “Poetry as Word-System: The Art of Gertrude Stein.” *The American Poetry Review* 8.5 (September/October 1979): 33-43. Print.
- . “Tolerance and Taboo: Modernist Primitivisms and Postmodernist Pieties.” *Poetry On & Off the Page: Essays for Emergent Occasions*. By Marjorie Perloff. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1998. 34-50. Print.
- . *21st-Century Modernism: The “New” Poetics*. Malden: Blackwell, 2002. Print.
- . *Wittgenstein’s Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996. Print.
- Perry, Ralph Barton. *The Thought and Character of William James, Vol. I*. London: Humphrey Milford, 1935. Print.
- Plumb, Cheryl. “Revising *Nightwood*: ‘a kind of glee of despair.’” Levine and Urquilla 149-59.
- Pochoda, Elizabeth. “Style’s Hoax: A Reading of Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*.” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 22.2 (1976): 179-91. Print.
- Pondrom, Cyrena N. Introduction and Analysis of Contents. *Geography and Plays*. By Gertrude Stein. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1993. vii-lix. Print.
- Ponsot, Marie. “A Reader’s *Ryder*.” Broe 94-112.
- Priest, Stephen. *Merleau-Ponty*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.
- Quartermain, Peter. *Disjunctive Poetics: From Gertrude Stein and Louis Zukofsky to Susan Howe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1992. Print.
- Ramirez, Jan Seidler. “The Tourist Trade Takes Hold.” Beard and Berlowitz 371-91.
- Reik, Theodor. *Masochism in Modern Man*. Trans. Margaret H. Beigel and Gertrud M. Kurth. New York: Grove, 1941. Print.

- Retallack, Joan. Introduction. *Gertrude Stein: Selections*. Ed. Joan Retallack. Berkeley: UC Press, 2008. 3-81. Print.
- . “One Acts: Early Plays of Djuna Barnes.” Broe 46-52.
- Ricoeur, Paul. “Kant and Husserl.” *Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology*. Trans. Edward G. Ballard and Lester E. Embree. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1967. 175-201. Print.
- Rohman, Carrie. “Revising the Human: Silence, Being, and the Question of the Animal in *Nightwood*.” *American Literature* 79.1 (Mar. 2007): 57-84. Print.
- Rose, Marilyn Gaddis. “Gertrude Stein and the Cubist Narrative.” *Modern Fiction Studies* 22.4 (Winter 1977): 543-55. Print.
- Ruddick, Lisa. *Reading Gertrude Stein: Body, Text, Gnosis*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990. Print.
- Ruskin, John. *The Elements of Drawing*. Ed. Bernard Dunstan. London: Herbert, 2006. Print.
- Russell, Matheson. *Husserl: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum, 2006. Print.
- Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von. *Venus in Furs. Masochism*. By Gilles Deleuze. New York: Zone, 1991. 143-271. Print.
- Sadler, William S. *Race Decadence: An Examination of the Causes of Racial Degeneracy in the United States*. London: Routledge, 1923. Print.
- Sanger, Margaret. *Motherhood in Bondage*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2000. Print.
- . *Woman and the New Race*. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005. Print.
- Santayana, George. “A General Confession.” *The Philosophy of George Santayana*. Ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp. La Salle: Open Court, 1971. Print.
- . *The Letters of George Santayana, Book One, 1868-1909*. Ed. William G. Holzberger. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001. Print.

- . *The Letters of George Santayana, Book Two, 1910-1920*. Ed. William G. Holzberger. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002. Print.
- . *Middle Span: The Background of my Life*. London: Constable, 1947. Print.
- . *Persons and Places: Fragments of Autobiography*. Eds. William G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986. Print.
- . *The Realm of Essence: Book First of Realms of Being*. London: Constable, 1928. Print.
- . *Scepticism and Animal Faith: Introduction to a System of Philosophy*. London: Constable, 1923. Print.
- . *The Sense of Beauty: Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory*. New York: Dover, 1955. Print.
- Santore, Cathy. "The Fruits of Venus: Carpacci's 'Two Courtesans.'" *Arte Veneta* 42 (1988): 34-39. Print.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. London: Routledge, 1958. Print.
- Schmitz, Neil. "Gertrude Stein as Post-Modernist: The Rhetoric of *Tender Buttons*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 3.5 (July 1974): 1203-18. Print.
- Scholten, Catherine M. *Childbearing in American Society: 1650-1850*. New York: New York UP, 1985. Print.
- Scobie, Stephen. "The Allure of Multiplicity: Metaphor and Metonymy in Cubism and Gertrude Stein." *Gertrude Stein and the Making of Literature*. Eds. Shirley Neuman and Ira B. Nadel. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1988. 98-118. Print.
- Scott, Bonnie Kime. "Barnes Being 'Beast Familiar': Representation on the Margin of Modernism." *Levine and Urquilla* 41-52.
- Scott, James B. *Djuna Barnes*. Boston: Twayne, 1976. Print.

- Seigel, Jerrold E. *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830-1930*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print.
- Seitler, Dana. "Down on All Fours: Atavistic Perversions and the Science of Desire from Frank Norris to Djuna Barnes." *American Literature* 73.3 (2001): 525-62. Print.
- Sielke, Sabine. *Reading Rape: The Rhetoric of Sexual Violence in American Literature and Culture, 1790-1990*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002. Print.
- Skinner, B. F. "Has Gertrude Stein a Secret?" *Atlantic Monthly* 153 (Jan. 1934): 50-57. Print.
- Smith, A. D. *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations*. London: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Smith, David Woodruff. *Husserl*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Smith, David Woodruff and Ronald McIntyre. *Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1982. Print.
- Smith, Victoria L. "A Story beside(s) Itself: The Language of Loss in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*." *PMLA* 114 (1999): 194-206. Print.
- Somerville, Siobhan. "Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5.2 (Oct. 1994): 243-66. Print.
- Sontag, Susan. "Against Interpretation." *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Penguin, 2009. 3-14. Print.
- . "Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition." *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Penguin, 2009. 263-74. Print.
- Stange, Martina. "'Melancholia, melancholia': Changing Black Bile into Black Ink in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*." *Hayford Hall: Hangovers, Erotics, and Modernist Aesthetics*. Eds. Elizabeth Podnieks and Sandra Chait. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2005. 133-49. Print.
- Stansell, Christine. *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New*

- Century*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010. Print.
- Stein, Gertrude. *Alphabets and Birthdays*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1957. Print.
- . *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. New York: Vintage, 1960. Print.
- . *Bee Time Vine and Other Pieces [1913-1927]*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1953. Print.
- . *Fernhurst, Q. E. D., and Other Early Writings*. London: Peter Owen, 1972. Print.
- . *The Geographical History of America*. New York: Vintage, 1973. Print.
- . *Geography and Plays*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1993. Print.
- . *Gertrude Stein: Selections*. Ed. Joan Retallack. Berkeley: UC Press, 2008. Print.
- . *How Writing is Written*. Ed. Robert Bartlett Haas. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1974. Print.
- . *Last Operas and Plays*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977. Print.
- . *Lectures in America*. London: Virago, 1988. Print.
- . *The Letters of Gertrude Stein and Thornton Wilder*. Eds. Edward M. Burns and Ulla E. Dydo, with William Rice. New Haven: Yale UP, 1996. Print.
- . *Look at Me Now and Here I Am: Writings and Lectures, 1909-45*. Ed. Patricia Meyerowitz. London: Penguin, 1990. Print.
- . *The Making of Americans*. Normal: Dalkey, 1995. Print.
- . *Matisse Picasso and Gertrude Stein with Two Shorter Stories*. Barton: Something Else, 1972. Print.
- . *Narration*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2010. Print.
- . *A Novel of Thank You*. New York: Books for Libraries P, 1958. Print.
- . *Operas & Plays*. Barrytown: Station Hill, 1987. Print.
- . *Paris France*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1940. Print.
- . *Reflection on the Atomic Bomb*. Ed. Robert Bartlett Haas. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1974. Print.

- . *A Stein Reader*. Ed. Ulla E. Dydo. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1993. Print.
- . *Three Lives*. Ed. Linda Wagner-Martin. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000. Print.
- . "A Transatlantic Interview 1946." *A Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Gertrude Stein*. Ed. Robert Bartlett Haas. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1971. 15-35. Print.
- . *Two: Gertrude Stein and Her Brother, and Other Early Portraits (1908-12)*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1951. Print.
- . *Writings, 1932-1946*. New York: Library of America, 1998. Print.
- . *The Yale Gertrude Stein*. Ed. Richard Kostelanetz. New Haven: Yale UP, 1980. Print.
- Steiner, Wendy. *Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance: The Literary Portraiture of Gertrude Stein*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1978. Print.
- Stevenson, Sheryl. "Ryder as Contraception: Barnes v. the Reproduction of Mothering." Levine and Urquilla 97-106.
- . "Writing the Grotesque Body: Djuna Barnes' Carnival Parody." Broe 81-91.
- Stimpson, Catharine R. "Gertrude Stein: Humanism and Its Freaks." *boundary* 2.12/13 (Spring-Autumn 1984): 301-19. Print.
- . "The Mind, the Body, and Gertrude Stein." *Critical Inquiry* 3.3 (Spring 1977): 489-506. Print.
- . "The Somagrams of Gertrude Stein." *Poetics Today* 6.1/2 (1985): 67-80. Print.
- Stoddard, Lothrop. *The Revolt against Civilization: Menace of the Under Man*. London: Chapman & Hall, 1922. Print.
- Sutherland, Donald. "Gertrude Stein and the Twentieth Century." Kostelanetz, *Gertrude Stein Advanced* 4-17.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles. *Poems and Ballads & Atalanta in Calydon*. Ed. Kenneth

- Haynes. London: Penguin, 2000. Print.
- Sypher, Wylie. *Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature*. New York: Vintage, 1960. Print.
- Talbot, Eugene. *Degeneracy: Its Causes, Signs, and Results*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901. Print.
- Tendlarz, Silvia Elena. *Childhood Psychosis: A Lacanian Perspective*. London: Karnac, 2003. Print.
- Terry, Jennifer, and Jacqueline Urla. *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995. Print.
- Toklas, Alice B. *What is Remembered*. London: Michael Joseph, 1963. Print.
- Unger, Mary I. "‘Dropping crooked into rhyme’: Djuna Barnes’s Disabled Poetics in *The Book of Repulsive Women*." *Legacy* 30.1 (2013): 124-50. Print.
- Wagner-Martin, Linda. "‘Favored Strangers’": *Gertrude Stein and Her Family*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1995. Print.
- . Introduction. *Three Lives*. By Gertrude Stein. Ed. Linda Wagner-Martin. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000. 3-25. Print.
- Walker, Jayne L. *The Making of a Modernist: Gertrude Stein from Three Lives to Tender Buttons*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1984. Print.
- Walters, Suzanna Danuta. "From here to queer: radical feminism, postmodernism, and the lesbian menace (or, why can't a woman be more like a fag?)." *Signs* 21.4 (1996): 830-69. Print.
- Wasserstrom, William. "The Sursymamericubealism of Gertrude Stein." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 21.1 (Feb. 1975): 90-106. Print.
- Watts, Linda S. *Gertrude Stein: A Study of the Short Fiction*. New York: Twayne, 1999. Print.
- Weinstein, Norman. *Gertrude Stein and the Literature of the Modern Consciousness*. New

- York: Frederick Ungar, 1970. Print.
- Wertz, Richard W., and Dorothy C. Wertz. *Lying-In: A History of Childbirth in America*.
New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. Print.
- Wetzsteon, Ross. *Republic of Dreams: Greenwich Village: The American Bohemia, 1910-1960*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002. Print.
- Whitley, Catherine. "Nations and the Night: Excremental History in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 24.1 (Autumn 2000): 81-98. Print.
- Wilson, Elizabeth. *Bohemians: The Glamorous Outcasts*. London: Tauris Parke, 2003. Print.
- Zahavi, Dan. *Husserl's Phenomenology*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003. Print.