Interrogating the Mind of Modernism:
Gender, Race, and Modern Cognitive Citizenship

by

Valentina Montero Román

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(English Language and Literature)
in the University of Michigan
2019

Doctoral Committee:

Professor June Howard, Co-Chair
Professor Joshua Miller, Co-Chair
Professor Mary Kelley
Professor Megan Sweeney

Valentina Montero Román

vmontero@umich.edu

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3026-7913

© Valentina Montero Román 2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people and institutions provided the moral, intellectual, and financial support that enabled me to complete this project. High on that list are the members of my dissertation committee. My co-chairs, June Howard and Joshua Miller, were a continual source of academic inspiration. June's early advice and keen critiques allowed me the freedom and structure necessary to develop the core of this project, and Josh offered clarity, sanity, and pragmatic advice while I worked to sharpen my claims and navigate modernist scholarship. Meg Sweeney's rigorous feedback was always coupled with strong encouragement. She was a source of strength when I needed it most. Mary Kelley's enthusiasm and intellectual bravery were a model for me before I ever got up the courage to ask her to be on my committee. Her meticulous commentary has been invaluable.

Special thanks go to Alison Case, Robyn Warhol, and Yeidy Rivero, whose mentorship I could not have succeeded without. Alison responded to my email – a note from a strange graduate student in another state – and offered not just generous feedback on my chapter but also kind words and cogent professional advice. Robyn, who also responded to an unsolicited electronic message, has been an example of what it means to understand theory as activism. I have been buoyed by the knowledge that someone who has dedicated her life's work to politically engaged pedagogy and scholarship believes that I can make change happen too. Yeidy spun into my life in 2016 and I have been grateful for her sense of humor, her honesty, and her advice ever since. She conquers everything she sets her mind to and I aspire to achieve the strength of purpose she maintains in her life and in her work. I am also grateful to the numerous faculty who provided guidance and advice throughout my graduate career. Frederick Luis

Aldama, Hadji Bakara, Sara Blair, Anne Curzan, Sandra Gunning, Danny Hack, Mark Kamimura-Jimenez, Sue Kim, Aida Levy-Hussen, Christina Lupton, Adela Pinch, Alisse Portnoy, Xiomara Santamarina, Amy Shuman, Ruby Tapia, and Andrea Zemgulys deserve particular thanks for making time to speak with me about my work and professional goals at various stages of this dissertation process.

Financial support from the University of Michigan's English Department, English Department Writing Program, and Rackham Graduate School was crucial to my ability to complete this project. Moreover, the staff members in the English department and at Rackham have been invaluable sources of information. Most notably I owe thanks to Jan Burgess, Senia Vasquez, Jane Johnson, Denise Looker, Thea Bude, and Emma Flores. I am also indebted to the work of GEO. I have benefited from their continual efforts to cultivate an inclusive and supportive graduate environment.

Throughout the dissertation process, I have been fortunate to work with peers whose brilliance and sustained curiosity proved to be contagious. The feedback and comradery I found in my writing workshops at the University of Michigan and in the 2017 Project Narrative Summer Institute on Queer and Feminist Methodologies at the Ohio State University was crucial to the development of this dissertation. Special thanks go to Orquidea Morales, MicKenzie Fasteland, Lisa Jong, Gabby Sarpy, and Alexandra Provenzano, whose advice and support was much appreciated.

Finally, I must thank my family and friends; they are brighter, kinder, and more supportive than any one person deserves. I am deeply indebted to Cass Adair and Kyera Singleton who have been sharp, astute critics as well as lifelines and confidants. They have answered my phone calls and texts at all hours of the day and night, and I am forever grateful. Bre Eder, Maia Farrer, Emma Jurado, Jessica Hoard, Melanie Postma, and Liz Woodard are the workout pack who

made Ann Arbor my home. I was at my most relaxed when I was in the world with them, running through the long days of summer and the brutally cold days of winter. Their company, along with that of Clay Hillenburg, Nate Hoard, Nick Hoffman, Cory Gilbert, Tony Lupo, and Chris Postma, meant that I could always find a good conversation at the end of a long week. I would be remiss if I did not thank the dogs who were crucial to my sanity throughout this process: Mighty Mouse, the dog who reminded me that nothing matters once you're running with your friends; Wolfie, whose extreme pack mentality is a reminder of how to treat the people who matter most to you; and Poe, who makes me happy every day.

I am thankful for my Tia Bea, Tia Buena, Uncle Frank, and Uncle David as well as my cousins Paul Maneri, Marisa Maneri, Regina Maneri, Sonia Hasemeyer, and Elena Groh-Montero. They make the world a better place with their passion, their love, and their intelligence. I have learned so much from each of them. This project would have been much more arduous without my time on the east coast where Alex and Nicole Montero and Amber Grady made all of my breaks from Michigan happier with their infectious laughter and their steadfast support. I have been able to count on Jamie Bradford's friendship since I was five. Though she and her partner Christy VanderWyden were far away while I was writing this project, they were always in my heart. Thanks also go to the newest members of my east coast family: Carter VanderWyden Bradford and Luke Valentín Montero. This last year of writing was made so much brighter because they were in it.

I am forever grateful for my mom and dad. Though my mother never liked being called la jefa, it is something I have always been proud of. She taught me what it means to hold your own and claim strength in difficult times. My father's unflagging support of me is an inexpressible comfort, and the love he has for the work he does is a model I will always emulate. Thanks also go to my grandparents, whose lives have shaped me in innumerable ways. Most notably, I want

to thank my grandmother, Myriam Román, who passed away while I was writing this dissertation, but whose life in some ways informs these pages.

This dissertation could not have been written without the intellectual insight, love, and support of my partner, Kyle Grady, who made sure I ate more than microwave food, generously read numerous versions of this project, and was always ready with words of encouragement. He has been a source of strength, stability, and laughter that I appreciate more than words can express.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS………………………………………………………………….. ii

LIST OF FIGURES..………………………………………………………………………vii

ABSTRACT…………………………………………………………………….........viii

CHAPTER I

Introduction: Flappers with Philosophies………………………………………………………1

CHAPTER II

When Smart Became Sexy: Modernity and the Mind in the Early Twentieth Century ………... 26

CHAPTER III

Black Women with "Real Brains": Nella Larsen and Unreliable Focalization…………………. 65

CHAPTER IV

Modeling the Mind of the Colonial Modern Girl: Jean Rhys and Stream of Discourse………...90

CHAPTER V

Pelonas in Periodicals: María Cristina Mena and Narrative Revision…………………………119

CHAPTER VI

Afterword: Theorizing the Mind(s) of Modernism ……………………………………..….. 150

Bibliography……………………………………………………………………………… 160

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

2.1 A newspaper article titled “Typical Flappers” accompanied by a photograph of a flapper with numbers corresponding to her typical attire (*Weekly Journal-Miner*. August 2, 1922. Image. Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, Prescott, AZ. Image 1, col. 3) ...…………...………………………………………………...……...…...27

2.2. An image of a flapper above a poem titled “A College View.” The image and accompanying message were first published in a Stanford newspaper, then republished in Collegiate World – a paper that circulated to a number of different colleges – and finally republished for a third time in The Literary Digest’s thirteen-page *Personal Glimpses* special on “The Case Against the Younger Generation” in June of 1922. ("A College View." *The Literary Digest*, June 1922)………………………………………….....….58

ABSTRACT

This dissertation, titled "Interrogating the Mind of Modernism: Gender, Race, and Modern Cognitive Citizenship," argues that women authors across racial and ethnic difference experiment with narrative form to undermine dominant cognitive models, not to demonstrate the universal shift towards epistemological doubt often attributed to transatlantic modernist formal innovation. Scholarship in transatlantic modernism contends that the fragmentation and alienation of modernist representation produces and reflects profound historical shifts in the understanding of reliability, truth, and subjectivity. That is, it proposes that the modernist mind found in the work of authors like Woolf and Joyce plays a crucial role in producing postmodern theories of performative, relational, or fluid identities. In this study, I argue that literary works by or about women who in some way navigate complicated racial, ethnic, or migrant identities demonstrate that this shift towards epistemological doubt has different stakes for marginalized people. In a political climate that hinges on an articulation of identity for the achievement of political or economic parity, epistemological uncertainty is a privileged condition and a barrier to sociopolitical equity. While the authors I study undoubtedly reveal the limitations of available systems – the arbitrary nature of borders and categories of identity and cognition – they also depict what it means to live life within relational systems of oppression.

My analysis develops through an examination of the interplay between cultural conceptions of gendered modernity in Europe, Mexico, and the United States and the representation of fictional minds in Anglophone literary texts. I contend that each of the writers I examine in depth – Nella Larsen, María Cristina Mena, and Jean Rhys – develop alternative models of the mind, models that both echo and intervene in the liberal individualist conceptions

of cognition and autonomy that ground European and American definitions of citizenship. I employ relational analyses to outline a shared investment in undermining the way that women's minds were constructed as spaces of empowerment and freedom through the naturalization of an exclusionary cognitive model: linear, singular, and individual (not intersubjective, relational, protean, or social), rational (not emotional), and universalizable (not multiple or sociohistorically contingent). Mena, Larsen, and Rhys all use narrative form to critique the hierarchies of cognitive capacities that were mobilized as a means to police marginalized racial groups. Through the use of narrative tools like unreliable narration, stream of consciousness, and narrative revision, they depict the politics of cognitive representation, undermine dominant discursive regimes, and develop a more complex field of mental models.

My dissertation indicates the array of strategies women authors used to negotiate circumscribing conceptualizations of whose minds matter, whose stories matter, and why. In representing the limitations of universal models, the texts I study circulate their own theorizations, shift available narratives of belief formation and subjectivity, and suggest a proliferation of diverse constellations of raced and gendered cognition in a cosmopolitan, modern world. The new history I develop in this project constructs a genealogy of shared literary strategies and outlines the political import not just of narrative experimentation but also of the notions of cognition, citizenship, gender, race, and modernity through which those narrative forms emerge.

CHAPTER I

Introduction:

Flappers with Philosophies

> 'The proper stuff of fiction' does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss (Virginia Woolf).

> The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function (F. Scott Fitzgerald).

> Nobody admires Clare more than I do, for the kind of intelligence she has, as well as for her decorative qualities. But she's not –She isn't—She hasn't […got] [r]eal brains that can hold their own with anybody (Nella Larsen).

The model of the mind in modernist literary scholarship has for many years developed out of the work of authors like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Dorothy Richardson. Their preoccupation with the unconscious and the experience of perception, cognition, and reality has been the subject of numerous studies and classroom discussions. Modernist authors treated as a part of this history are widely understood to be invested in "subjectivity, inner states of consciousness, and fragmentary and discontinuous character construction" (Palmer, "Ontologies" 275). Their work contributes to an understanding of literary modernism defined by a desire to represent "as faithfully as possible the workings of fictional minds" (Palmer, "Ontologies" 275).[1] This conceptualization of modernist literature and its investment in the mind, though, has not

[1] In the last few decades, the cognitive turn in literary studies has added a new dimension to earlier scholarship that looked at the representation of consciousness in Freudian or epistemological terms, analyzing literary texts in relation to work in neuroscience, philosophy of the mind, evolutionary and discursive psychology, and cognitive linguistics. In modernist scholarship, for example, Dora Zhang relies on the theorization of "qualia"— a term use to describe the quality of thought, "qualia" accounts for "the way things seem to us" – from contemporary philosophy of the mind scholarship to discuss Virginia Woolf's investment in articulating the nature of experience (51-52). For an excellent discussion of the cognitive turn and its manifestation in literary analysis, see "What is Cognitive Cultural Studies?" by Lisa Zunshine.

been interrogated alongside contemporaneous debates about the mind in political discourse. The early twentieth century is the heyday of the eugenics movement: a transatlantic moment in which intelligence testing emerges as a means for further marginalizing (and racializing) immigrants and people of color. [2] In this context, fictional representations of the mind are politically significant, and the writing of marginalized people takes on a crucial role in reorienting scholarly discussions of cognition, citizenship, and modernity.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, W.E.B. DuBois wrote his now canonized essay "The Souls of Black Folk" in which he describes the African American experience of double consciousness – the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (364). DuBois's explorations of the psychological ramifications of American racism have made him a key figure in analyses of the epistemology of liminality. His theorization of double-consciousness is one of the most well-known explorations of the limitations of dominant twentieth-century notions of cognition and selfhood, but it is far from the only one. In this project, I contend that fictional representations of the mind extend discussions about minoritization and the mind. When we analyze formal innovation in literary texts as a demonstration of how racism and sexism alter the experience of cognitive autonomy, we can see that literary texts that focus on fictional minds intervene in the cognitive pretexts of twentieth-century definitions of citizenship and modernity. Analyses of literature by marginalized people are crucial for expanding modernist historiography of cognition, citizenship, and modernity because they offer new opportunities for investigating varied epistemologies of liminality.

---

[2] In 1916, Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon publish "New methods for the diagnosis of the intellectual level of subnormals" in which they delineate a series of tests to ascertain and attribute levels of intelligence (Esping and Pluck). Their goal for this testing was to advocate for increased public school education, but Americans like Henry Herbert Goddard and Carl Brigham adapt this research in ways that result in increased racial stratification, forced sterilizations, and the policing of immigrant intelligence at Ellis Island (Greenwood). Both Brigham and Goddard will later retract their positions, but not until after the IQ test becomes widely instantiated and the SAT test (which Brigham created) is standardized (Saretzky).

This dissertation examines the interplay between cultural conceptualizations of what I call modern cognitive citizenship and the representation of fictional minds in literary texts at the beginning of the twentieth century. I demonstrate that in this historical moment, modernity itself becomes inextricable from a discussion of intelligence. Foregrounding the work of women across racial and ethnic difference, I outline that the construction of modern gendered identity in transatlantic contexts is inseparable from a conceptualization of cognitive citizenship that polices who has access to rights and humanity based on cognitive evaluation.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, despite the circulation of Freudian and Jamesian theories of the mind, John Locke's definitions of personhood are still central to conceptualizations of citizenship and authority. Locke defines a person as "a thinking intelligent being, [with] reason and reflection," thus positioning rationality and self-knowledge across time as the defining characteristics of humanity ("Human Understanding" 210). Though his theories are debated and interpreted variously in scholarship, they manifest in scientific, psychological, and sociopolitical writing that places women of all races and ethnicities, indigenous people, African Americans, and immigrants outside of accepted definitions of rationality and intelligence.

Although we often remember the European and American modern girl as a figure of frivolity and consumption –the party-girl beneficiary of her women's rights foremothers – across racial and ethnic difference modern girls argued for their modernity and their sociopolitical rights through an assertion of cognitive autonomy. Instead of locating modernity in commodities and consumption, periodical authors proposed that to be modern was to have a mind of one's own. As one American modern girl author argued, being a flapper takes "brains […] self-knowledge and self-analysis" (Page 607). Modern girl assertions of intellectual capability are

what Toril Moi calls defensive speech acts, a response to critiques that mark their minds negatively as unreliable, childish, and emotional (265).

In this historical moment research on intelligence and hierarchies of cognitive capabilities are just as vital an intertext for modernist literature as discussions of Freud and the unconscious. At the same time that European and American eugenics discourse defines intelligence as a fundamental faculty that demonstrates white superiority, F. Scott Fitzgerald works to define a "first-rate intelligence," T.S. Eliot explores his understanding of a poet's perfectly equipped mind, and Nella Larsen writes a novel focusing on a character deeply invested in demonstrating that she has "real brains that can hold their own with anybody" (62). Unlike Fitzgerald and Eliot, who write from a position of assumed intelligence, Larsen writes a novel about a woman character preoccupied with exploring what it means to navigate a world in which that designation is always an uphill battle.[3] Of the three authors I quoted at the beginning of this introduction, Larsen is the one whose work most reroutes current discussions of cognition in modernist theory, though her work is not traditionally recognized in that regard.

Modernist literature is often described as a subversive response to traditional art forms and modern bourgeoisie life, part of an artistic movement that has the "clear purpose of detaching the reader from the habits of thought and feeling that the larger culture imposes" (Trilling qtd. in Mao and Walkowitz 3). Scholars and artists understand modernism as an attack on the "uncritical endorsement of traditional forms, uplifting sentiments and happy endings, complacency about the course of world events, approbation of the social order, and the view that instrumentality and moral legibility were distinguishing features of worthwhile art" (Mao and

[3] Fitzgerald's essay "The Crack Up" is a meditation on what it means to lose intelligence in a "crack up," and Eliot's discussion of the perfectly equipped mind is a description of the moments of clarity poets experience when they can reconcile "chaotic, irregular, fragmentary" experiences into "new wholes" (qtd. in Cianci and Harding 47). Neither Fitzgerald nor Eliot are concerned with the politics of the mind, and, in some ways, their comments naturalize a hierarchization of cognitive functioning that often excludes marginalized people.

Walkowitz 3). As recent work has illustrated, though, part of the continued potency and interest of modernism as a scholarly term develops out of the ways it has been positioned as an elitist establishment in its own right.

The study of modernist writing by women is one area in which a focus on expanding the canon has been productive. As Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz suggest in their introduction to *Bad Modernisms,* scholars like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Shari Benstock, Bonnie Kime Scott, Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace, Suzanne Clark, and Ellie M. Hisama demonstrate that the tension between modernism and modernity, "[t]he old story in which heroic modernist outsiders assault a complacent bourgeoisie," is "complicated by the observation that there were numerous ways of being outside in the early twentieth century, many of which invited marginalization far more enduring than that briefly experienced by Picasso or Eliot" (7). As Benstock states so poignantly in the preface of *Women of the Left Bank*, "Modernism itself participated in 'resistance to the norm' but it also - and simultaneously - reinforced the normative" (x). Building from this line of thought, some scholars push Benstock's argument further suggesting that modernism does not just reinforce existing norms, it creates new, even more exclusionary systems of hierarchization. Mao and Walkowitz cite Cary Nelson's *Repression and Recovery*, Houston Baker's *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*, and Colleen Lamos's *Deviant Modernisms* as examples of scholarship that demonstrates how politics, race, and sexuality challenge any simple schematic for identifying how modernists position themselves as subversive (8). Academic work in these areas of study, as well as in transnational, interdisciplinary, and intersectional modernisms, has created a more expansive field of modernist scholarship, one in which, as Elizabeth Evans suggests, gender analyses gain strength from being attentive to "the formative influences of other constituents of identity…none more so than those of race and nation" (32).

This dissertation participates in this genealogy of feminist modernist scholarship, a scholarship that understands, to adapt a quote from Robyn Warhol, that "'[r]eal' gender [and race] do not exist," but that "[t]he more we can understand about narrative's role in the constitution of gender [and race], the better positioned we are to change the oppressive ways that gender [and race] norms work in the world" (*Core Concepts* 13). I extend feminist and transnational modernist scholarship by demonstrating the universalizing conceptualizations of cognition that are fundamental to definitions of modern gendered experience across racial and ethnic difference. By arguing that literary texts play a crucial role in unraveling the normalization of European and American cognitive hierarchies, though, I also reroute a current scholarly narrative that locates the value of modernist literary representation in its status as a precursor to post-modern fluidity.

One of the dominant narratives of transatlantic modernist literary history is that the fragmentation and alienation of modernist literary production was a catalyst for postmodern relationships toward epistemological doubt about the nature of truth, reliability, and identity. In a discussion of unreliable narration, for example, Bruno Zerweck suggests that the modernist period is characterized by "a set of cultural discourses dominated by epistemological doubt regarding truth, reality, and the representation of both" (162). In this context, he argues that modernist unreliable narrators highlight "the inconsistencies and problematic elements of highly personalized narrators" and prefigure postmodern and contemporary texts in which "unreliable narration is no longer an option," because "subjectivity and unreliability are accepted as realities, and reliability is regarded as an impossibility" (Zerweck 162). Pamela Caughie takes this kind of argument one step further, suggesting that we should locate the historical emergence of conceptualizations of subjectivity as fragmented and unreliable in the modern period. She contends that the "fluidity of identity boundaries that we have come to identify with

postmodernity – especially a postmodern notion of subjectivity as constructed, discursive, and fluid – has as much or more to do with the historical conditions in which modernist art was produced as with the textual theories of post-structuralism" (Caughie, "Passing" 387). Building from scholarship on African American modernist authors, Caughie locates passing "as the peculiar identification at the heart of modernism" ("Passing" 387). In making this critical move, though, she moves away from a historically specific interrogation of "passing as white" to focus on "passing as fraudulence and deception" ("Passing" 387). She argues that opportunities for frequent border and boundary crossing created through the technological advancements of the modern period (like the airplane and the radio) produce the historical conditions within which passing is "a performative act and a strategic intervention that exposes systems of racial or sexual oppression" (Caughie, "Passing" 400). The driving force of Caughie's argument is her insistence that in an "anxious effort to impute passing in the pejorative sense to others engaged in practices very like our own, we risk foreclosing on the transformative opportunities opened up by modernist border crossing" ("Passing" 404).[4] This statement reflects her belief that "the notion of passing as fraudulence and deception remains dominant today, despite the modernist erosion of such binary thinking" (Caughie, "Passing" 387). Caughie, however, fails to ask how we can account for the continued policing of identity, authenticity, and reliability if the racialization of identity she describes in the modernist era taught us that it was "necessary to think about race as a component of identity formation, inspiring new fantasies and new

---

[4] Arguments like Caughie's emerge as a part of scholarship that argued for the recovery and centrality of the work of marginalized authors in modernist history. Caughie cites, for example Henry Louis Gates Jr. arguing that "the thematic elements of passing […] fragmentation, alienation, liminality, self-fashioning—echo the great themes of modernism" (Gates qtd. Caughie, "Passing" 387). While it is important to understand that formulations forwarded by marginalized authors carry significance across racial and cultural boundaries, her theorization risks deracinating passing in a way that has the potential to erase both the history of scholarship that had to fight for canon revision and the historical differences between passing for white and being a white tourist passing across national borders. Writing theories of modernism that emerge through the work of authors from historically marginalized backgrounds should not necessitate erasing the specificities of their marginalization.

possibilities of identity, whether Locke's New Negro or Toomer's blue man" (Caughie, "Passing" 404).

In suggesting that the modern period is defined by border crossing and liminality, work like this often fails to account for the ways that acts of passing have different stakes for different communities of people. Though it is important to recognize that certain kinds of passing can unsettle norms, it is even more crucial to acknowledge that this recognition has done very little to break down the systemic and structural oppressions that continue to marginalize women and people of color, people for whom passing is often an exercise in survival. Instead of seeing modernist preoccupation with liminality as a means for leveling the playing field, we need to attend to the ways literary modernism demonstrated the different stakes of liminality and passing.

The authors I analyze in this dissertation undoubtedly reveal the limitations of available systems – the arbitrary nature of borders and categories of identity and cognition – but they also depict what it means to live life within relational systems of oppression. Their work demonstrates that in a political climate that hinges on an articulation of cognitive independence for the achievement of political or economic parity, epistemological uncertainty is a privileged condition and a barrier to sociopolitical equity. I contend that we can only interrogate the persistence of the policing of authenticity and reliability if we understand that there is a disconnect between a theoretical understanding of fluidity or border crossing as liberating and a reality that remains entrenched in binaristic and hierarchical thinking. Unreliability, fragmentation, and liminality retain their negative connotations because a modern cognitive citizenship defined by progressive, unified subjectivity remains a dominant western paradigm. In disrupting the way that modernist literary scholarship posits a linear movement toward increasingly transformative opportunities for everyone, I am proposing that we need to develop a

more nuanced understanding of the value of modernist literary experimentation as it relates to representations of fictional minds. We need to rethink our narrative of historical change in order to be more specific about who has access to emancipation and what that emancipation looks like in different communities.

In what follows, I argue that literary works by liminal authors – that is by or about women who in some way navigate complicated racial, ethnic, or migrant identities – demonstrate that a modernist shift towards epistemological doubt has different stakes for marginalized people. When I call the authors of this study liminal, it is not because we currently conceive of them as non-canonical. Instead, I understand them as authors concerned with liminality, where liminality is defined by structural, systemic oppression. Modernist literature might very well be characterized by a widespread exploration of experiences of marginalization – F. Scott Fitzgerald though a popular, white, male author, was a Catholic, and T.S. Eliot, though wealthy, white, and male, was an immigrant. However, my focus on women authors representing cognition under the overlapping pressures of racism and sexism is a means for acknowledging that while many modernist authors struggled to narrativize experiences of marginalization, liminality has different cognitive consequences for women and people of color. The authors I focus on in this dissertation are liminal modernists because they intercede in discussions of cognitive difference around issues of gender and race, and because their work is central to rerouting modernist historiography to include an understanding of the historical power of dominant articulations of modern cognitive citizenship.

In working to develop a different conceptualization of the value of modernist experimentation, I find it helpful to revisit Susan Stanford Friedman's questions about theories of fragmentation, hybridity, and fluidity. She asks,

> Does the rhetoric of multiple positionality foster the greater participation of marginalized and oppressed peoples, precisely those who have had the most difficulty in having their voices be heard, in producing visible and transmittable cultural formations, both inside and outside of the academy? Does the emphasis on the fluidity of interminably shifting identities facilitate or inhibit the energy and vision necessary for activism, coalitional politics, and alliance building? (Friedman 30).

Or, to revise Mary Helen Washington's question, "Who benefits from these [theoretical] changes?" (qtd. in Friedman 30). Keeping these questions alive in our scholarship is a means for shifting our current analysis of literary modernism. As we work to bring the art and literature of historically marginalized figures into the modernist canon through a recognition of a shared awareness of self-alienation, there is still a need to resist smoothing out the disparate stakes of representations of fragmentation or liminality in a racist, sexist, xenophobic modern landscape.

Looking at work in transnational, critical race, and borderlands feminist scholarship can help to revise our understanding of the impact (and import) of modernist experimentation. A reliance on the critical work of these fields makes visible that noticing commonality in various forms of passing does not necessarily mean that we cannot acknowledge important structural differences. As Elaine Stravo has asserted, through her reading of Simone de Beauvoir's insights on gender identity and political autonomy, "[t]here is a commonality within difference which provides the basis for communication between members of minority groups while respecting the particularity of one's existence" (451). Her argument points out that we can acknowledge commonality without erasing the particularity of different experiences of existence; disparities need to be acknowledged before coalitional effort. Though there is obvious merit in arguing for the need to resist binaristic structures, we cannot discuss the emancipatory possibilities of

passing, or truly ever escape a system that polices authenticity and reliability, without an attention to structural inequality.

In locating the epistemological changes that accompany modern mobility, we need to remain attentive to the fact that race, class, ability, sexuality, and nationality complicate the opportunities afforded in various forms of crossing or passing. For marginalized people, passing and crossing are often violent activities born of a need to survive. Gloria Anzaldúa, for example, tells us that the space of *nepantla* – the "unarticulated dimensions of the experience of *mestizas* living in between overlapping and layered spaces of different cultures and social and geographic locations" is "painful, messy, confusing, and chaotic" (Anzaldúa 176, Keating 10). And, Warsan Shire's poem "Home" powerfully articulates the fact that for refugees transnational movement is rarely voluntary and often dangerous. The speaker of the poem says, "no one leaves home unless/ home is the mouth of a shark," telling the reader:

i want to go home

but home is the mouth of a shark

home is the barrel of the gun

and no one would leave home

unless home chased you to the shore

unless home told you to quicken your legs

leave your clothes behind

crawl through the desert

wade through the oceans

drown

save

be hunger

beg

forget pride

survival is more important (Shire 102-103)

Shire's poem, like Anzaldúa's theorizations, describes the brutality as well as the necessity of certain kinds of transnational mobility. In modern movement of this kind, passing across boundaries is not a choice, and though it may be transformative it is not necessarily liberating.[5] Katarzyna Marciniak, Anikó Imre, and Áine O'Healy remind us that we need to acknowledge that "[t]ransnational economic developments and the global flow of information, images, and sounds implicate everyone. But they do not create an equal playing field […] [t]he borders they erase and erect affect different groups differently" (4). The anthology from Marciniak, Imre, and O'Healy focuses on transnational feminisms in which "the misadventures of actual liminal figures, whose lives do not fit within legitimate borders and boundaries" function as a refusal "to depict the world as a borderless global village of the cosmopolitan subject" (15). They call for a "dialogical, relational approach to representations and experiences across borders," an approach that is attentive to the violence liminal figures experience in border crossings at the same time that it acknowledges that "genders, sexualities, races, classes nations, and even continents coexist not as hermetically sealed entities but rather as part of a permeable interwoven relationality" (Shohat qtd. in Marciniak et al. 16).

Centering the work of liminal women authors who move in fraught and challenged modern circuits produces an understanding of modernist minds that has more in common with contemporary transnational feminist theory than universalizing theories of modernist liberal

[5] The poem describes the challenges asylum seekers face, noting that the abuse and insults they confront in modern movement are better than the alternative of staying in their home countries. The speaker says, "the dirty looks/ roll off your backs" because "the blow is softer / than a limb torn off / or the words are more tender / than fourteen men between / your legs / or the insults are easier / to swallow / than rubble / than bone / than your child body / in pieces" (103).

citizenship. In this dissertation, I focus on the authors Nella Larsen, Jean Rhys, and María Cristina Mena because each represents an experience of modern gendered identity that is informed by their own liminality. Larsen, the daughter of a white, Danish immigrant mother and a Black Virgin Islander father, explores issues of racial passing and belonging in white American and African-American communities. Larsen's novel *Passing* undermines any simple understanding of freedom or reliability in Jane Crow America, demonstrating the challenges to claiming intellectualism and humanity in a world where modernity and gender are complicated by anti-Blackness. Rhys, a white, native West Indian who moves from colonial outpost to modern metropole, depicts modern life infused with experiences of ethnic displacement and racial self-alienation. Her work is an intricate representation of conceptualizations of whiteness and womanhood informed by colonial movement. Moreover, her experimentation with stream of consciousness to represent the mental worlds of her white, Creole protagonists demonstrates the always embodied impact of modern mobility and marginalization on cognition.[6] And, Mena, a Mexican-American immigrant who moves to the United States in her youth, represents cross-cultural contact and cultural mediation as an opportunity for recognizing divergent definitions of cognitive modernity in Mexico and America. In depicting fictional minds as social instead of individual and autonomous, Mena develops a model of cultural interaction that stands outside of Americanization and assimilation rhetoric. Through representations of fictional minds across racial and gender difference, she redefines modernity and argues for the need to attend to cultural difference without hierarchizing marginalized cognitive models. All of these authors were at some point in their careers considered outliers within the communities they inhabited (African-

---

[6] Note that at the beginning of the twentieth century the term Creole meant white, Native West Indian. Later in the period, the term is increasingly used to designate "the 'colored' native of mixed racial origin, and more generally, the West Indian culture itself, which was gaining a self-conscious identification separate from the European culture of the colonials" (Raiskin 97).

American, Caribbean, and Mexican-American). Their work speaks to the fact that liminality does not erase difference, it makes visible how false universalities dictate structural inequalities and manifest as common sense.

Instead of imagining the modern period as one from which we can draw a line of progress towards increased freedom through the breakdown of binaristic systems, I see a historical moment in which that movement towards freedom and mobility is an uneven experience. In what follows, I move away from understanding the modern period as one that transitions from the dominance of linearity towards the privileging of fluidity. Instead, I focus my analysis on the modern period as a time, much like our own, in which notions of a unified and universal cognitive experience circulate in tension with representations of experiences that resist normative codification. The texts I analyze indicate the limitations as well as the political expediency of narratives of modern cognitive citizenship.

When modern girls argue for their sociopolitical rights through an articulation of their self-knowledge and their rational minds, they do so because that rhetoric is easily assimilated into existent models of modern cognitive citizenship.[7] Volubly asserting their "real brains" is a means for intervening in a historical discourse that polices who has access to citizenship and civil rights. At the same time, though, their declarations of cognitive autonomy reify a model of the mind consistent with liberal political philosophy: linear, singular, and individual (not intersubjective, relational, protean, or social), rational (not emotional), and universalizable (not multiple or sociohistorically contingent). Claiming intellectual prowess and independence is a

[7] Elizabeth Ammons, in *Conflicting Stories*, argues that "[i]ntellectually, definitions of difference and inferiority were being openly challenged and debated, which meant that they no longer reflected immovable facts. Politically, the idea of sexual equity appeared to be gaining strength steadily, even as the idea of racial equity—complicating matters for women of color—was clearly moving backwards" (10). My research suggests, though, that even if ideas of sexual equity were gaining ground, that equity did not change a political hierarchization of intelligence defined through Lockean theory. What that meant was that even arguments for gender equity had to be made through a reliance on a conceptualization of the mind and the self that was defined via exclusionary definitions of personhood.

tool for amassing power but it does not undermine the system of marginalization that perpetuates power discrepancies. The literary texts I examine in this dissertation work to negotiate this double bind. In seeking to undermine and weaken the power of western hierarchies of cognitive processing, they sometimes reinforce other kinds of systemic inequality. In this dissertation, I argue that in a political landscape in which having a mind of one's own is imperative, literary texts that represent the minds of marginalized women are critical areas of study. But my focus on the importance of equitable and diverse literary representation is coupled with an attention to the limitations of narrative experimentation, an acknowledgment of the messiness and imprecision of narrative resistance.

Though dominant discourse positions the modern girl as a symbol of progress achieved, the literary texts I analyze depict how issues like race, class, ethnicity, and nationality impact the possibility of mobilizing a rhetoric of independent cognitive capabilities as a means for achieving equity. This study demonstrates the need to interrogate how women's minds were constructed as spaces of empowerment and freedom through the naturalization of an exclusionary mental model. I contend that literary narratives by or about liminal figures mobilize narrative form as a means for representing fictional minds that undermine dominant conceptualizations of modernity, subjectivity, and progress. Through the use of unreliable narration, narrative revision, and stream of consciousness, the authors I study depict a more complex field of mental models and they indicate the array of strategies women authors used to negotiate circumscribing conceptualizations of whose minds matter, whose stories matter, and why.

In analyzing literary texts from the beginning of the twentieth century, I focus both on what narratives of cognitive experience they promote or normalize as well as on the ways they use narrative form to create divergent models of the mind. What I delineate through this kind of

analysis is threefold. First, I demonstrate that literary texts by and about women embodying complicated identities respond to cultural narratives of modernity, citizenship, and cognition in both form and content. Second, I argue that they depict mental models that undermine dominant narratives of the mind. And, third, I contend that in representing how issues of race and gender are interpolated into conceptualizations of cognition, they generate new models of mental processing that resist dominant historiography about marginalized minds.

My first chapter, "When Smart Became Sexy: Modernity and the Mind in the Early Twentieth Century," lays the foundation for the rest of the project by outlining how easily descriptions of thought get attached to conceptualizations of selfhood, subjectivity, humanity, and citizenship – how easily, that is, that ideas about the mind become political. Working from an understanding of literature as just one of the diverse mediums through which narratives of gender, modernity, and race proliferate, I analyze literary texts alongside periodicals, films, and advertisements. From roughly 1910-1940, the modern girl was a dominant force in global culture and the most salient emerging identity category for women. Across diverse racial and ethnic communities, she was associated with widespread social change, global commodity culture, and women's desire for political, economic, and personal liberation. Analysis of a varied representational archive reveals that the early twentieth century is inarguably a moment in which women work to claim authority through the assertion that they have independent minds, and that this assertion is inextricable from a history of women's movements that relied on notions of modern cognitive citizenship to fight for sociopolitical rights. At the same time, representations of modern gendered identity also demonstrate that those articulations of intellectual independence are interpolated into a developing discourse of desire that marks the unpredictable mind of the modern girl as attractive.

In this historical moment, smart becomes sexy in a way that means that the liberatory potential of modern girlhood rests on the ability to be sexually attractive, most typically to a white, male, heterosexual gaze. The allure of the modern girl is that she has, like F. Scott Fitzgerald's heroine, Ardita, "a radiant curiosity," or like Marjorie, a "dazzling, bewildering tongue." Literary texts from Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun* to Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* represent women's minds in ways that subordinate their mental acumen to their sexualized bodies. A woman's mind, and thus her right to respect and autonomy, could be attacked because she was too attractive, because she was not attractive enough, or because she refused to comply with heterosexual norms, and this meant that her sociopolitical standing was unstable and easy to compromise. This chapter highlights some of the issues of cognitive difference that will manifest in later chapters. In particular, it demonstrates how notions of women's cognitive abilities are linked to their gendered, sexualized, and raced bodies in ways that mark their mental reliability as precarious.

Each of the subsequent chapters of the dissertation focuses on a single text or author whose representation of modern gendered minds outlines the problems of universalizing discourses of cognitive citizenship defined through marginalization. In my second chapter, titled "Black Women with Real Brains: Nella Larsen and Unreliable Focalization," I analyze how Larsen's novel *Passing* mobilizes narrative unreliability in a way that marks the overlap between literary reliability and cultural narratives about the unreliable minds of women and African Americans. Larsen's work with unreliable focalization demonstrates that narrative reliability, like cognitive reliability, is a socially determined category, one often defined through judgments beyond or at least only tenuously within the control of the characters she represents. An unreliable narrator is unreliable because they are either unknowing or calculating. That is, unreliable narrators either tell stories that speak to their own flawed knowledge or they

manipulate "the truth" in their narrative construction. In scholarship on *Passing*, the protagonist Irene is often called an unreliable narrator, but she does not narrate her own story. Larsen represents Irene as a character who is framed by a narrative structure that marks her self-knowledge as flawed or manipulative, instead of as a narrator who frames herself. This decision makes it possible to read the use of unreliable focalization as a tool for representing the social realities black women navigated at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In *Passing*, black women characters are marked as unreliable through the mobilization of critiques of women's language, intellectual capacity, and sexualized bodies. Though Larsen's protagonist articulates her mental independence, the structure of the novel marks her claims of intelligence as flawed assertions of reliability. Larsen's novel demonstrates both the limitations of available narratives of gendered modernity and the fact that a performance of gender scripts was a powerful tool for negotiating Jim Crow America. Marking the interplay between conceptualizations of passing, race consciousness, and women's unreliability, Larsen's text uses narrative unreliability as a means for making visible in narrative structure how race and gender bias play out in the ascription of mental reliability.

My third chapter, "Modeling the Mind of the Colonial Modern Girl: Jean Rhys and Stream of Discourse," examines Jean Rhys's preoccupation with the sociopolitical regulation of narratives of subjectivity and the ideas of cognition on which they rest. I begin with an outline of the individual, rational mind that is naturalized as a part of colonial projects at the beginning of the twentieth century, and then proceed to analyze Rhys's experimentation with stream of consciousness as a means for foregrounding the interplay between ideas of the mind and narratives of progressive selfhood, citizenship, and humanity. Locke's definition of personhood grounds humanity both in rational (not emotional) thought and in the ability to articulate a narrative of unified, diachronic consciousness. The narrative of a rational person is a story of

progress and development. Rhys's novels delineate how colonial movement makes visible that these connected systems are naturalized and mobilized as a means for policing marginalized groups. In representing the minds of her white, Creole protagonists, Rhys depicts the diurnal recalibrations they perform to negotiate a barrage of criticisms that mark them as having vapid, vacuous, and emotional minds. Her characters cannot communicate a narrative of autobiographical identity that lines up with a notion of unified, rational, progressive selfhood. For them, autobiographical self-revelation is crucial for interpersonal interaction and professional advancement, but their experiences of subjectivity fail to conform to available identificatory schemas.

Rhys's manipulation of stream of consciousness pushes back against the atomization of the individual mind, the hierarchization of thought and emotion, and the linear narrative of development to which those ideas adhere. Using parentheticals, ellipses, blank space, repetition, tense change, and different forms of narrative address to demonstrate a shift in cognitive attention or process, Rhys works to represent the various mental experiences that accrue around any action, perception, or sensation. Instead of positioning her work as a part of stream of consciousness novels that often separate articulated inner thought from a record of sensation, I analyze her work as stream of discourse, a technique that blurs the distinction between thought and feeling, past and present, internal and external. Her use of stream of discourse highlights how easily ideas about atomized, western cognition are marked as universal and objective. Rhys's novels should be read as a call to attend to the politics of narratives of progress but also as a revision of how we interpret fictional representations of cognition as distinct from discussions of race, gender, and citizenship. In any analysis of fictional minds, we need to understand the power dynamics indexed in dominant conceptualizations of the mind, dynamics that often exclude based on race and gender.

My fourth chapter, "*Pelonas* in Periodicals: María Cristina Mena and Narrative Revision" explores the work of an author who is interested in representing both the cognitive dissonance of transnational movement and the productive possibilities of cross-cultural contact. Like Rhys and Larsen, Mena's work demonstrates the need to question any universalizable conceptualization of the mind, but unlike the other authors in this dissertation, her work is invested in exploring how meaning is made across national and ethnic difference. Mena's work is best understood as a nuanced depiction of the challenges and payoffs of translation and communication in contact zones. In this chapter, I contend that in analyzing the silences of periodical form (the gap or gutter on a periodical page, the time between the publication of stories) we can see Mena's commitment to narrative revision as an aspect of literary production that supports the recursive and ongoing work of negotiating cultural difference.

In Mena's work, representations of gendered modernity are a means for amending theories of hemispheric cultural contact. Throughout her career, Mena writes four versions of a story that outlines the relationship between a Latin American boy and a blonde Anglo flapper. Two of them focus on depicting barriers to cross-cultural understanding, and two of them suggest opportunities for positive cultural interaction. In these stories, Mena's attention is not exclusively on the representation of women's minds. Instead, her focus is on social interactions, on the connected minds of characters of different races, cultures, and genders. Mena's stories and editorials depict different viewpoints in order to shift the work of cross-cultural interaction to the citizens of the United States, demonstrating productive relationships that develop through an acknowledgment that rational individualism is not the only route through which to define modern cognitive citizenship. In her literary texts, she focuses on social cognition, emphasizing the mutual work of cultural contact by representing the mind as embodied and highlighting the adaptation of mental capacities (like perceptions, belief systems, habits, and feelings) that occur

in moments of cross-cultural exchange. Indeed, her texts suggest that Anglo-American notions of independent cognition fail to acknowledge the myriad ways in which social cognition contributes to productive interactions.

Mena's work outlines the distance between cultural understandings of modern cognitive citizenship in Mexico and the United States and suggests a necessary revision to discussions of cultural contact and the processes of racialization that accompany them. Moreover, her depictions of gendered modernity across difference make visible the racialization of cognitive hierarchies of modernity. Writing through an increasingly anti-Mexican historical moment, Mena suggests divergent models of the mind that undermine modernism's exclusionary foundations and demonstrate that cross-cultural communication is a project that requires engaging with the minds of others as valuable and modern.

The authors I focus on throughout this study provide an alternative historiography of modernist minds. My first chapter is a revision of the title of F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1920 collection of short stories, *Flappers and Philosopher*s. Fitzgerald's title is obliquely worded. Are the women characters for whom he is so famous "flappers and philosophers"? Or, is the collection of stories focused on "flappers" and other character who are "philosophers"? The ambiguity is not one that needs resolution, but it is one that I reject. This dissertation is about flappers *with* philosophies. William James argues that philosophers encourage a "wider openness of mind and a more flexible way of thinking" (James, "Philosophy" 4). They are in "the habit of always seeing an alternative, of not taking the usual for granted, of making conventionalities fluid again, of imagining foreign states of mind. In a word, it means the possession of mental perspective" (James, "Philosophy" 4). This dissertation is an analysis of women authors whose work encourages an openness of mind while still acknowledging the centrality of difference to definitions of modernism and modernity.

In cognitive literary studies, scholars have argued that fiction is compelling because of its ability to tell the mind's story. Dorrit Cohn, for example, suggests that the "singular power possessed by the novelist" is that the author is a "creator of beings whose inner lives [they] can reveal at will" (4). Though debates about the role of narrative and language in the experience of cognitive processing are contentious, cognitive historians, especially those in the history of emotion, have argued that the language we have to describe our cognition is a crucial aspect of the way we come to experience our own minds. While I do not propose that fictional minds are mirrors of real minds, I do believe that there is a space for considering them as models, or as David Herman and Natalia Molina might call them, scripts through which authors revise and reify dominant ideas about the mind. Though representations of fictional minds can never serve as a mimetic record of the lived experience of an individual or group, they can demonstrate the limitations of prominent conceptualizations of subjectivity and cognition. Moreover, they can provide models, through narrative experimentation, which create space for the articulation, circulation, and interpolation of different experiences of consciousness. In this project, I contend that in representing how issues of race and gender are interpolated into conceptualizations of cognition, the authors I study negotiate, engage, and shift dominant cultural ideas about gender, race, modernity, and cognition. I show that literary texts interrupt the denial of cognitive agency to which marginalized people were—and still are—subjected.

This dissertation is an examination of the role literary texts play in a broader narrative and media landscape, one that examines the possibilities and limitations of representation and recovery as avenues for resisting oppression. Despite the continued significance of Jane Tompkins argument that there is "importance in merely circulating," scholarship in the humanities has interrogated the efficacy of increased representational equity to create or reflect actual sociopolitical change (62). Arlene Dávila's work in media studies has urged us, for

example, to remember that there are "limits to equating visibility with political empowerment" (4). And Leif Sorensen in his work on ethnic modernisms has argued that "recovery movements err when they celebrate their ability to redeem the failings of the past in the present […]. [T]he act of recovering a text or author does not in itself challenge or restructure the constraints that made the text or author undesirable" (2).[8] Such scholarship has encouraged the field to acknowledge that in discussions of marginalized authors, we need to be more specific in describing the role narrative formation, historical recovery, and theoretical development play in sociopolitical change.

At the beginning of this introduction, I suggested that we need to reorient the argument that the value of modernist literary texts is that they rupture binaries and produce a world in which we recognize fluidity as a transformative opportunity. Lauding modernist literary experimentation as a representation of what has changed ignores the reality that many of the structures of oppression they depicted still remain. In this study, I propose that focusing on texts written in the margins of modernist history can help us articulate a different import for the analysis of fictional minds in the modernist period. In examining the representation of cognition in texts by liminal women authors, we learn that narrative form can undoubtedly encourage "the habit of always seeing an alternative…of imagining foreign states of mind," but we also see a history in which the models that they produce do not change dominant political discourse.

In expanding the canon of texts considered central to modernist discussions of the mind, what becomes apparent is that the writing of historically marginalized authors did not radically reshape the narrative structures that dictate systemic change or political infrastructure. The

[8] Dávila and Sorensen build from critical race scholarship that attends to the limitations and potential dangers of representational equity. Scholars like Sarah Ahmed, Roderick Ferguson, and Jodi Melamed have written powerful critiques of the ways that representational equity might in some ways preserve the systems of structural inequality that allow minoritization to function. For more see Sarah Ahmed's *On Being Included,* Roderick Ferguson's *The Reorder of Things*, and Jodi Melamed's *Represent and Destroy*.

authors I study had circumscribed discursive options. They mobilized narrative form as a means for intervening in contemporary debates about modern gendered cognition across racial and ethnic difference. Inarguably, their experimentation produced alternative models of the mind and articulated previously unnarratable experiences.[9] At the same time, although they picked up available narrative tools and used them in unusual and productive ways, there were costs to their choices, as there are with any act of narrative construction. Despite Larsen's use of unreliable focalization to undermine the cognitive marginalization of African American women, Irene Redfield is still repeatedly read as an unreliable narrator. While Rhys' work undermines hierarchies of colonial difference it also reifies racial stereotypes, and, although Mena's stories develop an alternative to narratives of Americanization they also participate in a mestizo modernist fetishization of indigeneity. Their work demonstrates both the power and the complicated nature of narrative resistance, reminding us that narrative experimentation is a potent though unpredictable tool.

Without understanding the work of marginalized, liminal authors as central to discussions of the minds of modernism, we forget that the modernist period is one that is much more like our own than we might want to acknowledge. The issues of reliability, rationality, and modernity that manifest in arguments about the language use and cognitive capabilities of marginalized people at the beginning of the twentieth century still circulate today. Re-reading authors like

[9] Robyn Warhol, building from Gerald Prince's *Dictionary of Narratology*, describes the "unnarratable" as "'that which is unworthy of being told,' 'that which is not susceptible to narration,' and 'that which does not call for narration' or perhaps 'those circumstances under which narration is uncalled for.'" ("Neonarrative" 222). Warhol identifies some of the possible forms the unnarratable might take saying that there is "that which (1) 'needn't be told (the subnarratable), (2) 'can't be told (the supranarratable),' (3) 'shouldn't be told (the antinarratable),' and (4) 'wouldn't be told (the paranarratable).'" ("Neonarrative" 222). She suggests that what neednt' be told is untold because it is "normal," but that which wouldn't be told is untold because of formal convention ("Neonarrative" 226). Warhol's example of the paranarratable is of a heroine in the "feminocentric nineteenth-century novel" being consigned to either marriage or death ("Neonarrative" 226). I am arguing, here, that narrative representation of divergent models of the mind is also "paranarratable" until the authors of the modernist period take up the task of writing women's experiences of cognition. Woolf's insistence that there is a need to explore the nature of reality and experience for women in narrative form is a representation of that which was previously "paranarratable."

Larsen, Rhys, and Mena as critical to modernist theories of the mind helps to keep alive a history we should not forget.[10] Their archival precarity and their continued absence from theorizations of modernist minds suggest the need to invest renewed energy into interrogating the universals that guide our understanding of the import of modernist literary history.

[10] I argue that the authors of this dissertation deserve attention because they create divergent models of the mind, models that directly engage circulating narratives about the flawed mental capabilities of marginalized people. In doing this, I am not suggesting that we stop considering Woolf, Joyce, and Richardson as pivotal figures in modernist constructions of the mind. Instead, I contend that we should stop discussing the mind of modernism in favor of discussing the politics of the minds of modernism, plural. We need to reinterpret the work of authors who are positioned as paradigmatic of the mind of modernism by positioning them as a part of a history of authors negotiating the politics of the mind in that historical moment. This is particularly true for Woolf and Richardson, both of whom write about their interest in crafting fictional representations that attend to modern gendered experiences. However, it is also true for someone like Joyce. The final chapter of *Ulysses* centers the mind of Molly Bloom and is stylized in ways that mimic stereotypes of women's language use in the early twentieth century. The endless, deeply sexualized run-on form of Molly Bloom's thoughts is inextricable from the history of marginalized minds I discuss in this dissertation, and it deserves an analysis that is attentive to that context.

CHAPTER II

When Smart Became Sexy:

Modernity and the Mind in the Early Twentieth Century

Standing in her hot pink dress, engulfed in diamonds, her platinum blonde hair a halo around her face, Marilyn Monroe sang "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" in 1953 and made her character, Lorelei Lee, an icon of American cinema. But before Monroe's film, the literary Lorelei captivated and provoked a different generation of people. In 1925, Anita Loos serialized *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady* in *Harper's Bazaar.* The novel is entirely comprised of the fictionalized diary entries of Lorelei Lee, a character Loos describes in the 1963 preface to *Blondes'* as "the nadir in shortsighted human stupidity" (Loos xii).[1] Lorelei calls herself old-fashioned in the text, but for the reading public her commodity-obsessed ways, bobbed hair, and undeniable sex appeal identified her as a Modern Girl.[2] Loos pokes fun at her gold-digging, fun-loving flapper narrator throughout the text, but she also gestures towards—and takes advantage of—the intense interest that the figure of the Modern Girl generated. *Blondes* is a satirical look at the mind of an American flapper, and it was an immediate and international success.

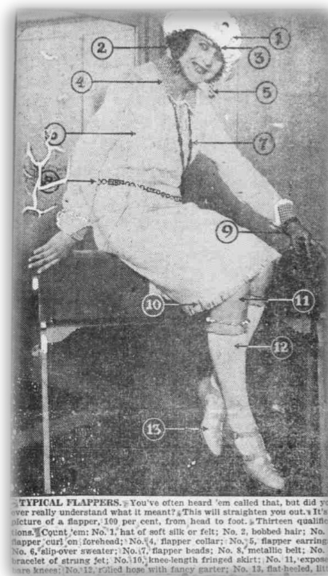
At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Modern Girl was a powerful force in global culture and the most salient emerging identity category for women. A figure associated with

---

[1] In Loos's 1963 preface, she uses the phrase "the nadir in shortsighted human stupidity" to describe Little Rock Arkansas, but her subsequent writing collapses this geographical backwardness with Lorelei's particular brand of gendered stupidity.

[2] Throughout this chapter, I capitalize Modern Girl when I am discussing the topos of the Modern Girl, and modern girl in lower case letters when discussing historical actors or individuals.

widespread social change, global commodity culture, and women's desire for political, economic, and personal liberation, the Modern Girl, across diverse racial and ethnic communities, was a seductive symbol for the possibilities and choices of a modern world.[3] Like the concept of the modern itself, the Modern Girl is not a stable category. That said, the boundaries of the topos are most clearly defined in association with a popularized aesthetic, a particular image of feminine beauty. As the Modern Girl Around the World Research Group argues, advertisements, films, and other visual mediums are the primary means through which we can see a "distinct Modern Style simultaneously appear[ing] around the globe in the 1920's and 1930's" (25). Newspapers published images, like the one below, outlining the characteristics of the Modern Girl in order to help their readers learn how to identify her in person [Figure 2.1]



TYPICAL FLAPPERS. You've often heard 'em called that, but did yo ever really understand what it meant? This will straighten you out. It's picture of a flapper, 100 per cent, from head to foot. Thirteen qualifica tions. Count 'em: No. 1, hat of soft silk or felt; No. 2, bobbed hair; No. flapper curl on forehead; No. 4, flapper collar; No. 5, flapper earrings No. 6, slip-over sweater; No. 7, flapper beads; No. 8, metallic belt; No. bracelet of strung jet; No. 10, knee-length fringed skirt; No. 11, exposed bare knees; No. 12, rolled hose with fancy garter; No. 13, flat-heeled, littl

Figure 2.1: A newspaper article titled "Typical Flappers" accompanied by a photograph of a flapper with numbers corresponding to her typical attire (*Weekly Journal-Miner*. August 2, 1922. Image. Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, Prescott, AZ. Image 1, col. 3).

[3] The Modern Girl had many names and developed out of the flows of geographically specific socio-cultural movements. Each iteration of the figure embodied the ways women navigated the interaction between global discourses of gender and modernity and the particular histories and politics of their communities and geographical spaces. Showing up in India as the *kallege ladki*, in Japan as the *modan gāru/moga,* and in Germany's *Neue Frauen*, the modern girl in the United States and Britain is best remembered as the flapper. For more information on the global modern girl, see *The Modern Girl Around the World* Anthology.

Descriptions of the flapper “look” often fell short of rigorousness. The subtext for the image above, for example, lists characteristics that are fairly specific, like "bobbed hair" and "rolled hose"; yet, it also lists features that are extraordinarily vague, like "flapper beads," a "flapper collar," and "flapper earrings" ("Typical Flappers"). Despite the less than helpful picture by numbers in “Typical Flappers,” at least a few aesthetic markers manifest as essential to the topos of the Modern Girl. The Modern Girl Around the World collective lists these distinctive, globally recognizable qualities as "bobbed hair, painted lips, provocative clothing, elongated body, and [an] open, easy smile" (Weinbaum et al. 2). In magazines, films, and advertisements, the Modern Girl danced on skyscrapers, drove automobiles, and gallivanted on beaches. Her hypervisibility in popular print culture has meant that she is often remembered as a creature of surfaces, a topos defined by the ways her image circulated in different geographical locations. Looking at literary texts instead of collections of images, though, highlights one of the least analyzed aspects of the figure of the Modern Girl: her mind.

This chapter analyzes dominant depictions and descriptions of Modern Girlhood to identify the network of stories that comprises the topos of the Modern Girl. My transmedial and transnational analysis identifies the centrality of articulations of intellectual independence to discussions of modern gendered identity. In the early parts of this chapter I focus on the ways modern gender identity is constructed through a definition of cognitive autonomy. The first section identifies that at the beginning of the twentieth century women authors assert that being modern means having a powerful and rational mind. The second section ties this Modern Girl articulation of mental autonomy to the political history of women’s rights rhetoric. I contend that Modern Girl arguments of intellectual prowess are attempts to claim sociopolitical recognition in ways that are inextricable from the history of the New Woman. The final section of this chapter

complicates the liberatory tenor of Modern Girl rhetoric. While the early twentieth century is undoubtedly a period saturated with increased attention to the power and potential of (mostly white) women's minds, it is also a moment where women's assertions of intellectual prowess become inextricable from their sexual attractiveness. Exploring the way that the mind becomes part of a discourse of white, male heterosexual desire demonstrates that women's interesting, independent minds are positioned precariously in a system that privileges rationality and reliability. Through a discussion of the relationship between the Angel in the House and the Modern Girl, I outline that even while women fight to argue that their modern minds are authentic and powerful, their sexualization suggests the continued potency of the dichotomous trope of the naïve/manipulative woman that accompanies heterosexual systems of power.

My work at the end of this chapter elucidates the complex interplay and interpenetration between literary representation and cultural pattern. In this period, women authors argue for the chance to control, or at the very least contribute to, the stories told about their cognitive capabilities. Though my work is attentive to the distance between the stories told by and about women and the lives of the women who live alongside those narratives, this chapter concludes by acknowledging how women navigate, in the creation of fictional worlds or in acts of self-disclosure, dominant cultural discourses of female identity. More importantly, it demonstrates the ways issues of race and class factor into dominant conceptualizations of the capable mind of the Modern Girl.

I.

"Brains are Really Everything"[4]

"I mean I seem to be thinking practically all of the time." Lorelei Lee

Reading Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* in the context of the history of the

[4] "Brains are Really Everything" is the title of the sixth chapter of Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

Modern Girl not only highlights the centrality of a rhetoric of cognitive independence but also demonstrates the complications that emerge around the sexualization of the mind of the Modern Girl. Despite the designation of the blondeness of its heroine, Loos's novel is noticeably bereft of physical descriptions of the narrator and focalizing character Lorelei Lee.[5] Instead, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* foregrounds Lorelei's writing. Written in epistolary form, the text focuses on the inner-workings of Lorelei's mind, allowing a glimpse into the mind of a flapper whose success, like the Modern Girl's, is purportedly determined by her beautiful exterior.

An essential part of what makes Lorelei a flapper is that she, like her historical counterparts, claims intellectual autonomy and asserts her ideas as worthy of respect. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* takes the form of Lorelei Lee's diary, and in the opening entry, she describes how she came to be writing this record of her experience. A gentlemen friend, she says, gave her a journal after telling her that if she "took a pencil and a paper and put down all of [her] thoughts it would make a book" (Loos 11). Lorelei's narration of this moment does not dwell on what might have prompted her gentleman friend to make this remark. Instead, she steers the reader's attention to the contents of her mind, detailing her reactions to the gentleman's gift and comments. She scoffs at his underestimation of her intellectual capacity, writing that "what it would really make would be a whole row of encyclopediacs [sic]" (Loos 11). Representing her thoughts as both voluminous and weighty, she is confident that if she were to write down *all* of her thoughts, they would fill more than a single book; they would make a series of reference texts, a resource for people like her gentleman friend who do not know anything about the minds of modern women. Regardless of whether her gentleman friend is sincere or simply self-interested in his compliments, Lorelei understands herself as powerful and intelligent.

Lorelei's insistence on drawing attention to her thoughtful nature stands in tension with

[5] Susan Hegeman's article, "Taking Blondes Seriously," also notes this lack of physical description. She reads the elision as an extension of modernist discussions of surface.

some details in the text that suggest that it is her body and not her brain that determines her success. In the novel, Lorelei fails to explain several incidents of good fortune she experiences in relationship to men. In her narration of these events, she seems almost intentionally obfuscatory. For example, we never learn why Lorelei spends only a couple of months in business school before being singled out to work as a stenographer before graduating. Similarly, when a gun she is holding shoots her boss, we are not told what she does or says to make the all-male court rule that she is not to blame. Although the novel never explicitly addresses her physicality, these narrative elisions suggest that her power lies in her body's attractive veneer. The reason the novel never explores the power of Lorelei's beauty, though, is because Lorelei's diary does not dwell on it. Lorelei is unwavering in her assertion that men find her attractive because she "seem[s] to be thinking practically all of the time" (Loos 11). From the very opening of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Lorelei's writing suggests that men are interested in her because she has "brains."

While Lorelei's assertion of her mental prowess stands at odds with the subtext of the novel - with the narrative implied by her unexplained good fortune with men and money - it aligns with articles written by self-identified flappers and modern girls at the beginning of the twentieth century. Like Lorelei Lee, modern girls narrate their confidence and self-knowledge in the face of discourse that marks them as weak and vapid. In the midst of public debate about hemlines and bobs, modern girls argue that their physical appearance is inextricable from a progressive state of mind. Although, as I noted above, the Modern Girl is often remembered as a creature of surfaces, she is also a topos deeply defined by the ways she fights to portray herself as having unseen mental depths.

Below, I look at some of the ways women assert the importance of their independent minds at the turn of the twentieth century. By demonstrating the overlap between Modern Girl

narratives of authority and writing by women's rights activists, I show that American and European flappers built on the work of the New Woman movement to contend that other people should respect their minds and their right to make their own choices. Modern girls grasp authority by aligning themselves with the dominant conceptualizations of progress, reliability, and cognitive autonomy embedded in New Woman arguments for sociopolitical rights. These parallels are important considering the disconnect so often narrated between the intellectual New Woman and the physically potent Modern Girl.

Articles written by modern girls in this historical moment almost always define "modernity" as cognitive autonomy. Women authors consistently argue that what is most important in defining a Modern Girl is not how she dresses or even how she acts, but what she thinks. Published in a Chicago based magazine called *The Flapper: Not for Old Fogies*, a 1922 article titled "The Modern Riddle" serves as a good example of the kind of argument that women made to assert their intellectual independence. The author, Myrtle Heileman, opens the piece by saying that "the topic of the day" is "the modern girl, commonly known to the multitude as the flapper" (2). She assures her readers that "the flapper isn't the terrible, wicked thing she's supposed to be" and that only "narrow-minded" people criticize her in that way (2). Outlining the critiques levied against flappers, she notes that "several authorities (masculine species), have declared that woman is the cause of all evil, that it is she who leads man into crime" (2). Despite this, she contends that "most of the great women belonged to that class [i.e., flappers]" and that America "couldn't go on without [them]" (Heileman 2).

Heilaman's article is an attempt to take control of the stories told about the Modern Girl. Heileman defines herself, and women like her, in conversation with dominant narratives that mark her choices as a cultural problem. Positioning the Modern Girl as more than an image, a beauty standard, or a harbinger of modern debasement, she contends that the defining

characteristic of the flapper is neither her clothing nor her hair but her "I will," her "'Go to it' spirit" (Heileman 2). To be a flapper, she says, does not mean having a certain haircut or wearing a particular type of dress. It means having an energetic mind and self-knowledge. Heileman defines the Modern Girl as a woman who "has common sense and […] knows when it's time to use her own judgment and exercise her own authority" (2). In her writing, modern girls are women who have the conviction to define themselves as autonomous and knowledgeable. If there is anything that the image of the Modern Girl should evoke, Heileman's article suggests, it is a sense of a powerful, independent, and capable human mind.

Heileman marshals the visible attributes of the Modern Girl as evidence of the rational choices that modern women make about their bodies and their actions. Defending aspects of modern girl aesthetic that scandalize critics, like the bob and short hemlines, Heileman argues that fashion choices are part of a decision to live a more rational, physically unencumbered life. The Modern Girl's choices in style and dress, she says, are reflective of progressive female consciousness. "Analyze her dress," Heileman demands of her reader; "it's the most sensible thing since Eve. She wears her rolled sox…[because] they are extremely cool and comfortable" (2). She continues, "her bobbed hair is cool, sensible, and sanitary" (Heileman 2). [6] In Heileman's argument, any identifiable characteristics of the Modern Girl are a reflection of a powerfully rational female mind.

In making these arguments, Heileman adds her voice to many others in the period that connect the aesthetic of the Modern Girl to a progressive way of thinking. In an interview for *Pictorial Review* in 1927, opera singer Mary Garden says that "bobbed hair [is] a state of mind and not merely a new manner of dressing [her] head" (8). In Garden's account, getting a bob is a way to make a physical characteristic reflect an interior feeling. The bob is a movement away

---

[6] Heileman's arguments also participate in discussions of "rational dress" that predate this period and are associated with the bloomers of the New Woman.

from “old-fashioned” ideals and “feminine helplessness” (Garden 8). Women with bobs make visible the fact that they belong “to the age of freedom, frankness, and progressiveness” (Garden 8). They make choices that signal to a policing society that they are not helpless or passive: they will fight for the right to live a life that they choose.

II.

From the New Woman to the Modern Girl:

Defining Modern Cognitive Citizenship

The Modern Girl is often remembered as the less political historical descendant of the New Woman, but arguments by modern girls like Heileman lean on the same progressive era ideologies of self-knowledge and cognitive autonomy that are mobilized by women’s rights movements in the late nineteenth century. In talking about the ethos of the Modern Girl, Kathy Peiss suggests that the Modern Girl’s individualism is "not the individualism of liberal political theory, involving a claim to citizenship, but a more psychological notion of individuality" (Weinbaum et al. 352). Peiss’s argument distances the assertions of autonomy that Heileman articulates from the language of autonomy used by activists in the nineteenth century to fight for the political rights of women. Modern Girl assertions of cognitive independence, though, are similar to arguments by New Women precisely because they rely on concepts from liberal political theory in which rationality and self-knowledge define personhood and citizenship.

Both Modern Girls and New Women claim that their cognitive autonomy and self-knowledge are evidence that they deserve sociopolitical respect. Heileman’s article, for example, echoes the rhetoric of activists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a pivotal figure in the early women’s rights movement. Stanton’s work circulates in social activist, suffragist, and abolitionist debates throughout the nineteenth century. In 1892, Stanton argues that it is because women, like men, have an "inner being, which we call ourself," a mind that has its own "bitter

disappointments…brightest hopes and ambitions," that they ought to be equipped with the education and political rights that allow them the chance to live and act with "self-dependence…self-support" (3). Stanton's emphasis on self-reliance is grounded in the belief that she has independent cognitive capabilities that she should be able to develop. In arguments like Heileman's, the language of self-reliance and cognitive authority becomes not just a justification for political change but a way to extend such thinking to a general respect for the choices and ideas that women have about their bodies and their lives.

Both Heileman and Stanton suggest that women's hopes, desires, and disappointments – the stories that they have to tell about their own experience – are inextricable from having the economic, political, and material freedoms to act on that self-positioning. They insist that, because women have minds of their own, they should also have the means to decide what kind of life they would like to lead. Their arguments tap into writing by authors like John Dewey, John Locke, and John Stuart Mills whose work grounds liberal political theory. Dewey, Locke, and Mills define personhood and citizenship through discussions of individualism, independence, and self-reliance.[7] Fundamentally, what Heileman and Stanton identify is a disjuncture between how they perceive the existence of women's minds – as having independent ideas about common sense, rationality, desire, disappointment, etc. – and the ways in which those minds are perceived and respected in women's daily lives.[8]

---

[7] John Dewey, for example argues that "the state has the responsibility for creating institutions under which individuals can effectively realize the potentialities that are theirs" (21), while John Locke argues that, "every man has a Property in his own Person." Locke also contends that the individual "has a right to decide what would become of himself and what he would do, and as having a right to reap the benefits of what he did" (*"Civil Government"*).

[8] As June Howard points out in *Publishing the Family*, the New Woman's language of individualism extends forward through the women's movements of the 1960's and 70's. Arguing that, "decade after decade, women invent their own relations to female modernity," Howard identifies an issue of *New Woman* from 1971 that describes a continued reliance on female individualism: "We at NEW WOMAN stress the importance of the female self—not selflessness and subservience. We believe that life can be a greater experience when one searches out one's own identity, explores one's own individuality, believes in one's own abilities, discovers who or what one is or might be and takes real pleasure in being that person. This kind of thinking—and doing—constitutes the essence of living that many men (but only a few women) have heretofore known" (qtd. in Howard 206-207). The magazine itself, as Howard argues, is a combination of merchandising and feminism in which you pay for a "magazine dedicated to the elevation of the status and image of the thinking woman" (*New Woman* qtd in Howard 207). Though Howard

Women's assertions of their autonomous and powerful minds fit neatly into narratives that define the early twentieth century as a period of increased freedom and empowerment for women, particularly white women. As June Howard explains, "whether she attracted or she repelled, the defining feature of the New Woman was that she had choices. She might marry, or not; she might have a career, or not; she might support reform and suffrage, or not – but in each case she was understood to make up her own mind" (158). In popular representations of the Modern Girl this ability to choose, "to make up her own mind," is a defining feature of the topos. In stories and advertisements, she dances frenetically, drives recklessly, runs and bikes in athletic competitions, and commands attention in public spaces. She proposes to her beau, drinks, and smokes. The public representation of the Modern Girl marks her as a woman who does what she wants, when she wants to, because she has fought for her economic and political independence. The arguments above, though, suggest that despite this popular image, historical women living alongside the topos of the Modern Girl had to continually contend that they had adequate cognitive capabilities.

III.

Why Does Smart Become Sexy?

From the Angel in the House to the Modern Girl

The Modern Girl is a complicated figure tied to more than just the progressive politics of the New Woman. Looking at the network of stories through which the figure of the Modern Girl emerges is an opportunity to unpack the way discourses of gendered modernity sexualize women's minds and undermine the efficacy of assertions of cognitive autonomy. Unlike the New

---

focuses specifically on the New Woman movement and the women's movements of the 1960s and 70s, *Publishing the Family* demonstrates the pervasiveness of a language of liberal individualism in feminist movements (as well as its cooptation). Moreover, the long history Howard's work discusses stands as evidence of the enduring naturalization of the model of modern cognitive citizenship I outline throughout this dissertation, a model in which power requires an assertion of self-knowledge and cognitive capabilities.

Woman, the Modern Girl was understood as an ideal of feminine beauty. She may have been represented in popular culture as a woman more likely to be found dancing on an airplane than pouring you tea, but she was still a beauty icon, a female topos in part defined by her desirability.

How did the flat-chested, gender-bending Modern Girl become a sex symbol? Returning to an examination of Loos's Lorelei Lee can help to answer this question. Lorelei's association with the American flapper is often relegated to observations about her status as a fun-loving, commodity-obsessed stereotype, but seeing her as a sex symbol highlights some of the ways in which the flapper reflects complicated ideas about gender and modernity in this period. In "Taking Blondes Seriously," one of the few pieces of scholarship that connects Lorelei to the flapper, Susan Hegeman reads Lorelei's association with the child-like demeanor of the flapper as part of the "subtextual nature of sexuality in the novel" (539). Marking the ambiguity of whether Lorelei "works at seduction or somehow simply, passively, embodies sexual attractiveness" (539), Hegeman sees the evasion of sex in the discourse of the novel as a part of "Lorelei's problematic relationship to agency" (539). In her reading, Lorelei's interest in educating herself through reading and her insistence on her more than capable brains are euphemisms. Hegeman notes that Lorelei tells the reader that her benefactor, Gus Eisman the Button King, "spends quite a lot of money educating a girl," and that "of course when a gentleman is interested in educating a girl, he likes to stay and talk about topics of the day until quite late" (Loos qtd. in Hegeman 539). She marks this as evidence that education is a word that means sex and "brains" is "a similarly coded reference to sex appeal" (Hegeman 536).[9] And although there is a clearly sexual undertone to Lorelei's relationship with Eisman, putting Loos's novel in the context of the modern girl suggests that "brains" and "education" might not be

---

[9] Hegeman points out that "by the yardstick of an older standard of beauty," the bodies of the American Flapper seemed "curiously sexless" (536). However, this sexlessness was precisely a part of the aesthetic that women like Heileman mobilized to make visible their powerful, independent minds.

euphemisms for sex but a reflection of new ideas about gendered attractiveness at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lorelei's interest in reading and writing books and her desire to present herself as having "brains" resonates with contemporaneous representations of desirable women who have minds of their own. Analyzing novels like *Gentleman Prefer Blondes* that explore the allure of the mind of the Modern Girl complicate the simplicity of narratives of women's progress and freedom. They depict the ways in which discourses of desire play a role in the kinds of power available to women in this historical moment. Moreover, they demonstrate that sex appeal can function as a means for undermining women's assertions of intellectual capabilities. Modern Girls are smart and independent, though, as I will demonstrate, not necessarily intelligent, rational, or intellectual.

If aligning the Modern Girl with the New Woman helps to illuminate the ways in which the topos is shaped by discourses of cognitive independence and self-knowledge, outlining the Modern Girl's relationship to the Angel in the House demonstrates that she is equally connected to a discourse of desire, a discourse that stands in tension with assertions of reliability and knowledge. In this section, I examine the differences and similarities between how the Angel in the House and the Modern Girl are marked as attractive. In the early twentieth century, discussions of sexual attractiveness shift from valorizing a dependent and knowable Angelic mind to marking as desirous a bewildering and independent female mind. Popular representations of the appearance and actions of Modern Girls were a dramatic change if not from actual, historical women of the past, at the very least from the dominant feminine ideals of the previous period.

Scholarship that focuses on women's history in the nineteenth century is fairly consistent in marking mid-century as the time period in which the ideal of the self-effacing mother,

daughter, and wife takes hold in numerous geographical locations.[10] Even before Coventry Patmore's 1854 long, narrative poem, "The Angel in the House," put the term in circulation, literary texts from this time period describe desirable women as angels. For example, Harry Maylie in Charles Dickens's 1837 novel, *Oliver Twist*, asserts his desire for his love interest, Rose, by describing her as "a creature as fair and innocent of guile as one of God's own angels" (277).[11] He sees her as a woman who "belonged to that bright sphere whither so many of the fairest and the best have winged" (278). Harry's attraction to Rose springs from the fact that she is so predictably and reliably good that she could be an angel: pure, innocent, and unfailingly right. Similarly, in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lucy Audley is marked as attractive by the narrator because "she looked very pretty and innocent, seated behind the graceful group of delicate opal china and glittering silver" (242). It is her innocence, naivety, and purity that are described as desirous.

In her study of the political history of domestic fiction in the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries, Nancy Armstrong points out that in the late eighteenth century, "authors began to represent an individual's value in terms of his, but more often in terms of *her*, essential qualities of mind" (4). She argues that "literature devoted to producing the domestic woman" suggests that "neither birth nor the accoutrements of title and status accurately represented the individual; only the more subtle nuances of behavior indicated what one was really worth" (Armstrong 4). In literary description external behavior can be a readable manifestation of character and thought in ways that allow readers to "attach[] precise moral value to certain qualities of the mind"

[10] The idea of the Angel in the House is often linked to Coventry Patmore's coining of the phrase in 1858, but the concept of the self-effacing, domestic woman has, of course, a much longer history. Scholars of Hispanic culture, for example, connect the idea of the nineteenth-century *ángel del hogar* to the concept of *la perfecta casada* (The Perfect Wife) from Fray de Luis de León's 1583 manual for women. For more information on this history see the following resources: *Rewriting Womanhood: Feminism, Subjectivity, and the Angel of the House in the Latin American Novel* by Nancy LaGreca and Bridget Aldaraca's work, *El Angel Del Hogar: Galdos and the Ideology of Domesticity in Spain.*

[11] *Oliver Twist* was originally serialized from 1837 to 1839 in *Bentley's Miscellany*.

(Armstrong 4). Of course, novels in this period trouble the readability and "reality" of those associations, but the shift Armstrong notes – towards valuing a particular set of mental qualities – is crucial to nineteenth century descriptions of women's minds.

The characteristics of the topos of the Angel in the House have been explored in numerous analyses, but what I want to draw attention to in the language that describes the Angel is how much of the discourse about her attractiveness has to do with predictability, with reliability. The following excerpt from Patmore's poem is characteristic of the ways in which the mind of the Angel was represented as knowable:

> Man must be pleased; but him to please
>
> Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
>
> Of his condoled necessities
>
> She casts her best, she flings herself.

Reportedly written about his wife, this passage idealizes a woman whose pleasure is defined through someone else's. The first line, "But him to please / is woman's pleasure" becomes an important part of the language that surrounds mainstream, masculine, heterosexual desire in the nineteenth century. A good woman is predictable, because her innocence and morality guide her to create pleasure for others. In representations of the Angel, moral purity and innocence are readable qualities that can help predict what life with an Angel will be like. In the topos of the Angel in the House, innocence and moral purity are inextricable from dependency and subordination. Innocent and pure minds are minds that are geared towards supporting the desires of the family, husband, and community associated with them. In George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, for example, Tertius Lydgate discusses his desire to have a wife that would "have that feminine radiance, that distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous, being molded only for pure and delicate joys"

(121). For him, Rosamund Vincy is "perfect womanhood," a companion that will "venerate his high musings and momentous labors…create order in the home and accounts with still magic, yet keep her fingers ready to touch the lute and transform life into romance at any moment" (258). Rosamund marries domestic ideals with a sexual undertone that is justifiable within the context of the Angel topos. Rosamund and other women imagined as the Angel are represented as desirable because they are knowable, because their desires are never independent ones.

Although discourses of desire are always contradictory and multiple, the dominant understanding of male desire in the late nineteenth century surrounds the Angel in the House. Descriptions of male desire do not linger on the inner workings of women's minds. Instead, they hinge on the idea that men want an angelic woman because they believe they already know the limits of her desires (domesticity, wifehood, motherhood). The mind of the Angel is knowable, readable, and visible in her actions, demeanor, and behavior. The idea is a woman who does not have a mind of her own, and that is what changes when the Modern Girl comes onto the scene.[12]

Masculine, heterosexual desire for the Angel lies in her knowable and predictable mind, but when the Modern Girl emerges as a sex symbol it is her independent mind that defines her allure. When Lorelei Lee says that men are interested in her "brains" and her ideas, she speaks to a noticeable trend in the literature of the time. It is the mind of the Modern Girl that manifests in the language of sexual desire in the early twentieth century. Narratives that describe what makes the Modern Girl attractive note the seductiveness of trying to figure out what is going on inside of her head, because the personality of the flapper always seems to be just barely visible. Although she acts indifferent, the persistent suggestion is that something exciting and interesting is bubbling beneath her shellacked, nonchalant veneer. In descriptions of the Modern Girl and in

[12] There are, of course, exceptions to nineteenth century representations of predictable women's minds. Women were sometimes represented as irrational, emotional creatures who were unpredictable in their mood swings. What I contend here is that predictability is a dominant paradigm in literary and popular representations of the Angel as a gendered ideal.

Modern Girl self-descriptions, women's attractiveness is connected to the perception of an independent and unreadable gendered mind.

Myrtle Heileman's article picks up on the characterization of the flapper as a cipher in the title of her article; she calls the Modern Girl "The Modern Riddle." As I have pointed out above, Heileman argues that a Modern Girl is a woman who has a mind of her own and knows when to use her own judgment. What is important about that description is that it positions the flapper's independent decision making as a source of her unpredictability. Heileman is not the only flapper who traffics in this kind of description. Zelda Fitzgerald, for example, argues that a flapper is the kind of woman who says, "I do not want to be respectable" ("Eulogy" 391). Any real flapper, that is, "flirt[s] because it [is] fun to flirt and [wears] a one-piece bathing suit because she [has] a good figure, she cover[s] her face with powder and paint because she [doesn't] need it and she refuse[s] to be bored chiefly because she [isn't] boring" (Fitzgerald, "Eulogy" 391). The flapper does all of these things because "she [is] conscious that the things she [does are] the things she [has] always wanted to do" (Fitzgerald, "Eulogy" 391). Fitzgerald's description, like Heileman's title, gestures towards the way modern girls narrate their independence by positioning themselves in opposition to social norms. Their minds are their own; interesting because they are unpredictable.

In this historical moment, though, ideas about the independent and indifferent mind of the flapper are inextricable from ideas about her attractiveness. It is in the early twentieth century, for example, that the "It Girl" comes into being. In 1927, Elinor Glyn popularizes the word "it" as a colloquialism for sex appeal. In a short story of that name, she defines "It" as "strange magnetism" that is the effect of being "entirely unselfconscious and full of self-confidence" (Glyn 5).[13] A person with "It" is "indifferent to the effect he or she is producing, and

---

[13] This is a quote from a text scene in the silent film *It* that cites the serialized story "IT" from *Cosmopolitan*.

uninfluenced by others" (Glyn 5). The language Glyn uses to explain the qualities of "It" match up with the essence of Myrtle Heileman's argument that Modern Girls know "when it is time to use [their] own judgment and exercise [their] own authority" (2). Glyn uses the term as a description for the sex appeal of both men and women, but it becomes intertwined with the idea of the Modern Girl. "IT," the short story about a girl, becomes a film, and that film depicts a flapper, actress Clara Bow, as shop girl Betty Lou Spence. In the film, Betty Lou steals the affections of her boss away from his beautiful but old-fashioned (and monied) girlfriend. Catapulting Clara Bow into stardom, the film makes her the first "It" Girl, but it also irretrievably connects the idea of "It" to the éclat of a progressive, modern girl.

Oft-heralded as popularizing, if not creating, the flapper as a literary figure, F. Scott Fitzgerald repeatedly connects the flapper's sex appeal to her indifferent, independent, and unpredictable mind. In an interview, Fitzgerald argues that it is "rather futile to analyze flappers," and in many of his descriptions, it is precisely her unreadability and capacity to shock that makes a woman attractive (Reid 94).[14] In his work, Fitzgerald describes heroines with words like "curious and courageous" (*Flappers and Philosophers*, "Benediction" 195) just as much as he characterizes them with physical characteristics like "slender and supple" (*Flappers and Philosophers*, "The Offshore Pirate" 5). The allure of the Modern Girl is that she has, like Fitzgerald's heroine, Ardita, "a radiant curiosity" (*Flappers and Philosophers,* "Offshore" 5), or like Marjorie in "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" a "dazzling, bewildering tongue" (*Flappers and Philosophers* 109). What makes these characters attractive is that they are mystifying, and that they have minds that are as quick and lithe as their beautiful, young bodies.

Not all of Fitzgerald's female characters are seductive in the same ways – Modern Girls,

[14] Fitzgerald says quite a bit about the flapper in his numerous interviews on the topic, but these particular sentiments are from an interview in *Motion Picture Magazine* in July of 1927 (no.6). For more information about his views on the flapper, see the book *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald* edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith Baughman.

he points out in an interview, can be “all sorts of girls” – but they do have to be “young things with a splendid talent for living” (Reid 94). What exactly, though, does he mean by a “splendid talent for living”? In his texts, and in other descriptions of the flapper (and by the flapper) in fiction and in historical documents, a splendid talent for living means acting and speaking in ways that fall outside of the boundaries of traditional ideas about decorum. Modern Girls minds are perplexing because what they do and say often stands at odds with the belief systems of others. Fitzgerald’s protagonist in the short story “The Jelly-Bean” exclaims, for example, “Don’t treat me like a girl…I’m not like any girl YOU ever saw” (*Tales of the Jazz Age* 24). Seemingly indifferent to the opinions or beliefs of others, flappers aggressively assert their independent, and often adversarial, minds. They do not just bob their hair and wear short skirts, they refuse proposals, flit from one love affair to another, and refuse to allow anyone real knowledge of their interiority. Maintaining their distance intellectually, if not physically, they are indomitable, and that is attractive.

Descriptions of the appeal of a woman with an independent mind circulate even in texts that are not often considered Modern Girl narratives. In Jessie Redmon Fauset’s novel *Plum Bun*, for example, they manifest in a description of the African American protagonist, Angela.[15] A white love interest, Roger, describes her this way: “She was young; she was, when lighted from within by some indescribable mechanism, even beautiful; she had charm and, what was for him

[15] Catherine Keyser also reads Angela in relationship to the American flapper. Her book, *Playing Smart*, analyzes middlebrow magazine humorists who “play smart” in their production of a language of wit and irony that allows them to subvert stereotypes and critique modernity and its gender roles. Her discussion of the wit and humor of the fashionable flapper smart set speaks to the central argument of this dissertation – that women across racial and ethnic difference develop strategies to negotiate a world that did not want them to be too serious, too intellectual. Keyser opens her monograph with a reading of Nancy Hoyt’s “A Very Modern Love Story,” that outlines this precise heterosexual desire. She notes that the protagonist of the story is accompanied by a man who does not want her to be “‘too serious’ or ‘too heavily cultured’” (1). In Keyser’s reading of *Plum Bun*, she contends that “Fauset’s novels offer irony as a corrective for social injustice and wit as a verbal corollary for self-regard” (109). While my work focuses on narrative experimentation and the representation of fictional minds as tools for negotiating the challenges of modern cognitive citizenship, Keyser’s analyzes humor and irony. For more on flappers and humor see *Playing Smart: New York Women Writers and Modern Magazine Culture.*

even more important, she was puzzling" (122). Angela's beauty is inherently tied to Roger's desire to understand that which is not exactly visible on her exterior. For two paragraphs after that sentence, Roger tries to decide what it is about Angela that makes her so "puzzling" and "pleasing" to him.[16] Looking at a Modern Girl, like Angela, is looking at something that has an energy and a spirit that is independent, unusual, and mysterious, unsettling and exciting rather than comforting and calming. Similar discussions of the minds of women of color appear in novels like Nella Larsen's *Passing* and stories like the "The Vine Leaf" by María Cristina Mena or "Melanctha" by Gertrude Stein. In these works, narrative description is inextricable from the contemporaneous fetishization of stories about raced (and racy) bodies.

The self-dependent nature of the Modern Girl becomes integral to her sex appeal, and in some texts her independence becomes a part of a narrative discourse that marks her as valuable only for her sexual promise. Modern Girls may be indomitable, but they are also just the kind of indomitable that a man would love to conquer. One example of a text that explores this aspect of the topos is the iconic Modern Girl novel, *Naomi*. Serialized by Japanese author Jun'ichirō Tanizaki starting in 1924, the novel is so culturally potent that the titular character's name becomes a slang term for the characteristics of the *môdan gaaru*, the Japanese Modern Girl.[17] In the novel, the narrator, 28 year old Jôji, meets Naomi when she is 15 years old and his desire for her lies in the fact that he believes he can shape her into a perfect, westernized, modern woman. However, Naomi quickly grows beyond Jôji's control. Asserting herself in the ways that she sees

---

[16] The narrative tension of this moment is developed through the fact that the reader is aware that Roger does not know Angela is passing for white. What he reads as puzzling and indecipherable, her resistance for falling for him, is inextricable from her act of racial passing.

[17] Donald Keene describes the process through which Naomi became a national sensation in his work *Dawn to West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era.* He describes the novel's impact this way: "It is a summing up of the craving for modernity, free love and liberation from cramping old traditions that marked [Tanizaki's] earlier works, but implicitly condemns the hero, Jôji, for his adulation of a waitress whose coarse appeal destroys a decent, sensitive man. However, the book did not seem a condemnation to its first readers. Young people were attracted by the portrayal of the môdan gaaru...who violated all the old rules, and the term 'Naomi-ism' was invented to describe her appeal" (735).

the movie starlets do, she becomes willful and mercurial. And, although Jôji sees her as damaging to his life and sanity, he cannot seem to help himself from obsessively desiring her. He describes her as an "obsession that never goes away" (Tanizaki 236), citing his reason for loving her by asking the question, "Can it be…that life without her is so dull as this?" (Tanizaki 237). Jôji does not desire the stability of the Angel. He is excited by the ups and downs, the trials and tribulations, of life with a woman who is capricious and unreadable. For Jôji, it is arousing to be able to "boast to everyone, 'This woman is mine. Take a look at my treasure'" (Tanizaki 58), precisely because of her independence and self-confidence.

The desire to control or collect a woman who seems independent and powerful has had a long afterlife and looking at a description of 1920s starlet Louise Brooks can help to demonstrate the dangers that correspond with the sexualization of the mind of the modern girl. Between the years 1925 and 1938, Brooks, with dark eyes, bobbed hair, and unquestionable sexuality, was one of the most photographed "It" girls of the silver screen in America and Europe. A controversial and short-lived star, Brooks left a lasting impression on the image of the Modern Girl – Paramount studios marketed the flapper hair cut as the "Louise Brooks bob." Today, she is still remembered as an iconic figure in the history of cinema. What is interesting about Brooks in this context, though, is the kind of response her acting and image elicit. Film critic Kenneth Tynan describes her, graphically, as an "unbroken, unbreakable porcelain filly," suggesting that she is the only actress he can imagine "being enslaved by or wanting to enslave" (95). His description gets at the tenuousness of Brooks' control over "It," because "It" relies on the idea that women's power rests on how others perceive them. The fantasy is that they are indomitable but also available to be possessed.

Tangled up in notions of the attractive female mind, then, are ideas of masculine desire as well as ideas of female authority. In 1931, Frederick Lewis Allen publishes his history of the 1920's called *Only Yesterday* in which he describes the allure of the flapper in these terms:

> [T]he woman of the Post-war Decade said to man, 'You are tired and disillusioned, you do not want the cares of a family or the companionship of mature wisdom, you want exciting play, you want the thrills of sex without their fruition, and I will give them to you.' And to herself she added, 'But I will be free.' (94)

His description highlights the challenge of the shift in the discourse of sexual attraction. One way of reading the above passage is to think that the flapper's independence is what the "Post-war Decade" man desires, but another is to suggest that she does what is necessary to appease the desires of "Post-war Decade" men and enjoy her own freedom. Descriptions of flappers in literature and culture explore the somewhat causally confusing nature of the flapper as a sex icon. Is the flapper attractive because she is indifferent and independent, or is she making her independence attractive by making herself palatable to the perceived post-war desires of men? Is the Modern Girl's status as a sex symbol a limitation or a freedom? What interests me most in what follows is not whether flappers have agency, but what we learn from looking at how women navigate this double-bind. Once Modern Girlhood defines modernity in terms of the mind, how does the sexualization of women's cognitive capabilities play out? That is, in a system in which gaining sociopolitical rights requires an assertion of intellectual prowess and self-knowledge, how do women navigate a space in which their sexuality marks their minds as unreliable? What narrative structures do they rely on and what kinds of stories do they tell?

IV.

Negotiating Difference:

Arguing for Authenticity and Reliability

In her research on gender and narration in eighteenth and nineteenth century novels, Alison Case notes that "a woman's power to define the shape and meaning of her story—or further, her power to define herself as having that power—was considerably more elusive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than the proliferation of women's voices in the novel of the period would suggest" (192). It is precisely the right to define one's own life story – its goals, aspirations, desires, and definitions of success – that the figure of the Modern Girl asserts at the beginning of the twentieth century. In this chapter, I have looked at some of the ways in which Modern Girl stories are complicated by a history that marks women's claims of intelligence as associated with an always already sexualized body. Even though descriptions of "It" suggest that "It" is a powerful thing for a woman to exude, descriptions of the allure of the flapper always get at the volatility of that kind of power. Confident, beautiful women are interpolated into a discourse of sexual desire, a language that marks their power and achievements as suspect. Questions of women's mental or professional prowess and the powers of their minds become inextricable from the ways in which they are imagined as sexy. In this section, I outline a complicated history in which reliability and cognitive authority manifest as two of the main challenges that women face in arguing for sociopolitical rights across historical time, and I analyze how those issues play out once the mind of the modern girl becomes part of her sex appeal.

A long history of women have argued that female beauty can be a tool in the fight for feminist causes. Analyzing that history demonstrates the ways complicated structural inequalities determine how women negotiate asserting their independent minds and their sexuality. In her discussion of French feminist history Mary Louise Roberts details the work of feminist actress and professional journalist, Marguerite Durand. Durand serves as an excellent example of the gender politics women negotiated in asserting their right to speech, employment, and

sociopolitical respect. Roberts documents Durand's work as a pivotal part of the creation of the *éclaireuse*, a figure Roberts sees as negotiating the transition from the "mannish" New Woman to the beautiful and powerful French Modern Girl, the *garçonne*.[18] In Robert's work, Durand's contribution to the shift is clear: attractive femininity can aid in a fight for economic parity in a patriarchal system.

Well known for her work as a feminist activist at the end of the nineteenth century, Durand was the driving force in the creation of an all-female newspaper called *La Fronde*. Durand started the paper after she was assigned to cover the international feminist conference for the newspaper *Le Figaro* (Roberts, "Making" 81). While at the convention, she believed that the "good ideas" presented were being undermined by the fact that her fellow reporters for *le Figaro* dwelled on women's thick-glasses and their "resemblance to men, the effect of which was to render their positions less interesting" (Roberts, "Making" 81). In response, Durand decided that "if the New Woman had been lambasted in the press, the only response was for women to create a newspaper of their own, one which produced a more positive image of the New Woman as feminine, elegant, and beautiful as well as powerful and professional" (Roberts, "Making" 84). Along with her employees, Durand went about convincing male reporters in Paris that "female rights" did not require the renunciation of "the joys of seduction" (Roberts, "Making" 85). [19] They hosted parties, conducted interviews with dignitaries, and ran campaigns to make their brand of feminism more visible to the French public, all while doing political work like founding a union for female typographers (1899) and starting a research center for the study of women's

[18] Roberts suggests that the name comes from a play by Maurice Donnay and "is a feminization of the *éclaireur*, a military term for soldiers who go in advance of troops for intelligence purposes" ("Making" 87). The designation, *éclaireuse* is one that is placed onto Durand's legacy retroactively, as Donnay's play comes toward the tail end of her career and the figure's prominence. Roberts sometimes refers to this figure as the *Frondeuse*, after the newspaper's name.

[19] The list that Roberts includes in her work details the impressive women that Durand gathered around her from Clemence Royer, the first woman to teach at the Sorbonne to Blanche Galien, the first female pharmacist ("Making" 84).

labor (1907) (Roberts, *Disruptive* 49).

In her life, Durand argues for a feminism that is inextricable from, indeed reliant on, female seductiveness and beauty. Pronouncing that "[f]eminism owes a great deal to [her] blonde hair," Durand argues "I know it thinks contrary, but it is wrong" (Roberts, *Disruptive* 49). A famous picture of Durand, an image where she stands tall and assertive holding the leash of her lion, *Tigre*, demonstrates the complicated power dynamics of her feminine feminism. Roberts points out that a closer inspection of the image "reveals that a male figure behind the door, perhaps purposefully hidden but nevertheless visible, did the real work of controlling Tiger" (Roberts, "Making" 83).[20] Despite the fact that the picture represents Durand as independent and in charge, her power is not wholly separate from masculine presence. Although Durand foregrounds her own intelligence, her ideas hinge on claiming a power that comes from convincing men that feminism is not threatening to their heteronormative desires. There is power, she suggests, in getting what you want by catering to the desires of men. So, on the one hand, sounding familiar to Myrtle Heileman, Durand writes, "[i]n all things, one must have the courage of one's own opinion" (Roberts, *Disruptive* 64); but, on the other hand, she argues that there is power in being beautiful and seductive.

Durand's *éclaireuse* feminism was contested even in her own historical moment. She had a contentious relationship with socialist and working-class feminist activists despite the fact that *La Fronde* provided a platform for feminist voices (Roberts, *Disruptive* 64). Arguments against Durand saw her centering of aesthetic concerns as classist, exclusionary, and politically problematic (Roberts, *Disruptive* 64). As Roberts articulates it, "[h]ow could blond hair be feminist?" (*Disruptive* 50). For Durand, though, women's attractiveness was never not in play in

---

[20] Roberts also notes that this image rests on Orientalist props, demonstrating "how imperialist tropes of power were used by women to make their own case for authority and control" ("Making " 84).

discussions of women's rights, and so she chose to use her sexuality as a means to gain social, political, and material power, instead of letting it remain part of the narratives that marked her body as less important or less worthy of being taken seriously. Her way of telling her own story was powerful in her time, and it resonates not just within her own cultural moment, but also beyond it.

The *éclaireuse*, Durand's feminine feminist, was not the Modern Girl in look – the French equivalent of that aesthetic is the *garçonne* – but Durand's narrative of the power of heterosexual desire manifests in the topos of the Modern Girl. Roberts, for example, highlights what remains the same between the *éclaireuse* and the *garçonne* by saying that "the garçonne inherited Durand's equation of modernity and femininity. This Modern Girl cut her hair, wore deliberately masculine clothes, and deemphasized her hips and breasts. Yet she also strove for a distinctly feminine glamour that was carefree but also charming. Gone forever was the plain-Jane…New Woman" (Roberts "Making the Modern Girl French" 92). Roberts draws attention to the fact that there is a shift in aesthetic but that the *garçonne*, like the *éclaireuse*, still finds power through a system that privileges male heterosexual desire. In her description of the Modern Girl, what is distinctly feminine about the Modern Girl *garçonne* is that she is still charming, she is still interested in pleasing men.

Thinking about Durand in conversation with the descriptions from Zelda Fitzgerald and Myrtle Heileman makes visible both the similarities and the differences in the language the three women use to narrate their thoughts about feminine power. Myrtle Heileman and Zelda Fitzgerald both argue that they are attractive *because* they act in the ways that they want, but Durand asserts that she knows the power of a good haircut or a low-cut dress in making it possible to exercise the kind of authority that Heileman and Fitzgerald claim. Despite this subtle difference, some representations of the flapper suggest that Durand's arguments still resonate in

the 1920s and in a different geographical space. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story, "Bernice Bobs her Hair," for example, one of the main characters, Marjorie, tells her cousin that she hates dainty minds, "but a girl has to be dainty in person" because, "if she looks like a million dollars she can talk about Russia, ping-pong, or the League of Nations and get away with it" (5). The short story details Marjorie's Modern Girl education of her cousin Bernice. Marjorie helps Bernice gain popularity and acceptance by teaching her to perform an acceptable amount of transgressive and devil-may-care attitude. From her corrections of Bernice's dancing (don't lean on the man!), to the way that Bernice ought to brush her eyebrows (boys notice those things!), Marjorie's lessons suggest that the most important learning goal is to realize that the power to get what you want lies in being attractive to the male gaze. The story is, of course, more complicated than that, but a majority of the narrative demonstrates that Bernice must learn a new way, not the old-fashioned way, to cater to men. Be independent (hence, no leaning), be indifferent to them while being interesting, and make yourself attractive. Fitzgerald's Marjorie, like Durand, refuses to give up any power that she can find, particularly the power she knows she can have by mobilizing the force of her beauty.

Both Durand and Marjorie assert that there is power to be found in the sexualized bodies that women are always reminded they possess. This aspect of the Modern Girl connects her, like Pamela, Shamela, and the Angel before her, to a long history of ideas about female plotting and manipulation. In a study of fictional narratives in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, Alison Case notes that "[f]emale narrators…always run the risk of being associated with female plotters of another and more unsavory sort" because there is a connection between "narrative and material plotting" (15, 16). The double bind Modern Girls face in this historical moment, then, is not so different from the one that women authors tried to escape in the nineteenth century.

Looking at the ways authors across historical time mobilize arguments about authenticity and reliability demonstrates the resilience of systems of inequality grounded in gender difference.

In 1856, Christina Rossetti writes the poem "In an Artist's Studio" in which she argues that the artist's image of his living model is of "one selfsame figure," a "nameless girl," "a saint, an angel" that is "not as she is, but as she fills his dreams" (796).[21] Rosetti's work is part of a network of texts that argue that the Angel in the House is a dangerous fiction, one that creates a discourse that maps unrealistic ideals onto women who have desires and minds of their own. Although we mark mid-century as the height of the Angel's cultural power, it is important to note that its proliferation is in part due to the number of texts that reference the Angel in order to push back against it. In *Middlemarch* and *Lady Audley's Secret*, for example, mapping domestic desires onto women is a mistake, a misreading of women as ideals instead of as complex individuals. Rosamund and Lucy may be discussed in relationship to the topos of the Angel, but the plot of their respective novels relies on the fact that they are not as they seem. These texts undermine the power of the discourse that surrounds the Angel by marking it as a fiction. In these novels, reading female characters as domestic angels turns out to be either a projection (*Middlemarch*) or a misreading (*Lady Audley's Secret*).

Lady Audley's Secret is part of a genealogy of texts that suggest that the women's minds are not as knowable as they may seem. The novel constructs Lucy Audley's purity and innocence as a contrivance, a fabrication that obscures her "true self." Like Henry Fielding's *Shamela* and Eliza Haywood's *The Anti-Pamela* – texts that respond to the naïve innocence of Samuel Richardson's virtuous protagonist Pamela – *Lady Audley's Secret* depicts piety as a front for social climbing and scheming. Lucy Audley, after abandoning her first husband and child to marry up, eventually attempts to murder two people who might uncover her past misdeeds.

[21] The poem was written in 1856, but it was not published until after her death in 1896.

While readings of her actions and character are multiple, it is clear that she is not an angel who has no desire outside of making other people happy. In these narratives, feminine purity is associated with deception.

In *Middlemarch*, the unraveling of the Angel does not necessarily reveal malicious intent but a woman who has desires and dreams of her own that do not coincide with Lydgate's. In discussing his attraction to Rosamund, Lydgate notes that he believes she "was instructed to the true womanly limit and not a hair's-breadth beyond" and that because of this she would "venerate[] his high musings and momentous labors and would never interfere with them" (258). Her desirability lays in her dependence on him to know and to think. She is an attractive woman who will be "ready to carry out behests" that come from beyond her own scope of knowledge (258). In fact, though, Rosamund turns out to be a force to be reckoned with. She is one of the few characters in Eliot's novel who actually acquires all of the things that she desires (a wealthy husband and a luxurious life outside her initial social sphere) by the end of the story. Like Audley's text and Rosetti's poem, *Middlemarch* contests the reality of the figure of the Angel and the topoi's attendant narratives of female identity. The desirability of the angel character in these texts is undermined by the fact that these women characters are individuals with their own human desires and drives.

It is in texts like these that the mind of the "real" girl, even in the nineteenth century, begins to open up alternative narrative space. In 1931, seventy-five years after Rossetti writes her poem, Virginia Woolf delivers a speech about how, in order to articulate her own thoughts and ideas, she has to kill the phantom Angel that haunts her writing practice. In the early 1900's, discussions of the Angel in the House develop a dichotomy between the fiction of the Angel and the reality of women with independent, female minds, and in these later texts, ideas about authenticity and honesty become part of the narrative of the Modern Girl.

Woolf's essay begins with a description of the Angel as a woman who is "utterly unselfish," who "sacrifice[s] herself daily," and who is "so constituted that she never ha[s] a mind or a wish of her own, but prefer[s] to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others" (141). The Angel, she says, keeps telling her to "be sympathetic, be tender, flatter, deceive, use all the arts and wiles of [your] sex" (141), but Woolf knows that she can only write if she can have a "mind of [her] own" (141). In these descriptions, the Angel that haunts Woolf's writing sessions is not actually an Angel in the House; she is a *woman* who has learned how to give the effect of that ideal. The Angel in Woolf's text suggests that women must "charm, they must conciliate, they must – to put it bluntly – tell lies if they are to succeed," but Woolf encourages women to figure out who they are and to tell "the truth about [their] experiences" (144).[22] In her narrative, *real* women must kill the woman-performing-Angel in order to be honest and truthful about their thoughts and desires. Similar ideas can be found in numerous texts at the turn of the century. In 1891, Charlotte Perkins Gilman writes "The Extinct Angel," arguing that the Angel went extinct because women began to educate themselves and develop independent minds. Her narrative, like Woolf's, contends that women escape the shadow of the Angel by paying more attention to their own intellectual life.

By the twenties, modern girls are publishing work that points to the pervasiveness of cultural myths about the old-fashioned girl in order to argue for the recognition of that nostalgia as myth and to demand that women be understood as *real* people with desires and minds of their own. In a 1922 *Flapper* magazine, for example, a poem called "The New-Fashioned Girl"

---

[22] Woolf may be famous for arguing for the need of "a room of one's own," but in her work that room is never divorced from the mind that it is meant to support. A room of one's own is necessary for physical independence, but it is what that can do for the mind that is most important. A mind, like a room "has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms?" Woolf's questions in *A Room of One's Own* and in *Three Guineas* outline the connection between the ability to earn money that allows for material independence and the opportunity to engage with what that independence means as an intellectual space. "These," she says to her imagined audience of moern women, "are questions of the utmost importance and interest. For the first time in history you are able to ask them; for the first time you are able to decide for yourselves what the answers should be" (*Room* 144).

critiques the cultural nostalgia for an imagined “simp” sister of the past. The poem is as follows:

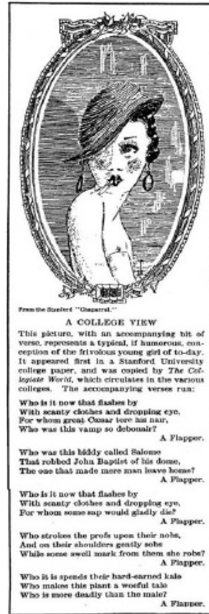
> Let them sing of the girls of the long, long ago,
>
> Who were shocked if their elbow or stockings did show
>
> But I’ll chant of the maidens whose ankles are free
>
> To show their half-socks, and the shape of their knees.
>
> Let them praise those back numbers who turned in their toes,
>
> And panted and fainted when MEN would propose;
>
> Compared to the short-skirted, bob-headed fry
>
> Who meet all proposals with right to the eye.
>
> Let them shed all their tears in a crocodile pour for the simple simp sister who flourished of yore
>
> But I’ll cast my vote in the way that I feel—
>
> For the girl self-reliant, bright, snappy and REAL.

The capital letters at the end of this piece are in the original copy. This poem, like Woolf’s writing above, differentiates the Angel/Simp Sister from the Modern Girl by arguing that the latter is not a fiction found in the mind or memory of a man. The “real” mind of the Modern Girl is independent (able to make its own decisions and vote) and indifferent (able to turn down proposals and not care about men’s tears). A “real” girl is one who can be both an author and a citizen with a vote. She is a “girl self-reliant, bright, snappy and REAL,” a woman who has an independent mind. As I noted above, these qualities are part of the ways in which women are narrated as objects of desire, but they are also part of how Modern Girls negotiate critiques of women’s unreliability. In Woolf’s text and in this *Flapper* magazine poem, the Angel in the House and the Simp Sister are narrated as performers that stand in opposition to modern women who refuse to lie and trick. These discussions of old-fashioned women – Simp Sisters and Angels

– function to create an imagined unity in the previous period that allows modern women to suggest that the new generation is less manipulative and more honest.

In discussions of female progress, the Modern Girl is supposed to be unreadable (because independent), but she is also supposed to be more dependable and knowable because she is honest about her beliefs, ideas, and desires. Modern Girls "Kill the Angel" in order to be "real," in order to stop pretending to be something that they are not. Narratives about the "real" minds of modern girls, though, circulate alongside arguments that the "real" Modern Girl is as much a fiction as the Angel. Taking a longer view of history helps illuminate the ways Modern Girl sex appeal becomes a part of what marks her assertion of non-performance as performative, an act of manipulation to get ahead. In the context of Judith Butler's now familiar ideas about the performative nature of identity, the idea that the Modern Girl is a woman who is just her "self" immediately seems suspect today (25). Nonetheless, what is important is that women in the twentieth century who called themselves "real" and modern in an attempt to combat the naïve/manipulator (Angel/Whore) trap are accused of being unreliable; they are accused of performing or acting in ways that allow them to attain material goods and undeserved success. Regardless of whether we acknowledge that gendered identity is performative, narratives that circulate in this moment suggest that modern girl assertions of intellectualism are marked as suspect and worthy of denigration.

Despite the fact that the discourse of desire shifts in the twentieth century, ideas about plotting women linger. Modern Girls like Angels are represented as women who seek to use their "feminine wiles" to take advantage of men. Even though authors like Woolf and Perkins Gilman try to kill the connection to the Angel, the idea that women use their sexual bodies for material gain remains. In the image below, a drawing of a flapper is accompanied by verse that argues that women's academic success is contingent on their sexual availability.



From the Stanford "Chaparral."

A COLLEGE VIEW

This picture, with an accompanying bit of verse, represents a typical, if humorous, conception of the frivolous young girl of to-day. It appeared first in a Stanford University college paper, and was copied by *The Collegiate World*, which circulates in the various colleges. The accompanying verses run:

Who is it now that flashes by
With scanty clothes and dropping eye,
For whom great Cæsar tore his hair,
Who was this vamp so debonair?
A Flapper.

Who was this biddy called Salome
That robbed John Baptist of his dome,
The one that made more man leave home?
A Flapper.

Who is it now that flashes by
With scanty clothes and dropping eye,
For whom some sap would gladly die?
A Flapper.

Who strokes the profs upon their nobs,
And on their shoulders gently sobs
While some swell mark from them she robs?
A Flapper.

Who it is spends their hard-earned kale
Who makes this plant a woeful tale
Who is more deadly than the male?
A Flapper.

Figure 2.2: An image of a flapper above a poem titled "A College View." The image and accompanying message were first published in a Stanford newspaper, then republished in Collegiate World – a paper that circulated to a number of different colleges – and finally republished for a third time in The Literary Digest's thirteen-page *Personal Glimpses* special on "The Case Against the Younger Generation" in June of 1922. ("A College View." *The Literary Digest*, June 1922).

In the poem, the intellectually minded Modern Girl becomes the flapper femme fatale. Beginning with references to John the Baptist and Julius Caesar, "A College View" argues that all great men have been betrayed by flappers, that female student-flappers use sexual favors to get good grades, and that through the use of suggestive clothing and "looks," flappers get men to ruin themselves by spending all of their money to entertain them. The catchy refrain, "Who is it now that flashes by / With scanty clothes and dropping eye, /" is followed by sentences like "For whom some sap would gladly die?", and ends on "Who is more deadly than the male? / A Flapper." The sexualization of independent female minds is tightly tied to discourses that mark the minds of desirable women as unintelligent or dishonest yet crafty enough to leverage their sexuality for their own benefit. In this way, women's education, success, and reliability become suspect through their association with ideas surrounding the Modern Girl, and the attractiveness of the Modern Girl becomes a powerful way in which women's authority is criticized and

undermined. Even as women mobilize their education, professional success, and narrative independence as a means to assert their personal authority, contemporaneously circulating narratives sexualize their body and cast doubt on the ways in which they achieve or argue for their independence.

V.

Conclusions

Returning to Loos's representation of Lorelei Lee at the conclusion of this chapter highlights the ways sociocultural ideas about gendered modernity intervene in the ability to substantiate narrative authority and reliability. In particular, it demonstrates that though there is power to be found in Modern Girl assertions of intellectual prowess, that power is limited because it buys into a cognitive hierarchy that is inherently exclusionary. In literary texts, narrators who do not have narrative authority are either silenced by the text or tell stories that are undermined in some way by the narrative structures around them. Lorelei Lee, for example, is a narrator whose narrative authority we are not meant to respect. Her relationship to narrative authority is complicated by the conflicting cultural discourses that surround the creation of the novel. Lorelei's self-attribution of intellectual prowess suggests the power of conceptualizations of modern cognitive citizenship in the early twentieth century. However, Loos's treatment of her as unreliable – either an iconic dumb blonde who does not even know that she is dumb or a manipulative femme fatale playing everyone around her – demonstrates the precarity of assertions of cognitive independence, even for white women.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes is a satire of a woman who uses her feminine wiles to take advantage of the celebrity and money of the men around her. In the novel, Lorelei's writing demonstrates a desire to make narrative and meaning out of the events of her life, but the story she constructs is marked as suspect because of her always already sexualized body. 'Brains' is

not a euphemism for but in fact an important part of sex appeal, and Lorelei's narrative of intellectualism and education becomes inextricable from her hyper- or hyperbolically sexualized body, part of larger stereotypes about women and power in this historical moment.

Nonetheless, there is power in Lorelei's sexualized self-narration. Even if Lorelei's narrative authority is undercut, it is also authoritative in a number of ways that someone who studies narratives in the eighteenth- and the nineteenth- centuries, like Alison Case, might not see in earlier time periods. First, it is a narrative that Lorelei writes herself. Case points out that female narrators in the nineteenth century were often undermined by voices within the same fictional world or were unable to narrate their own experiences, resorting to listing instead of organizing their own structures (25). Although Lorelei's narrative is undermined by the paratext of the novel, it remains uninterrupted in the story world itself. Within the novel, Lorelei is able to tell a story about who she is and what she wants in order to become a successful producer both of the diary itself and of a film production company. Moreover, she becomes the protagonist of a best-selling novel when Loos publishes *Gentlemen* in 1925. Regardless of whether she is a character who garners respect, Lorelei is correct when she says that people are interested in her "brains" and in the stories she has to tell.

Writing retrospectively in 1963, Anita Loos says that *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* can be "stripped of all of its fun" and read as a story that:

> …concerns early rape of its idiot heroine, an attempt at murder (only unsuccessful because she is clumsy with a gun), the heroine's being cast adrift in the gangster-infested New York of Prohibition days, her relentless pursuit by predatory males (the foremost of whom constantly tries to pay her off at bargain rates), her renunciation of the only man who ever stirred her inner soul of a woman, her nauseous connection with a male who is repulsive to her physically, mentally, and emotionally and her final engulfment in the

grim monotony of suburban Philadelphia. (x-xi)

Despite the fact that Loos is not quite serious in her statement of this "bare bones" summary of the novel (she says that this is the way that Russian readers interpret her novel as a tragedy of capitalism), her breakdown of the basic plot draws attention to the fact that it is somewhat strange that we see Lorelei as a manipulator and not a victim. I am arguing that we see Lorelei that way because Lorelei's narrative foregrounds her own power and not her struggles. Her financial situation in the novel never seems unstable, but that is because victimization is not part of the story she chooses to tell. Part of what makes Lorelei a Modern Girl is the way that she uses her self-narration as a means to find (*and define*) success in a world where her social and economic standing are precarious. Lorelei's assertion of intelligence obscures the fact that her character exists in a world that challenges her authority and her self-narration every step of the way. Regardless of how others read her, Lorelei's aggressive control of narrative space, like that of her historical counterparts, is one of the ways that she navigates a system in which she is always already at a disadvantage.

Gentlemen Prefer Blondes is as an example of how focusing on the mind of the Modern Girl expands the kinds of protagonists that stories can have in this historical moment. Seeing the sexualization of the mind allows us to read characters like Lorelei, Angela (from Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun*), and Betty Lou (from Paramount's "It") as desirable fictional protagonists. Loos may suggest that being attracted to Lorelei is a mistake, but the novel still centers the experiences and desires of a working-class woman. Likewise, in the film "It", the bubbling energy of Betty Lou Spence allows her to succeed despite her lack of money or social status. And, *Plum Bun*'s focus on Angela's puzzling mind highlights something other than the fetishization of her raced body. Lorelei Lee, Betty Lou Spence, and Angela Murray are women characters who are marked by the text as desirable despite their lack of money, class status, or

whiteness. In some ways, then, the sexualization of the mind broadens ideas about what kinds of women can be marked as desirable within dominant discourse, a reflection of shifting values and morals in this historical moment.

Nonetheless, at the same time that *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* draws attention to the power of Lorelei's self-making, it also makes apparent the privilege inherent in the Modern Girl's ability to mobilize sexually potent self-narration. Lorelei succeeds despite her lack of education and her working-class background, but *because* of her attractiveness. Her desirability increases because of the ways she narrates her mental capacity, but her body is an essential part of the hook. And the same is true of Angela and Betty Lou. All of these characters "pass" for the kinds of women that can be deemed attractive in a socially acceptable way. They have only slightly transgressive bodies.[23] Indeed, some types of bodies are too far out of the spectrum to be narrated as sexually desirable. The topos of the Modern Girl privileges physical attraction along with a certain level of intellectual independence and education, and it functions within a system that still hierarchizes what stories people are interested in or respect along the lines of race, class, and sexuality.

For example, the treatment of Lulu, Lorelei's black maid in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,* demonstrates the types of characters still relegated to marginalized positions. Lulu, unlike Lorelei, or even Lorelei's friend Dorothy, does not get the chance to self-narrate, or, even, to have her speech recorded. The text does not mark her as sexually desirable and she receives very little narrative space. Reading Lulu in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* next to Angela in Jessie Redmon Fauset's *Plum Bun* makes visible the ways in which the politics of black female sexuality in this time period are inseparable from discussions of what kinds of minds and what

---

[23] This is the crux of F.Scott Fitzgerald's story "Bernice Bobs Her Hair." When Bernice talks about bobbing her hair it is fine, but when she actually does it, she falls outside of the bounds of traditional aesthetic for her community and is no longer desirable. Modern Girlhood is about small transgressions, not big ones.

kinds of bodies are marked as worthy of attention. When Roger considers Angela's beautiful, puzzling mind, he does so because she is passing for white, because she fits his notions of what kinds of bodies are desirable.[24] Acknowledging the cultural and social power of being marked as attractive or worth white, heterosexual male attention, desire, or love means acknowledging ideas about whose stories are "worth" being told, published, or heard, whose stories are worth narrative respect and space.

In looking for the mind of the Modern Girl in texts, then, intersections of race and gender become visible in fictional narratives as in cultural ones. Narratives that suggest the power and progress of women's opportunities to narrate their own experience and dictate their own lives at the turn of the twentieth century often obstruct the self-narration of women of color whose experiences in this period are different and yet deeply connected to this history. In texts like the ones discussed above, the Modern Girl becomes clearly associated with dominant discourses that exclude bodies of color from narratives of modernity and progress.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the way that modern gendered identity is constructed through a reliance on assertions of intelligence that are always already complicated for women across racial and ethnic difference. In what follows, I shift to an analysis of authors whose literary texts identify the centrality of claims for cognitive prowess in definitions of modernity at the same time that they seek to denaturalize them. Nella Larsen writes of an African American character who argues that she has "real brains," Jean Rhys depicts the mind of a white Creole woman who is critiqued for calling herself a "cérébrale," and María Cristina Mena constructs a world in which an Anglo character worries about whether their Mexican friend can have "a mind of their own." In explicit ways, these authors confront and unravel the common-sense narratives

[24] Like Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* or Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, Jessie Redmon Fauset's novel engages with the politics of beauty standards and the ways in which they alter how women of color come to narrate and experience their own realities.

that define modern gendered identity via a system of cognitive citizenship in which marginalized people, particularly women and people of color, are always at a disadvantage.

CHAPTER III

Black Women with "Real Brains":

Nella Larsen and Unreliable Focalization

In the final section of Nella Larsen's 1929 novel *Passing*, the focalizing character of the text, Irene Redfield, delineates a distinction between the feminine intelligence of her acquaintance Clare Kendry and the "real brains" of her friend Felise Freeland. In a conversation with her husband, Brian, Irene contends that Clare has "brains of a sort…acquisitive, you know"; she "isn't stupid. She's intelligent enough in a purely feminine way" (Larsen 62, 61). The implication of Irene's statements is that Clare has looks and the kind of womanly brains that are "decorative"; she is "intelligent enough to wear a tight bodice and keep bowing swains whispering compliments and retrieving dropped fans" (Larsen 61).[1] Aligning herself alongside Felise and in opposition to Clare, Irene clarifies that real brains are those "that can hold their own with anybody" across race and gender difference (Larsen 62). This moment is noteworthy both because it reflects the way Irene works to carve out space for a less-sexualized intelligence for Black women and because it signals a larger conversation about women's mental capacity, modernity, and independence in this historical moment. Perhaps, most crucially, though, it is significant because Irene's assertion of intellectualism becomes part of how the novel marks her as unreliable. Throughout the text, despite Irene's confidence in her mental capacity, her self-knowledge and intelligence are consistently undercut. In the very moment Irene argues for her cognitive capacity, for example, Brian undermines her analysis. Calling her comments "feline,"

[1] This last quote is from Brian, Irene's husband, and, even though Irene pushes back against his comment, his words crystallize the numerous moments throughout the text where Irene marks Clare's seductiveness and flirtation with men in order to critique her character.

he suggests that Irene's sense of superiority is a reflection of her jealousy of Clare. His response is a subtle preview of his later exclamation that he "can't understand how anyone as intelligent as" Irene likes to think that she is "can show evidences of such stupidity" (Larsen 73).

Part of the work of this chapter is to develop an understanding of how Irene is marked as unreliable. Towards this end, I trace the ways the text negatively frames Irene and connect those details to the historical conversations about women's mental autonomy with which they intertwine. What has gone unnoticed in readings of Larsen's *Passing* is the novel's attentiveness to Black women's claims for intelligence and to the ways those claims are undermined by judgments of their language, intellectual capacity, and sexualized bodies, judgments inextricable from discourses about modern gendered identity in the early twentieth century. Though scholars have noted Irene's ascription to aspects of the respectability politics and uplift aims of New Negro womanhood, Irene's discussion of "real brains" positions her in relationship to a different model of gendered modernity, Modern Girlhood.

In the historical moment that *Passing* is published, the modern girl is a seductive, pervasive symbol for the possibilities of a modern world. In African American periodicals like *The Chicago Defender* and white periodicals like *The Flapper,* modern girls assert cognitive prowess as a strategy for negotiating contemporary discourses that mark their minds as empty.[2] At the beginning of the twentieth century, having a mind of one's own is politically vital. Even authors who do not identify as modern girls orient themselves around the predominance of brain-positive rhetoric, working to articulate their intelligence and autonomy either by cleaving to characterizations of Modern Girl intellectualism or by positioning themselves against depictions of the vapid flapper femme fatale. Deeply intertwined with women's rights rhetoric that marks autonomous cognitive capabilities as a qualification for citizenship and rights, claims of

[2] I use the terms flapper and modern girl interchangeably in this chapter, though "modern girl" is the broader, global category under which the term "flapper" can be categorized.

intellectualism are important. This is especially true for African American women who did not gain the right to vote with the passing of the 19th amendment in 1920, and who had to distance themselves both from stereotypes of Black women's hyper-sexuality and from religious arguments that suggested that "labor was good" for those of "Negro blood" because "God had intended the sons and daughters of Ham to sweat," not think (Larsen 19).

Irene's articulations of self-knowledge and cognitive prowess link her to the figure of the Modern Girl, but the text's representation of Irene as unreliable marks the ways that issues of race, class, and sexuality impact the possibility of mobilizing a rhetoric of independent cognitive capabilities as a means for achieving sociopolitical equity.[3] In what follows, I contend that examining how *Passing* constructs Irene's unreliability reveals the racialized gender politics African American women negotiated in asserting their modernity. Moreover, I argue that an analysis of the narrative form of the novel – unreliable focalization instead of unreliable narration – makes visible how race and gender bias play out in the ascription of mental reliability.

In Larsen criticism, much has been made of Irene's unreliability, but not much has been said about the reasons we read Irene as an unreliable narrator without attending to the fact that she is not a narrator at all. Though it may seem like a small detail, Irene's status as a focalizer, and not a first-person narrator, means that she does not tell her own story. Irene is a character whose narrative is framed by an interpretive structure that is beyond her control. I argue that Larsen's use of unreliable focalization draws attention to the limitations Black women faced in asserting the narratives of mental independence central to articulations of modernity in this

[3] This chapter contributes to a line of scholarship from authors like Sami Schalk and George Hutchinson who draw attention to the historical realities that Larsen's writing works to undermine. Hutchinson writes that much interpretation of Larsen's work "neutralizes her nervy assault on the institution of race" (4) and Schalk writes that "*Passing* challenges the eugenic notion that race, class, gender, and sexuality are natural and knowable categories which can be controlled for eugenic purposes" (148).

historical moment. *Passing* highlights the distinction between unreliable narration and unreliable focalization in order to demonstrate how race and gender bias are naturalized as rational inference in ascriptions of reliability. The text, that is, points out that sexist and racist judgments of Black women's reliability manifest as reasonable circumscription despite the fact that the evidence for those assessments is often circumstantial, sociocultural, or non-existent. Even the most careful, cultivated Black women cannot escape the charge because their language use and the available models of modern gender performance in Jim Crow America mark them as defective sources of information.

Reading unreliability in *Passing* contributes to larger discussions about modernism and modernity. Larsen's work has been read as part of a modernist tradition in which representations of passing push us to "understand identity as dynamic" and to see "the transformative possibilities opened up by modernist border crossing" (Caughie 401, 404). Pamela Caughie, for example, interpolates Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s description of "the thematic elements of passing…fragmentation, alienation, liminality, [and] self-fashioning" into an argument about the ways that passing "at once produced profound shifts in thinking about the boundaries of identity and aroused ambivalence about those shifting, unstable borders" (387). In analyses that follow this line of thought, the formal experimentation of modernist texts both produces and reflects a universal shift towards epistemological doubt. Modernist texts are supposed to demonstrate a move away from the notions of authenticity and reliability that function in negative critiques of racial passing. In this chapter, I argue that though Larsen's representation of two biracial women who pass may demonstrate the limitations of available systems - the arbitrary nature of borders and categories of identity and cognition – it also depicts what it means to live a life without being able to escape those categories of relational oppression. The cognitive dissonance represented in this text is not a reflection of a modern shift towards understanding unreliability as a universal

human experience. Instead, Irene's self-estrangement and social dislocation are the inevitable results of structural inequality and sociopolitical oppression.

I begin this chapter with an outline of scholarship on narrative unreliability, demonstrating the need to see the sociopolitical stakes of conceptualizations of narrative reliability. I then proceed to analyze Larsen's experimentation with focalization and unreliability. I conclude that Larsen mobilizes narrative unreliability in a way that reveals narrative experimentation as a strategy for negotiating circumscription, one that stands outside of what historians Darlene Clark Hine, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, and Brittney Cooper have discussed as a culture of dissemblance and a regime of respectability. As Cooper describes it, dissemblance and respectability are "two key strategies that Black women used to navigate a hostile public sphere and to minimize the threat of sexual assault and other forms of bodily harm routinely inflicted upon Black women" (3). So often marked as a sign of unreliability, dissemblance for Black women meant "making their interior thoughts and feelings inaccessible from public view," in order to contribute to "making the race 'respectable'" (Cooper 3). In this chapter, I follow Cooper's insistence that dissemblance and a commitment to respectability politics "were not the only strategies Black women used to navigate the public sphere" (4). Larsen's use of unreliable focalization is a narrative strategy that serves not to highlight Irene's dissemblance but to make visible the systems of inequality that mark Irene as unreliable in ways that she cannot control.

I.

Histories of Unreliability

In 1961, Wayne C. Booth coined the term unreliable narration when he wrote, "I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for and acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not" (158-159). Since

then, narrative scholars have shifted the discussion of the term. By the end of the twentieth century, unreliable narration was understood as more than just a textual phenomenon. In concert with cognitive and cultural turns and the emergent field of reader-response studies, scholars pushed on Booth's original definition of unreliable narration and argued that narrative unreliability was at least in part, tied to extratextual information. Ansgar Nünning, for example, argues that "in addition to…intratextual signals the reader also draws on extratextual frames of reference in the attempt to gauge the narrator's potential degree of unreliability" (Nünning 99).[4] His scholarship demonstrates that "the identification of unreliable narrators depends…on the norms, cultural models, and conceptual frameworks that readers bring to the text" (Nünning 99).[5]

Working from within this larger shift in the discussion of unreliable narration, scholars like Greta Olson, Ansgar Nünning, Vera Nünning, and Bruno Zerweck argue for the need to historicize unreliable narration in order to more precisely describe its functions. Zerweck in particular has demonstrated that acknowledging the historically situated shift to a "realist presentation of psychologically coherent accounts" is "fundamental to [understanding] the concept of unreliable narration as a major literary phenomenon" (159). In an analysis of Victorian and Modern unreliable narrators, he argues that unreliable narration in the early twentieth century reflects "a set of cultural discourses dominated by epistemological doubt regarding truth, reality, and the representation of both" (Zerweck 162). In general, unreliable narrators can be read as such because their narratives are represented as lacking some kind of knowledge or because they seem to withhold or elide important narrative information.[6] In

[4] See also: Olson, Fluderinik, Vera Nünning, Zerweck.
[5] Similarly, Greta Olson builds from Monika Fludernik's argument that readers construct meaning through mapping frameworks onto fictional texts just as they map frameworks onto people. Summarizing Kathleen Wall's work on how readers use "implicit theories of personality as well as scripts for how narrators behave" to interpret character unreliability, Olson argues that readers engage with unreliable narrators by treating characters "like new acquaintances" (Olson 99).
[6] For more on various classifications of unreliability see Chatman, Phelan and Martin (1999), Phelan (2005), and Olson.

Zerweck's analysis, this quality draws attention to shifting beliefs about the ability to provide an objective account or to relay a "true" or "real" version of one's own experiences. In Modern and Victorian texts, he says, narrators "unintentionally give themselves away and thus reveal how problematic are their versions of events, their judgments, or their ethical values or norms" (162). Most of his examples, from Henry James's "The Aspern Papers" and Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* to Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier* and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, almost exclusively center white, male narrators.[7] And, while Zerweck links narrators' unintentional revelation to epistemological uncertainty, unreliable narration can also be analyzed in the context of a long history of literary texts that represent women narrators with fraught claims to authority.

Feminist narratologists outline a different historical context for unreliable narration. Alison Case, for example, has argued that in eighteenth- and nineteenth century texts, "feminine" narrators are marked as such because they "tend to be more interesting for what they do not know...than for what they know" and that "we are invited to assume authority over them—to construct a plot and a meaning out of the words that they themselves cannot understand or do not wish us to know" (16, 30).[8] Feminine narrators, like unreliable ones, produce stories that are suspect because they are either unknowing or calculating. These traits are embedded in the dichotic tropes of the plotting or naïve woman, character types that reflect cultural and social judgment. Consequently, it is essential that we think of unreliable narration as a politically potent formal choice, one that links women characters to stereotypes that impact the diurnal experiences of women outside of literary texts.

---

[7] Zerweck mentions *The Turn of the Screw* as another example of "classical" unreliable narration. Given the framed and mediated structure of the first-person narration of the governess, though, this text's use of unreliable narration would benefit from an analysis attentive to gender politics. Another (partial) exception in his list, *The Sound and the Fury,* features a section written in omniscient third person.

[8] For more on feminist and critical race narratology see Kim, Lanser, Mezei, and Warhol.

II.

Historicizing Unreliability in *Passing*

In accounting for the narration of *Passing*, scholars have described Irene Redfield as "confused and deluded about herself, her motivations, and much that she experiences" (McDowell xxiv). Critiques of the text that follow this line of thinking describe Irene as a "classic unreliable narrator" because her account is "myopic" (McDowell xxiv, Brody 1053).[9] Irene, though, is not a narrator in the traditional sense. Although the novel is concerned with the narratives of identity that drive Irene as an individual in her daily life, the story is not developed as a first-person narrative but as a third person one. That is, the text is focalized through, but not narrated by, Irene. Focalization is "the textual representation of […] sensory elements […] as perceived and registered (recorded, represented, encoded, modeled and stored) by some mind" (Margolin 42). When we read, for example, the opening passage of the novel in which Irene receives a letter from Clare Kendry, the third person narration presents this moment as filtered through Irene's suspicions. The focalization of this moment uses adjectives that suggest Irene's judgmental orientation to anything from Clare Kendry. In Irene's mind, the letter seems "[f]urtive, but yet in some peculiar, determined way a little flaunting" (Larsen 5). The interpretive work in this sentence is Irene's. The narrator does not mark the letter as "flaunting," "furtive," and "determined"; Irene does.

Uri Margolin argues that focalization "enables the reader to evaluate different takes regarding the same data, and also infer back from the nature of a take to the nature of the focalizer behind it" (50). The form does so by positioning the focalization of "a particular character perspective through which entities are being perceived and represented" alongside an "impersonal anonymous narrative voice, usually in the third person" that presents information

[9] Several other studies also refer to Irene as an unreliable narrator. See Blackmer, Blackmore, Cutter, and Tate.

that taps into "the assumption that one can know states of affairs *hors de toute focalisation*, fully and with absolute certainty" (Margolin 44, 49). The nature of focalization is that it highlights that "any individual act of focalization is just one particular perspective, and is always fallible and often skewed, distorted, or at least partial" (Margolin 49). In Larsen's novel, Irene is the focalizing consciousness presented by a third person impersonal, anonymous narrative voice. Her unreliability is in part defined by the fact that she is a focalizer and not a narrator.

In *Passing*, the third person narration relates, in linguistic form, the articulated and unarticulated thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and beliefs of Irene Redfield in a way that suggests that the narrator speaks the "full objective truth." The third person narrator is not an embodied character; it is a frame structure that functions as an ostensibly "impersonal, anonymous, narrating voice," one that reveals Irene's unreliability, her partial knowledge, and her self-deceptions. Passing is a closely focalized text, which means that it very rarely breaks from Irene's point of view, but the narrator controls the story, sometimes even stepping in to augment a negative representation of Irene's self-knowledge. For example, the narrator tells us that "though [Irene] did want [Brian] to be happy," she wanted his happiness to come about "only by her own way and by some plan of hers for him" (Larsen 43). And, maybe even more tellingly, at the conclusion of the novel, the narrator tells us: "What happened next, Irene Redfield never afterwards allowed herself to remember. Never clearly" (Larsen 79). The fact that Irene is not able to control the construction of her story enhances the reader's ability to undermine and judge Irene's account as faulty.

The ease with which we read Irene as a narrator who withholds or manipulates (instead of as one negatively framed by a structure outside her control) reflects a longer history of feminine narration as well as corresponding histories of material and political inequity. Alison Case suggests that the importance of delineating feminine narration lies in the fact that "a woman's

power to define the shape and meaning of her story— or further, her power to define herself as having that power— was considerably more elusive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than the proliferation of women's voices in the novel of the period would suggest" (192). For Case, as for many other feminist narratologists, narrative forms are inextricable from "the context of cultural constructions of gender," and thus narrative authority is deeply connected to material authority (Warhol qtd in Mezei 6). Similarly, at the beginning of the twentieth century, discussions about women's cognitive capabilities and debates about the political power of self-revelation for marginalized groups intertwine with issues of literary reliability.

Coming out of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries in which both Alison Case and Susan Lanser outline a proliferation of women's voices without a corresponding increase in narrative or material authority, modern girls' assertions of self-knowledge can be read as attempts at claiming that elusive authority. Even though the physical image of the Modern Girl may be most prominent in our cultural memory, at the beginning of the twentieth century, women argued that what defined a modern girl was not her bobbed hair, short skirts, or dark lashes, but her insistence on her mental autonomy. For example, one self-identified modern girl, Ellen Welles Page, writes that being a flapper takes "brains," because it requires "self-knowledge and self-analysis" (607). Her statement reflects a larger trend in modern girl writing that argues that sartorial choices, linguistic experiments, and bold actions are a reflection of their more than capable minds. Modern girls build on women's rights arguments that position self-knowledge as a pivotal reason for being given political rights and the chance at economic independence. To escape the slippery binary between dumb or manipulative woman, modern girls articulate their desire to be understood as knowledgeable people with "real" brains.

Although fewer explicitly narratological studies have been produced about how eighteenth- and nineteenth century African American women characters or narrators might be

considered a type defined in tension with narrative authority, the history of criticism of African American writing, particularly research on autobiographical texts and slave narratives, suggests that issues of narrative authority cling to the writing of African American authors. As Joanne Braxton points out, for African Americans, "emerging from a culture in which teaching slaves to read and write met with disapproval, or, in some places, with a criminal act… to be able to write, to develop a public voice, and to assert a literary self, represented significant aspects of freedom" (15). African American authors, she asserts, were fighting "to be politically free and to achieve narrative freedom within a given text" (Braxton 15). Conversations about the importance of articulating Black self-hood are a crucial aspect of African American writing, particularly because of the challenges African Americans faced in voting, gaining employment, and securing economic independence. In his 1925 essay, "The New Negro," Alain Locke argues for the need to encourage a "new psychology" for the Black community that would assert "renewed self-respect and self-dependence" and create a "buoyancy from within compensating for whatever pressure there may be of conditions from without" (4). Locke intimates that claiming a positive sense of self is an important tool for Black Americans as they fight for rights as American citizens. In the context of this larger history, unreliability becomes an important judgment to avoid.

Juxtaposing Zerweck's historicization of late Victorian and Modern unreliability with discourse in modern girl and African American communities illuminates that we need to draw a distinction between broad formulations of unreliable narration associated with a shift to modern thought and the availability of such formulations for women and people of color. If we historicize unreliable narration in relation to ideas about gender and race, it becomes clear that there are differences in how unreliable narration refracts cultural intertexts—modern shifts towards epistemological doubt have different stakes for different communities.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, narratives of identity were an important part of how marginalized people argued for their rights to political and personal emancipation; consequently, epistemological uncertainty could be politically unpopular and personally dangerous. If there is no way to communicate a self, then how can you prove self-sovereignty to a group of people who do not believe that you have it? And how do those anxieties about truth, reality, and self-knowledge inflect the choices and decisions one can make in everyday life? In a political climate that hinges on an articulation of identity for the achievement of political or economic parity, epistemological uncertainty is a privileged condition.

Passing intervenes in discussions of female intelligence and debates about the power of Black women's self-articulation. While white flappers may have found some modicum of success by articulating their mental autonomy, for Black women, working through conceptualizations of modernity meant negotiating politicized discussions of voice and selfhood as well as the different social realities of African American women's existence in Jim Crow America. Irene's narrative of identity is driven by a desire for stability, one she satisfies by an ascription to cultural narratives about Black respectability and Modern Girl intelligence. But, as so many scholars before me have pointed out, the drive to maintain balance means that Irene suppresses her sexuality, her anger, and her individual desire. This repression is the kind of dissemblance that Brittney Cooper marks as a strategy for navigating the violence of Jim Crow America. Irene's mobilization of unreliability as a survival strategy, though, is not the only message of this text. Focalization points out the partiality of any individual perspective, but in *Passing* flawed self-knowledge does not suggest the need to interrogate or embrace the nature of subjective accounts. By the end of the novel, we do not just think that Irene is someone deluding herself about her own intelligence or self-worth; we think that she might be capable of murder. Unreliable focalization in this novel draws attention to the structures that mark Black women as

unreliable and demonstrates the intense repercussions accusations of unreliability have for Black women.

III.

Real, Feminine Brains:

Learning to Read Unreliable Women in *Passing*

Deborah McDowell's introduction to *Passing* is one of the few extended discussions of Irene's unreliability and it suggests that "detail by detail" Irene's account "manifests the same faults of which she so harshly judges Clare" (xxv).[10] For McDowell, because Irene is "not always fully aware of the import of what she reveals to the reader," we are able to see her as "cold, exploitative, and manipulative," a woman using "wily and feline tactics to insure [the] illusion of security" that she desires (xxv). In the language of McDowell's critique, though, we can see that Irene's failings are readable precisely because the structure of the text, through Irene's judgments of Clare, has already taught us the terms for critiquing the manipulative "feminine" minds of Black women. McDowell's use of the word feline echoes the very critique Irene's husband Brian levies at Irene in his disparagement of her "real brains."

In this section, I outline the way the dramatic action of *Passing* develops through the text's focalization of Irene's suspicious readings of Clare Kendry as untrustworthy. I agree with scholars like McDowell that the record of Irene's judgments enhances our ability to read Irene's unreliability, but I differ from them in that I understand Irene's judgments of Clare as a reflection of a host of ideas that Irene has developed through her experiences with race consciousness, modernity, sexuality, and gender performance. Irene calls attention to Clare's unreliability as a person through sexist suppositions filtered through her own circumscribed position as a

[10] Pamela Caughie also writes on unreliable narration in *Passing*. Her essay, "'The Best People': The Making of the Black Bourgeoisie in Writings of the Negro Renaissance," similarly develops an argument through a reading of Irene as an unreliable narrator and not an unreliable focalizer.

respectable Black woman. Even though Irene tries to rationalize Clare as a woman worth judging, Irene's narrative is framed as delusional through many of the same cultural intertexts. Some of the moments when Irene's narrative is incriminated through concordant critiques are more obvious than others, like when Irene judges Clare for passing even as she also passes, or when Irene focuses on Clare's attractiveness and we read the desire and sexuality Irene suppresses in herself. However, other moments are more subtle, tied to the ways Clare's language use is similar to Irene's or to how Irene's language of intellectualism lines up with the same modern girl assertions of control she maps onto Clare. Irene adopts the same discourses through which she is read, because those critiques are already a part of the daily life she navigates. Paying attention to the extratextual information Irene mobilizes draws attention to how assessments of unreliability play out unevenly along the axes of gender, race, and sexuality.

The opening scene of the novel accurately exemplifies Larsen's intense focus on how Irene discredits Clare's character. The story opens when the arrival of a letter from Clare spurs a memory of Clare and Irene meeting. Irene frames the letter by saying that "this…was of a piece with all that she knew of Clare Kendry" (Larsen 5). The "this" Irene is referring to is what she sees as Clare's penchant for being "always on the edge of danger," and the importance of this description is twofold (Larsen 5). First, the language Irene uses connects Clare to stereotypes of the selfish and self-confident flapper. Second, in the first pages of the novel, it signals the ways that the text of *Passing* is hyper-attentive to how characters interpret, interact with, and judge others by filtering speech, gesture, and look through a network of ideas about social identities.

In Irene's first description of "the woman in the green frock," she reads Clare through views about female sexuality that align with uplift rhetoric. When Irene remembers her initial judgment of Clare, she does not suggest that she felt negatively toward Clare because Clare was

passing for white, because she does not know who Clare is at this point in her memory.[11] Instead, Irene's recollection focuses on her observations that Clare was using her attractiveness to manipulate men. In describing Clare's arrival, for example, Irene notes that "a sweetly scented woman in a fluttering dress of green chiffon" was followed by "a man, very red in the face, who was mopping his neck and forehead with a big crumpled handkerchief" (Larsen 9). The man remained standing in order to say, "See you later, then" with "pleasure in his tones and a smile on his face" (Larsen 9). Acknowledging that she cannot hear Clare's reply, Irene does not fail to notice that the inaudible response is attended by a "peculiar caressing smile" (Larsen 9). The very moment Clare enters into Irene's story, she is accompanied by a man, and Irene's interpretation maps onto Clare's actions an undercurrent of impropriety (one that will deepen as the story progresses). Why would "a sweetly scented woman" give a red, sweaty man a "caressing smile"? What is she getting in return?

This male character reappears only once in the novel. The narrator notes that Irene remembers him again when she first meets Clare's husband, John Bellew, saying that "the first thing [she] noticed about [Bellew] was that he was not the man she had seen with Clare Kendry on the Drayton roof" (Larsen 28). The only narrative function this character has, both in this moment and in the earlier one, is to imply a sexualized interaction. The dynamic Irene sets up between these two characters marks the beginning of her suggestion that Clare is suspect because of her seductiveness. We could read these retrospective memories either as a justification for Irene's later suspicion of an affair between Clare and her husband or as a reflection of her

[11] As George Hutchinson points out in his biography of Larsen, at this moment in the text, Larsen has "withheld any mention of race or color" (295). The central analytics of this first description of Clare reflect criticisms of gender and class that Irene later interpolates into judgments of respectability and race. Having said that, it is fair to acknowledge that this memory is filtered through Irene's later consciousness, one that does already know that Clare was passing for white.

suppressed desire for Clare.[12] Either way, though, both of these interpretive possibilities reflect the fact that Irene uses the suggestion of feminine wiles to undermine Clare's character.

As the novel progresses, Irene's judgments of Clare develop through gendered linguistic censure. When Irene ties Clare's "peculiar caressing smile" to a speech style characterized by intensives and verbosity, her response corresponds to the privileging of certain kinds of language use in linguistics scholarship. In 1922, linguist Otto Jespersen published a chapter called "The Woman" in which he marked the volubility and the use of coordination and intensives in women's speech as a reflection of their less than capable minds.[13] Women, he says, speak more but with a less "comprehensive" vocabulary (248). They are more likely to coordinate "one sentence or clause…to another on the same plane" without subordinating clauses to create deeper meaning, and they rely on the hyperbole of intensives - "I'm *so* glad you've come! Thank you *so* much!" – because they "start talking without having thought out what they are going to say" (251, 250). Irene's observations that Clare's writing is "a bit too lavish in its wordiness" and her castigation, "All those superlatives!" in response to Clare's delighted exclamations before the Negro Welfare League dance reflect a critique of women's language use circulating in that historical moment (Larsen 53).

Irene combines the judgment of Clare's caressing smile with critiques of her language use in ways that connect her to the flapper femme fatale:

---

[12] Scholars like McDowell, Butler, and Blackmer read moments like this in light of Irene's disavowed attraction to Clare. This interpretation is not at odds with my reading of the ways Irene rationalizes her judgments of Clare through an ascription to cultural intertexts that suggest the danger of sexy, manipulative women. Indeed, Irene's suppressed attraction to Clare strengthens my contention that Irene uses Clare's attractiveness as a means for undermining her character.

[13] Although Jespersen's larger arguments often undercut and trouble the boundaries that his generalizations about women's language use set up, his comments reflect beliefs about the limitations of women's cognitive capabilities that are developed through an analysis of their speech and writing. He records one study, for example, that concludes that the reason women outperform men in a reading summary is because women's heads are more empty, able to take in and regurgitate information without the ideas and insights that obstruct male participants' completion of the task. Conclusions like this have meant that Jespersen's chapter has been much criticized, but his work serves as an important compilation of supposedly objective, "descriptive" linguistic studies of women's language.

> Before her tired eyes Clare Kendry was talking to Dave Freeland. Scraps of their conversation, in Clare's husky voice, floated over to her: "…always admired you…so much about you long ago…everybody says so…no one but you…." And more of the same. The man hung rapt on her words, though he was the husband of Felise Freeland, and the author of novels that revealed a man of perception and devastating irony. And he fell for such pish-posh! And all because Clare had a trick of sliding down lids over astonishing black eyes and then lifting them suddenly and turning on a caressing smile. Men like Dave Freeland fell for it. And Brian. (Larsen 65-66)

Irene's record of Clare's language of flattery compounds with her judgment of Clare's caressing smile and astonishing black eyes, culminating in a claim about Clare's manipulative sexuality. The critiques of Clare's language and countenance accumulate, becoming the supporting evidence for Irene's characterization of Clare as a "having" woman who is "selfish, and cold, and hard," a woman who "retained her ability to secure the thing that she wanted in the face of opposition, and in utter disregard of the convenience and desire of others" (Larsen 6, 52).

Irene's characterization of Clare as a "having" woman lines up with disparagements of the flapper. *The New York Times* describes the flapper as "shameless, selfish, and honest," and *The Chicago Defender* suggests that flappers are "rattle-brained" and "lax in their morals" (Hooper BRM7; "The Flapper Age" 12). Stereotypes of flappers mark them as delusionally self-confident in their intellectual prowess, selfish in their desire to assert their independence, and, in African American communities, disloyal to the race. So, when Irene describes Clare as "selfish, and cold, and hard," a woman who has "nothing sacrificial" in her demeanor and "no allegiance beyond her own immediate desire," she does so during a time in which those words are bound to specific ideas about African-American womanhood (Larsen 6).

In *Passing*, Irene's critiques of Clare's speech and body become almost quotidian, but they flesh out more obvious moments of censure, like when Irene dismisses Clare's feminine intelligence. Suggesting that Clare is "intelligent in a purely feminine way," Irene says that Clare's brains are "useful" and "acquisitive" (Larsen 61). Her account of Clare's intelligence traces rhetoric in circulating cultural texts that delineates a denigrated quality of female thought, one tinged by sexuality and manipulation. As the following excerpt from a popular twentieth century work demonstrates, women's minds were difficult to separate from their sexualized bodies: "Who strokes profs upon their nobs, / And on their shoulders gently sobs / While some swell mark from them she robs? A flapper" ("A College View" 38). This catchy refrain was first published in a Stanford newspaper, then republished in *Collegiate World*, and then circulated for an even broader audience in *The Literary Digest.* It indicates the well-worn idea that the success of professional women is evidence of sexual favors instead of intellectual prowess. Irene's subtle disparagements of Clare are tied to this complicated system of critique in which women's bodies and language are easily, and often in unarticulated ways, collapsed into ideas about their selfishness, deviousness, and lack of intellectual potential.

Irene's unreliability, like Clare's, is constructed through the mobilization of sociocultural ideas about the acceptable language use and gender performance of Black women. Irene presents herself as a race-conscious, dutiful mother and wife, but she also pushes back against relational definitions, depicting herself as an individual with a mind of her own. She tries to navigate the culture of dissemblance and the respectability politics of her position, but her narrative of identity is undermined by a textual structure that pulls from cultural intertexts to mark her self-knowledge as flawed. In this final section of close reading, I outline what the focalization through Irene's perspective reveals about the narrative focus of the text. I argue that in depictions of Irene's social interactions, we see that she shares Clare's tendency towards intensives and

flattery, similarly uses words to sway and convince, and in her drive for familial and economic stability, manifests the same "having" way she critiques in Clare. These details are just minor manifestations of the systems Irene is up against when she asserts her intellectualism. The narrative force of *Passing* draws attention to the fact that despite Irene's best efforts, her aspiration to have real brains or to be understood as someone who has real brains is ultimately undermined by a system that assumes that women, particularly Black women, do not have them. Irene buys into a hierarchy of cognitive capabilities that has already positioned Black women's brains as flawed.[14]

Irene attempts to cultivate authority in a value system that privileges certain kinds of knowledge and language use. In conversations with friends, she makes confident judgments of the writing of David Freeland and Hugh Wentworth. She references people like blues singer Ethel Waters, artist and performer Josephine Baker, and French fashion houses like Lanvin and Babani. Her knowledge of popular culture and material goods is tied to the prestige of being able to participate in a growing cosmopolitan marketplace. Irene's references reflect the fact that the comments she makes confer cultural capital and project a certain level of power and status.

Throughout the novel, Irene solidifies her sense of cultural and intellectual knowledge by marking her ability to engage with the intellectual life of men (particularly white men). Tracing Irene's interactions with the white, male author Hugh Wentworth illuminates how issues of race and gender filter into the kind of knowledge and education Irene aspires to perform. From the very first mention of Hugh in the text, it is clear that Irene is proud of her familiar relationship with "*the* Hugh Wentworth" (Larsen 54). When Clare finds out about the Negro Welfare League

[14] Irene also suggests the inaccessibility of "feminine brains" for Black women. Marking the racial politics of acquisitive brains, Irene notes that "Eighteenth-century France would have been a marvelous setting for [Clare]…or the old South if she hadn't made the mistake of being born a Negro" (69). It is Clare's ability to pass for white and thus to be attractive to a heterosexual white male gaze that defines her ability to have feminine brains. Irene's attempt to cultivate a position of power through the definition of real brains thus in some ways functions to demonstrate the historical whiteness of feminine brains.

dance because she overhears Irene on the phone with Hugh, Irene has a rare moment of feeling superior. "A tiny triumphant smile" appears on her face when she describes Hugh "as a dear," shares a parable of how he would give you the shirt off his back, and alludes to her close relationship with his wife (Larsen 54). Irene is proud that she is the kind of woman with whom Hugh Wentworth wants to speak.

Irene's retrospective account of the Negro Welfare League dance is comprised almost entirely of the representation of her conversation with Hugh Wentworth. In a novel that spends most of its time developing two biracial women characters, ostensibly to explain how one falls to her death at the end of the text, this use of narrative space is important. Irene characterizes her account of the dance as a "few unconnected things" in a night that soon "faded to a blurred memory," but instead of being arbitrary, her memory of the dance functions as a pivotal moment in which Larsen represents Irene's curated performance of intellectualism (Larsen 56). The entire record is devoted to making visible how Irene positions herself, how she lingers on memories that bolster her sense of superiority.

The details Irene dwells on in her memory of the dance reflect her self-positioning within the complicated racial system she navigates in asserting intellectualism. In Irene's discussion with Hugh, he says that white women are "always raving about the good looks of some Negro, preferably an unusually dark one," and then he asks Irene whether she finds darker skin "ravishingly beautiful" (Larsen 55). Irene responds emphatically, "I do not! And I don't think the others do either" (Larsen 55). She suggests that there is a "kind of emotional excitement" that is like feeling "in the presence of something strange, and even, perhaps, a bit repugnant to you; something so different that it's really at the opposite end of the pole from all your accustomed notions of beauty" (Larsen 55). She adds that darker women evoke the same reaction, one that is decidedly not "predatory" (Larsen 55). This record of Irene's commentary demonstrates the

ways she positions herself as a distanced and educated race critic. She believes she performed well in this conversation, and when Hugh expresses a measured approval of her ideas – "Damned if I don't think you're halfway right!" – she is proud of herself (Larsen 55). Only a few sections earlier, though, Irene had a very different stance on dark skin. When Clare's friend, Gertrude, also an African-American woman who can pass for white, suggests that "nobody wants a dark child," Irene feels "resentment, anger, and contempt" because she has a dark son and she is proud of him and her racial allegiance (Larsen 26). Juxtaposing Irene's comments to Gertrude with her conversation with Hugh indicates that in his presence, her sense of intelligence is attached to her ability to remain objective and distanced from her personal experiences of racism. It also makes visible the diurnal, sometimes contradictory, recalibrations that Irene makes as she performs and cultivates her sense of self, her strength, and her independence in different situations and communities.

Deborah McDowell might read Irene's interaction with Hugh Wentworth as one in which "Larsen undercut(s) Irene's credibility as a narrator," at the same time that she "satirizes and parodies the manners and morals of the black middle-class that Irene so faithfully represents" (McDowell xxv). It is equally plausible, though, to suggest that this moment is a demonstration of the complicated systems of power Irene navigates in ascribing to cultural narratives about Black respectability, Black beauty, and women's intelligence. In moments of self-positioning, Irene's language use reflects her cultivation of an educated persona. When she speaks with Hugh, she performs erudition and her interaction with him is highly stylized. Irene uses a colloquialism only once. Larsen sets Irene's slang apart from the rest of her formal speech in single quotation marks and follows the usage with an elaborate, almost compensatory synonym for the act of dance: "…the average coloured man is a better dancer than the average white man—that is, if the celebrities and 'butter and egg' men who find their way up here are fair

specimens of white Terpsichorean art" (Larsen 54). Irene's insight is a marked demonstration of her education, but it is followed by the very same language ticks she identified in Clare's "sweet food of flattery": "Oh, Hugh! You're so clever" (Larsen 55). As women, Clare and Irene traffic in intensives that are marked as gendered language traits used to sway favor in social situations, and as black women their standardized language use is evidence of how they position themselves in terms of race and class. Neither Clare nor Irene can traffic in white dialect, nor, for that matter, in the flapper slang of white women, because to speak in that way would display a class or race difference that would undercut the authority and independence they have worked so hard to cultivate.

Irene's language stands in stark opposition to Hugh's, whose speech is littered with slang and cursing. Transforming phrases like "It's a fact" to "'S a fact," Hugh counters Irene's conscientious description of the Terpsichorean art with the nonchalant observation that he would not know how white men danced because he has never "tripped the light fantastic" with any of them (Larsen 54). In his reading of *Passing,* Joshua Miller marks Hugh's vernacular as a powerful way to signal white speech as dialect (Miller 227-228). I want to argue that signaling white speech as dialect is also signaling the privilege entailed in being able to use dialect without it taking away from one's sense of authority. Although Hugh receives some negative attention from the novel – Clare says that his books seem "Sort of contemptuous… As if he more or less despised everything and everybody" and Brian suggests that Hugh expects "the admiring attention that he happens to consider more than his just due"– neither of these comments undercuts his intelligence or his authority (Larsen 54, 61). When Brian suggests that Hugh is full of himself, he does not insist that Hugh is not a good writer or an intelligent person. In this novel, the linguistic choices Clare and Irene make function as a means for negotiating the power politics of their daily lives, but the text also suggests that these linguistic strategies do not entitle

them to the kinds of advantages that characters like Hugh always already have. Clare and Irene are fighting to assert their respectability, their status as intelligent, autonomous individuals. Hugh has that respect from the beginning.

The world of the text undermines Irene's assertions of intelligence, then, by marking the ways that even her attempts to cultivate intellectual authority are defined through the cultural capital of privileged, white knowledge structures and dominant, racialized ideas of beauty and gendered modernity. The conversation about "real" intelligence, for example, begins because Irene is trying to explain to her husband, Brian, why she did not invite Clare to the party she was throwing for Hugh. Irene asserts that the reason Clare is not invited is because "Hugh prefers intelligent women" (Larsen 61). So, when Irene says she believes that real brains are those that "can hold their own with anybody," "anybody" in this discussion is directly linked to the white author. Irene's unreliability as an intellectual within these structures is unavoidable.

IV.

Conclusions:

The Stakes of Unreliability

Passing asks us to question the "reliability" of reading Black women as "unreliable" narrators given the cultural frameworks that cause their life stories to appear suspect or flawed. What I mean to suggest here is not that Irene and Clare are "reliable," but that Larsen's work asks us to think critically whenever that category is in play. Unreliability is inextricable from cultural and social censure in ways that we should acknowledge when analyzing narrative reliability.

In the final section of *Passing*, Clare falls (or jumps) from an open window to her death and Irene's last utterance is a partial articulation: "I—" (Larsen 82). In this denouement, Clare drops to her death after trying to re-connect with a Black community, and Irene's elision of her own

sexual desires and her lack of reflection about her beliefs result in an unfinished statement of self-articulation. Neither Irene nor Clare is in control of the story that develops around her, and the mediation of the narration mirrors the kinds of societal, structural challenges that they face as characters within the story world.

Tellingly, the novella does not end with Irene's unfinished statement or Clare's death; it ends with a comment from an outsider, presumably some kind of law enforcement officer. The final line says 'Death by misadventure, I'm inclined to believe. Let's go up and have another look at that window'" (Larsen 82).[15] Coming on the heels of eighty-two pages that detail the emotional weight of Irene's anxieties and Clare's regrets, the observations of this disembodied voice seem incongruously unfettered, almost flippant. To suggest that this death happened by chance is to ignore the violence of Clare's fall and to underplay the larger problems the text so carefully constructs. The comment from this stranger may suggest that Clare's death can be normalized as a mishap, but the form of the novella asks us to think critically, to "look" again. The disjuncture between the tone of the larger novella and this sentence marks the statement as a provocation, a call to take seriously the request to have another look at the ending of *Passing*.

The final line directs us not to look at Clare's white husband, John Bellew, or Irene, but at the window, at the structure that framed the traumatic event. Uri Margolin points out that one of the ways to understand focalization is to see it as a "window," a structure that stresses "the

---

[15] My analysis is derived through a reading of the original ending of Larsen's novella. The line "Death by misadventure…" that concludes the first two printings of *Passing* is eliminated in the third. The later version ends: "Through the great heaviness that submerged and drowned her she was dimly conscious of strong arms lifting her up. Then everything was dark." As far as we know, there are no records indicating why this choice was made. For the purposes of this analysis, the original sentence is compelling in that it closes the text with the words of a disembodied, masculine, authoritative voice, one that draws attention to the social and judiciary structures that Black women negotiated and performed within. It is possible that in New York at this time, the authority figure could have been a fictional representation of the earliest African American police officers. However, the historical possibility of that is much less important than the fact that Irene marks the final lines as disembodied. The voice of these closing lines is conferred the authority of masculinity and the power to articulate the final words on what has occurred, but he does not have to contend with a body or its politics. The shortened ending of the later print does nothing to alter my reading that this text is about the kinds of structures that Irene and Clare negotiate textually and culturally, but the original does provide a richer interpretive opportunity. For more on the history of African American Police see Dulaney, and for more on the alternative endings of *Passing* see Hutchinson and Madigan.

specific situatedness of the agent: spatial, temporal, but also conceptual, cultural, epistemic" (Margolin 45). Focalization, that is, draws attention to the cultural situation of the focalizing character. Looking at the "window" of *Passing* means acknowledging the experimental focalization that highlights the opportunities and limitations Black women faced in asserting narratives of mental independence in this historical moment. It means recognizing the fact that even Larsen's cisgender, middle-class, ostensibly heteronormative biracial women who can pass for white struggle to actualize their claims of autonomy and intelligence in the context of available narratives of gendered modernity. Exposing the limitations of definitions of modernity that are co-constitutive with binaristic ideas of gender and hierarchical conceptualizations of race, *Passing* creates a formal structure that displays the kinds of dissemblance reliability demands. The formal experimentation in *Passing* suggests that the path to change is through thinking critically about the kinds of opportunities and privileges, the kinds of structural openings and windows, that modern experience and writing seem to project for women and people of color. *Passing*'s concluding sentence urges us to look closely at the frame structures that make visible that some people are more easily marked as unreliable than others. Let's go up and have another look at the window, she says.

CHAPTER IV

Modeling the Mind of the Colonial Modern Girl:

Jean Rhys and Stream of Discourse

The protagonist of Jean Rhys's 1934 novel *Voyage in the Dark*, Anna Morgan, describes her experiences of transnational movement as cognitively disorienting. She says,

> It was almost like being born again. The colors were different, the smells were different, the feeling things gave you right down inside yourself was different. Not just the difference between heat, cold; light, darkness; purple, grey. But a difference in the way I was frightened and the way I was happy. (*Voyage* 7)

Scholars of Rhys's work have noted that such moments reflect the experiences of ethnic displacement and racial self-alienation central to Rhys's representation of Creole subjectivity. Though the meaning of the word Creole shifts over the course of Rhys's lifetime, scholars use this term to designate white, native West Indians.[1] What I propose in this chapter is that when we talk about Rhys's experimentation with stream of consciousness, we need to understand it as a stream of Creole consciousness, one that inevitably reflects the politics of the mind embedded in colonial hierarchies of humanity. The quote above is notable for its attention to the way that Anna locates the confusion of colonial movement in cognitive dissonance, a disorienting shift in her experience of the external world. Her articulation of a change in not just *what* she feels but

[1] Later in the century, the term is increasingly used to designate "the 'colored' native of mixed racial origin, and more generally, the West Indian culture itself, which was gaining a self-conscious identification separate from the European culture of the colonials" (Raiskin 97). Throughout this chapter, I use the term "white Creole" in light of this terminological shift.

how she feels is indicative of the way Rhys's characters draw attention to how colonial movement denaturalizes cognitive processes that are ostensibly universal.

In what follows, I argue that Jean Rhys's mobilization of stream of consciousness suggests the need to interrogate dominant notions of rational personhood and cognitive citizenship. Her narrative experimentation makes visible the network of underlying assumptions that create a hierarchized system for evaluating mental reliability, one based on Lockean definitions of humanity, intelligence, and self-knowledge. I begin with historical background on the Lockean model of personhood and its impact on the development of dominant narratives of gendered modernity at the beginning of the twentieth century, and then proceed to analyze how Rhys's work depicts the interplay between models of the mind and narratives of progressive selfhood, citizenship, and humanity. Locke grounds personhood both in rational (not emotional) thought and in the ability to articulate a narrative of unified, diachronic consciousness. The narrative of a rational person is a story of progress and development. Rhys's novels demonstrate how conceptualizations of rational, unified, progressive subjectivity are naturalized and mobilized as a means to police marginalized groups. Her characters are impacted by colonialism in a way that makes them aware that they cannot communicate a narrative of autobiographical identity that lines up with a notion of unified, rational, progressive selfhood. Though autobiographical self-revelation is crucial for their interpersonal interactions and professional advancement, their experiences of Creole – white, native West Indian – subjectivity fail to conform to dominant models.

In depicting the thoughts of her dislocated, white Creole women characters, Rhys develops a stream of consciousness, one that I will refer to as stream of discourse, that presents a social mind and pushes back against conceptualizations of the unified, rational mind. Furthermore, her experimentation with stream of discourse marks the ways that modern, colonial

movement creates the conditions through which her characters come to understand the arbitrary and inequitable constructions of subjectivity, cognition, and citizenship and their very real impact in daily life. Rhys's work thus undermines dominant notions of cognition even as it demonstrates that characters must rely on them to navigate daily life.

I.

John Locke and the Modern Girl

In the 17th century, John Locke defined a person as "a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places" (210). His definition posits that rationality and self-knowledge across time are the defining characteristics of humanity, and, though his conceptualization has been debated and interpreted variously in scholarship, it permeated political philosophy. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the circulation of Freudian and Jamesian theories of the mind did nothing to alter the centrality of this Lockean definition of humanity to conceptualizations of citizenship and authority. Though Locke's description of personhood is not often understood as a crucial intertext for early twentieth century discussions of the mind, I argue that it plays a fundamental role in how modern gendered identity is constructed.

For Locke, the narrative of a rational person is a narrative of progress and development, and, as I have pointed out a number of times throughout this dissertation, this means that marginalized people, working within a Lockean political discourse, argue for political and social rights by working to prove that they have intelligence and self-knowledge. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's contention that women deserve rights because they have an "inner being, which [they] call ourself," a mind with its own "bitter disappointments…brightest hopes and ambitions" (2) becomes a central aspect of European-American flapper rhetoric. In other chapters, I pointed out that women who identify as modern girls at the beginning of the century do so by arguing that

they have minds of their own, but a secondary aspect of this contention is that they get what they want because they know who they are. Having a mind of one's own also means having a strong sense of self-knowledge. Myrtle Heileman, the modern girl author who writes that being a flapper takes "brains," also writes that flappers are a transhistorical phenomenon, because being a flapper means knowing who you are, what you want, and how to get it (2). She says, "Joan of Arc was a flapper […] Joan, the little dear, knew what she wanted to do. She wanted to wear armor and ride a charging steed […] [s]he wanted to lead an army of men, and she did it" (Heileman 2).

Despite modern girl declarations of self-knowledge and intelligence in periodicals across the country (or perhaps because of them), the intelligence of flappers was often fodder for ridicule. One *Life* magazine cover from March of 1926, for example, portrays a flapper figure titled "The Thinker" dispassionately holding a copy of "Love Confessions."[2] Just one example of the pervasive ridicule of women's minds in media coverage, the *Life* magazine cover stands as a testament to the challenges women faced in asserting that they were thinking, intelligent beings, an assertion that was further compounded for women who were multiply marginalized by race, class, ability, sexuality, or nationality. Women of all races and ethnicities, indigenous people, African-Americans, and immigrants found themselves positioned outside of the accepted definitions of rationality and intelligence. They were denied opportunities because scientific, psychological, and sociopolitical rhetoric marked their minds as deficient.

For modern girls, volubly asserting their "real brains" is a means for intervening in discourse that polices who has access to citizenship and civil rights. Yet, their claims of independent cognitive capabilities and self-knowledge also reify a model of the mind consistent

[2] In making this comment, I in no way signal my support for the dismissal of the critical potential or intellectual worth of romance as a genre. I am merely acknowledging that this image uses a reference to romance novels as a means for ridiculing the mind of the flapper.

with liberal political philosophy: linear, singular, and individual (not intersubjective, relational, protean, or social), rational (not emotional), and universalizable (not sociohistorically contingent). When modern girls argue for their rights through the articulation of a unified identity, they do so because that rhetoric is easily assimilated into existent models of modern cognitive citizenship. Their insistence on their unified, universal, progressive, and rational minds is what Toril Moi might call a defensive speech act, a response to critiques that mark their minds negatively as unreliable, childish, and emotional (265).[3]

Jean Rhys's novels intervene in these contemporary discussions about modern gendered experience and thought. In what follows, I contend that Rhys's work, in form and content, depicts how dominant conceptualizations of modern gendered identity, specifically modern girlhood, play out in the daily lives of characters. Modern girl periodical writing positions modernity as a space of self-knowledge and progressive selfhood, but Rhys's novels center white Creole protagonists who do not feel that they are "the same thinking thing, in different times and places" (Locke 210). These characters explicitly take issue with notions of unified, diachronic identity and with the gendered hierarchization of rationality and emotion. I begin this analysis by positioning Rhys's work in the context of modern narratives of progress and colonial experience. I then analyze her use of stream of consciousness, arguing that her novels depict a cognitive experience that pushes back against mental models that privilege rationality and thereby produce exclusionary narrative forms.

II.

The Story of the Colonial Modern Girl is not a Bildungsroman

In this section, I demonstrate Rhys's preoccupation with the socioeconomic import of interpersonal self-revelation for women. Across a number of her early twentieth century novels,

[3] Moi discusses the disclaimer "I am not a Woman Writer" as a defensive speech act. She suggests that "when we hear such words…we should look for the provocation" (265).

Rhys focuses on the challenges her characters face during acts of social self-communication, experimenting with various techniques for representing non-linear cognition in a way that resists notions of humanity predicated on unified diachronic subjectivity. Building from work by other Rhys scholars like Veronica Gregg and Judith Raiskin, I demonstrate that while Rhys's protagonists do not escape essentializing discourses of race and gender, it is precisely their white Creole experiences of marginalization that enable them to highlight unified subjectivity as a crucial and exclusionary aspect of colonial logic. Gregg has argued that Rhys's work uses intertextual narrative references to make visible the "constructed nature of the colonialist discourse that passes itself off as natural and transparent" (38). My work identifies Lockean political discourse as an important aspect of that colonial project, one that Rhys works to undermine through a manipulation of stream of consciousness form.

Rhys's 1930 novel *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* provides an example of a character whose conversations draw attention to the sociocultural pressure to perform a unified sense of self across time. The protagonist of the text, Julia, tells a male interlocuter, Mr. Horsfield, about a time when she "felt that it was awfully important that some human being should know what [she] had done and why [she] had done it" (Rhys, *Mackenzie* 52) However, Julia tells Horsfield that when she finished recounting her experiences to the sculptor, Ruth, for whom she had been sitting, she felt that the woman did not believe her, and that, maybe, she did not believe herself either. She tells him, "I wanted to say to Ruth: 'Yes, of course you're right. I never did all that. But who am I then? Will you tell me that? Who am I, and how did I get here?'" (Rhys, *Mackenzie* 53). Julia's frustration reflects a failure to find connection via interpersonal self-revelation, but it also demonstrates an inability to feel that the story she has told of her past functions as an accurate explanation of who she is now or how she got there.

When Julia describes her interaction with Ruth, she outlines not just a failure of language for communicating to another person but the failure of a model that assumes the continuity of the Lockean experiential self. Recounting her interaction with Ruth to Horsfield, Julia says that she had wanted to communicate "that everything [she] had done had always been the only possible thing to do" (Rhys, *Mackenzie* 52). The narrator of the novel, though, tells us that in the very moment when Julia tries to communicate how hard it is to communicate, Horsfield responds by feeling frustrated both with her inability to tell her story and her inability to know that story. He thinks, "Well, go on, get on with it. If it's going to be the story of your life, get on with it," and when Julia pauses in reflection, he feels irritated "by her vagueness, 'because,' he thought, 'your life is your life, and you must be pretty definite about it. Or if it's a story you are making up, you ought to at least have it down pat'" (Rhys, *Mackenzie* 50). He wants Julia's story to be consistent, but he also believes that she should know that story to be authentic, to be true. Veronica Gregg reads this moment as one in which Mr. Horsfield, "a young middle-class Englishman, assumes that an individual, as a unitary subject, possesses authority over her life, or that, if she makes up a story, authority resides in the narrativization of that life" (Rhys, *Mackenzie* 148), but it is also a moment when Rhys highlights precisely the aspects of unified subjectivity that her work unsettles. It is not just that Julia does not have the language to describe her experience; it is that her experience and thus her description of her life are not diachronically unified. This is evident when Julia describes how she attempted to ground her sense of a past self in nonlinguistic ways, telling Horsfield that after her interaction with Ruth she went home and "pulled out all the photographs I had, and letters and things. And my marriage-book and my passport. And the papers about my baby who died and was buried in Hamburg. But it had all gone, as if it had never been. And I was there, like a ghost" (Rhys, *Mackenzie* 54). None of the

systems for constructing a sense of self across time work for Julia. They all fail to function as an adequate reflection of who she is and how she got to where she is in that moment.

Rhys scholars like Judith Raiskin, Jessica Berman, Delia Konzett, Judith Kegan Gardiner, and Veronica Gregg have persuasively demonstrated that Rhys's protagonists struggle to communicate interpersonally because they speak from a white Creole perspective. Though these scholars do not describe this situation in cognitive terms, they note that the failures of language to communicate across difference are a central aspect of how Rhys marks the limitations of dominant European ideals of subjectivity. In discussing Rhys's 1934 novel *Voyage in the Dark*, for example, Veronica Gregg notes that the protagonist, Anna, struggles to tell her interlocutor about the West Indies, saying, "I wanted to make him see what it was like. And it all went through my head, but too quickly. Besides, you can never tell about these things" (Rhys, *Voyage 53)*. Gregg cites this moment as evidence of Rhys's interest in the failures of language and interpersonal communication in colonial time and space (116). Gardiner argues tangentially that Rhys's work highlights that "[i]n a capitalist patriarchy, men and the propertied control language and the literary tradition so that women's words are not believed" (249). These arguments demonstrate that moments of failed communication are not just a reflection of a modernist concern with universal self-alienation or the impossibility of language to reflect subjective reality; they are the result of systems of inequalities that intensify because of modern colonial movement. As Jessica Berman notes, for Rhys's characters, "narrative self-accounting always takes place within the geographical spaces of empire" and thus "the question, 'who are you?' calls up the uneven development and disrupted futurity of colonialism, which conditions both their corporeal experiences and their ability to disclose themselves to others in narrative" (33).

While all of these scholars focus on the failures of language and communication in Rhys's texts, I extend their arguments by suggesting that this linguistic system is predicated on a

particular idea of cognition that is crucial to how inequality is perpetuated and naturalized as common sense. Berman's interpretation of Rhys's "shifting perspectives, distorted temporalities, and uncertain plots" is that Rhys's "narrative convolutions, interruptions, and refusals question the possibility of personal growth under conditions of uneven colonial development" (33,78). However, paying attention to the ways Rhys's novels demonstrate the flaws of Lockean definitions of intelligence illuminates that we can only read these women characters as icons of stalled youth or failed maturity because we are still evaluating them on the basis of conceptualizations of growth and productive futurity defined through dominant conceptualizations of citizenship and cognition. Moreover, following this line of analysis makes manifest the interplay between debates about modern gendered subjectivity and Rhys's representation of fictional minds.

When modern girls assert that they have brains of their own, they do so in a way that demonstrates that they have precisely the kind of self-knowledge that Rhys's characters fail to access. Film star Colleen Moore says in an interview with the *Chicago Daily News* that a Modern Girl "is just a little girl trying to grow up - in the process of growing up," and that this process of growing up is the cultivation of "intellect and a healthy point of view" that allows her to assert that "[s]he knows what she wants and what she is doing, all of the time" (Hall). Rhys's novels depict the mental dislocation her characters experience as they try to perform a self-knowledge, a modern gendered experience, that they do not have. Everywhere Rhys's protagonists go, people ask them, "Who are you, anyway? Who's your father and have you got any money, and if not, why not? Are you one of us? Will you think what you're told to think and say what you ought to say?" (*Good, Morning Midnight* 92). These questions reflect the fact that while movement out of domestic spaces (both home and nation) was touted as a sign of progress

and modernity in popular discussions of the modern girl, Rhys's characters consider such movement the root of their alienation.

Media representations demonstrate the modernity of the modern girl, in part, by marking her ability to transgress boundaries as she moves outside of home, nation, and traditional gender scripts. As the Modern Girl Around the World editorial collective outlines, the figure of the Modern Girl comes into being through the material connection of different parts of the world through the flow of commodities that traffick in "ideas about gender, race, and modernity" (19). Both a consumer category and a narrative of subjectivity, the Modern Girl topos incorporates aesthetic elements from multiple colonial and national contexts, demonstrating the multidirectional influences of cosmopolitan circuits of exchange (Weinbaum et al. 51). Modern girls engaged the latest trends from abroad by encountering them in the circulation of commodities, and they "traveled within and across colonial and national boundaries" and "journeyed or even worked outside their home colonies and countries" (Weinbaum et al. 51). In advertisements and magazines, they become part of the growing urban landscape, standing on skyscrapers, driving in automobiles, and dancing in speakeasies. They are more mobile and more visible in their mobility, but their identification with the modern metropolis also marks their connection to imperial projects. For example, "The Lot of the Modern Girl," an article in *Woman's Life* in 1899, suggests that the educated girl who "has gone through Girton or Newnham" and has found herself repeatedly faced with "the rebuff of closed doors" has the opportunity to realize that "[i]f Britain does not want her, Greater Britain does" (Meade 256). The author, Mrs. L.T. Meade, tells readers that "a university girl must surely be welcomed and appreciated in our colonies" (256). "With her strong character, superb health, and her richly endowed mind," the Modern Girl is tightly connected to the project of colonialism: "she might make fresh centres of light and learning in distant lands" (Meade 256). Even if the "progress" of

the modern girl is always under fire in scientific, social, and political spaces, Modern Girlhood is inextricable from discussions of national and international progress, urbanization, and cosmopolitanism.

The Modern Girl is a cultural figure defined in relationship to a project of progress. Mobility out of nation and home shapes the narratives of development and self-knowledge modern girls articulate. Amy Kaplan reminds us, though, that domestic has a "double meaning that not only links the familial house to the nation but also imagines both in opposition to everything outside the geographic and conceptual border of the home" (581). The progress narrative of the rational, individual Modern Girl who knows who she is and what she will do is part of a process of domestication where "men and women become national allies against the alien, and the determining division is not gender but racial demarcations of otherness" (Kaplan 582). Rhys's characters are products of a domestication that is "more mobile and less stabilizing… [able to] produce shifting conceptualizations of the foreign" (Kaplan 583). Though almost all of Rhys's protagonists are white women, they experience alienation in Europe in ways that speak to the projects of gender and racial hierarchization embedded in the mobile domesticity of colonial time and space. As Judith Raiskin points out "Rhys's Caribbean characters returning to the mother country do not find themselves nurtured in the 'home' they have been so persuasively educated to expect, but rather find themselves once again in exile, this time not on the frontier, but in the heart of the metropolis" (152). Raiskin suggests that this alienation is the product of "cultural colonialism, operating through myths of home and family," but I would add that movement to the metropole destabilizes not just myths of home and family but also the hierarchy of cognitive capabilities inherent in colonialist rationale for the marginalization of women, immigrants, and racialized others (145).

In Rhys's novels, colonial contexts complicate notions of domesticity, rationality, and diachronic subjective unity. Though the mobility of the Modern Girl was popularized as a hallmark of emancipation for upper and middle-class white women in the modern period, Rhys's novels are about women who move in and out of domestic spaces without experiencing that mobility as transformative or emancipatory. The migration of the Modern Girl, her urban ties, and her attendant separation from narratives of home and family connection are a reflection of imperial contexts. Even figures who are not racially othered are othered alongside racial difference because of colonial praxis. Rhys scholars have pointed out that even though not all of Rhys's characters are explicitly Creole (white, Native, West Indians), her novels are always about a Creole subjectivity created through the experience of modern, colonial movement. And, while her characters have the privilege of being able to move through streets and across national boundaries, that movement is part of what marks them as other, as alien. Their transgressions are often forced, enacted as a means of survival, and the narratives they construct do not model themselves on the progress narratives of modern girls.[4] The story Rhys's characters have to tell is not the story of development that their interlocutors want to hear: their story is that they haven't eaten in days, that their baby died and their husband left them, that they have sex with men for food and stockings, that their family disowned them, that they are poor women in Europe with "no pride, no name, no face, no country" (Rhys, *Good Morning* 44). They don't "belong anywhere" (Rhys, *Good Morning* 44). The questions and accusations they face weaken progress narratives that suggest that modernity means increased freedom via class mobility and sociopolitical opportunity for white women.

[4] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson cite Wilhelm Dilthey's definition of the Bildungsroman when they describe it as a "story of an individual's struggle to become a social subject who 'becomes aware of his purpose in the world'(cited in Burt 105)" (10). Literary representations of women in the Victorian period demonstrate the troubled relationship that women characters have to traditional narratives of progress, and this is precisely part of what the historical figure of the Modern Girl tries to escape in aligning herself with narratives of progress associated with modernization, cosmopolitanism, and urbanization.

Because of this context and because of moments like the one I delineated above when Julia pushes back against the naturalization of diachronic unity, Rhys's texts are often positioned within the category of the anti-bildungsroman, a modernist antidote to dominant narratives of modernity that posit progress and development.[5] Jed Esty, for example, argues that Rhys's protagonists, particularly Anna in Rhys's 1934 novel *Voyage in the Dark*, are "profoundly alienated from any available moral or psychological schemes for self-formation" (167). What is interesting about Rhys's texts, though, is that while they participate in modernist resistance to dominant models of subjectivity and experience, they are also sometimes still positioned as a modern twist on the novel of development. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson describe the Bildungsroman as a story in which "[t]he individual's potential, thwarted by circumstances of birth and repressive social convention, by constraints of class and gender, is discovered in the extended process of becoming educated … [eventually culminating in] adherence to social conventions and structures" (Smith and Watson 10). The blurb on the back of the 2000 Penguin edition of *Good Morning, Midnight* describes the text in ways that align with this definition, suggesting that the novel is an "unforgettable portrait of a woman bravely confronting loneliness and despair in her quest for self-determination." Though the back-cover summary contends that the protagonist, Sasha Jansen, discovers that her "emancipation is far more painful and complicated than she could expect," it presents the novel as a "powerfully modern portrait" of a woman who finds "courage" and "independence." When I first read this description, I was baffled. How, given Sasha's explicit critiques of narratives of progressive selfhood, can *Good*

---

[5] Scholars like Smith and Watson, Raymond L. Burt, and Jed Esty have noted that the form of the bildungsroman is deeply historical, and that, in many ways, literature in the 20th century radically alters if not undermines the form. Many modernists, Smith and Watson argue, "invoke [the Bildungsroman] tropes of individuation to also show the fragmentation of selfhood and the constructed nature of the social" (Smith and Watson 10). Esty and Burt in particular contend that modernist texts often demonstrate the various ways in which narratives of progress collapse or crumble during the early twentieth century. These scholars argue that modernist texts demonstrate the rupture and fragmentation that develops alongside narratives of progress associated with imperialism and increased modernization and industrialization.

Morning, Midnight be positioned as a novel of development? Upon further analysis, I believe it is because Rhys's texts frequently mobilize a language of progressive individualism that positions narratives of development as a dominant cultural discourse. Her novels demonstrate the pervasiveness and sociocultural import of that discursive tradition. *Good Morning, Midnight* thus depicts both the flaws of systems of self-disclosure and progressive, unified self-knowledge and the ways in which those narrative structures function as a tool for navigating the chaos and cruelty of everyday colonial life.

Articulations of self-knowledge and plans for self-improvement pervade the internal dialogue of Rhys's protagonists, though these plans rarely pan out. In Rhys's 1939 novel *Good Morning, Midnight*, for example, the protagonist, Sophia, who changes her name to Sasha, is an English woman whose past life in France haunts her when she returns after losing a child, being abandoned by her husband, and being disowned by her family. She has a room of her own and a legacy of "£2 10s od" every Tuesday that an aunt left her "to annoy the rest of the family" (Rhys, *Midnight* 42). To escape the traumas of her past and work to define herself anew, she comes up with daily routines and cultivates moments of transformation (changing her name, her clothes, and her hair). Modeling Benjamin Franklin's language of daily self-improvement, Sasha wakes up and decides on "a place to eat at midday, a place to eat at night, a place to have my drink in after dinner," saying, "[t]he thing is to have a programme, not to leave anything to chance--no gaps. No trailing around aimlessly with cheap gramophone records starting up in your head, no, 'Here this happened, here that happened'" (Rhys, *Midnight* 9, 14-15).[6] This routine is about moderation and the establishment of habit. "This is going to be a quiet, sane fortnight," she says, "[n]ot too much drinking, avoidance of certain cafés, of certain streets, of certain spots, and

[6] In his autobiography, Benjamin Franklin lays out his plan for attaining moral perfection. In it he names thirteen virtues and describes how he will systematically work towards acquiring all of them. Despite the fact that he acknowledges his own failures in this project, the language of self-improvement in his work becomes part of American mythologies of individualism, progress, and self-reliance.

everything will go off beautifully" (Rhys, *Midnight* 15). In order to decide on these actions and rituals, Sasha makes rational choices about "what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve--what sensations [she could] expect from it, and what reactions [she should] prepare" (James, "Pragmatism" 25). These choices, though, do not culminate in a system that functions reliably every day in the same way. Despite her continued attempts to structure her life, the language of progress and transformation, system and moderation, is just a means for navigating a daily existence that demands constant renegotiation.

The language of development does not, cannot, disappear from Rhys's novels, but the result of the omnipresence of that language does not mean that the texts culminate in a finished or encapsulated singular narrative of a protagonist's life.[7] Instead, the pursuit of progress is represented as part of daily cognition, a tool that is sometimes successful and sometimes fails. The novel's overall narrative form reflects the revision and repetition of Sasha's daily linear narrative construction, a process that leaves her feeling that she does not know what to believe but also that gets her through the day. We could read this as a representation of stalled youth or frozen maturation. However, I think Rhys's preoccupation with gesturing to the exclusionary politics of narratives of progress unified identity suggests that her representation of this daily recalibration might better be interpreted as a call to interrogate why we read repetition and revision as evidence of failed maturation. What is it that reads as futureless in these texts? Jed Esty has argued that in *Voyage in the Dark* "Anna's delirious inner monologue" produces "rhythmic repetitions that cut against the narrative trajectory and, of course …interrupt and retard the standard process of maturation" (166). What, though, is a "standard process of maturation"? Esty's position, as I mentioned before is that Anna is "profoundly alienated from

[7] Indeed, scholarship at one point in time suggests that Rhys's novels were stories about Rhys women, a continued recycling of the same themes and concerns with subtle differences of geography, age, or ethnic identity. Paula le Gallez's book, *The Rhys Woman*, for example, develops its critique in this manner.

any available moral or psychological schemes for self-formation" (167). But these are precisely the kinds of evaluative terms that Rhys's characters rail against. When Rhys's protagonists are confronted with the question "Who are you, anyway?" they always attempt to answer the question, reformulating and revising their responses in different situations and conversations, despite the fact that their interlocutors tells them that their answers are not "standard" or socially acceptable. What is missing when we read this text as a novel of stalled youth, a condition in which unreliability, failed maturation, and futurelessness are inevitable, is an acknowledgment of how Rhys's texts undermine the system of evaluation that privileges and naturalizes narratives of progressive, productive, diachronically unified identity. *The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences* defines cognitive maturity as a process in which an adult develops "higher cognitive functions to shape and moderate their behavior according to *shared standards*, and to be held accountable if they don't" (emphasis mine). What remains uninterrogated in descriptions of Rhys's work that suggest a futurelessness or failed maturity is the fact that Rhys's texts take issue precisely with the exclusionary hierarchies of cognitive capabilities that define what those shared standards are and who is disproportionately held accountable for falling outside of them.

III.

"Just a Cérébrale":

Why Locke's "Thinking Intelligent Being" Is Not a Colonial Modern Girl

Though Rhys's texts are inarguably part of the modernist anti-bildungsroman genre identified by numerous scholars, her work is unique in its hyper-attentiveness to the role discussions of cognition play in defining hierarchies of modernity and modernization. In Rhys's work, movement out of domestic spaces, both home and nation, is always predicated on a colonialist logic in which rationality - and "rationally minded" people - come from the

metropole. Rather than positing a general, universal inability to achieve modern narratives of progress or mobility, her texts suggest the historically specific limitations marginalized people faced at the beginning of the twentieth century, though she often obscures the consequences of anti-blackness. In representing the minds of her white Creole protagonists, Rhys depicts the diurnal recalibrations they perform to negotiate a barrage of criticisms that mark them as having vapid, vacuous, and emotional minds – minds that do not have the ability to communicate a narrative of unified, progressive selfhood. In Jean Rhys's novels, negative conceptualizations of women's minds are an indisputable cultural intertext. Her texts intervene explicitly in discussions of what it means to be read as an outsider, a woman, and a victim, and they mobilize narrative form to demonstrate the cultural discourses that regulate who has access to specific ways of moving through the world.

Despite feeling overwhelmed by critique, Rhys's characters sometimes try to convey a strong sense of self-knowledge, one that lines up with modern narratives that privilege rational thought. Their attempts at asserting their self-knowledge rarely go well. When Sasha, for example, the protagonist of *Good Morning, Midnight*, seeks to position herself as a "cérébrale," an intellectual, her male companion, Rene, retorts that he finds her "stupid" (162). Working to clarify his position, he says: "Don't be vexed. I don't mean stupid. I mean you *feel* better than you *think*" (*Midnight* 162, emphasis added). He continues to say a "true cérébrale" is: "a woman who doesn't like men or need them" (*Midnight* 162). In fact, she "doesn't like women either. Oh, no. The true cérébrale is a woman who likes nothing and nobody except herself and her own damned brain or what she thinks is her brain… In fact, a monster" (Rhys, *Midnight* 162). As inflammatory as Rene's critiques may seem they reflect popular, "scientific," and political criticisms of the Modern Girl.

Rene marks women who assert their independent minds as man-hating, delusionally confident, and monstrous, and he does so with the backing of "science." Historian Nicole Eustace points out that in the eighteenth century, gender is a category constructed to "naturalize the differential distribution of power, to ground social hierarchies in the order of nature" (qtd AHR 1490). In the 1900s, arguments against women's suffrage in Britain cement this naturalization of difference through arguments about mental capacity. British physiologist and biologist Sir Almwroth Wright's 1913 book called *The Unexpurgated Case Against Women's Suffrage* is a good illustration of how "science" gendered and raced the mind to limit access to citizenship and political rights. In his book, Wright argues, "[t]he woman voter would be pernicious to the State because…of her intellectual defects" (87). In a much longer tirade, he delineates that a "woman's disability in the matter of intellect" is that her minds appraises a statement "primarily through the mental images it evokes," arrives "at conclusions on incomplete evidence," and has "a very unreal picture of the external world" (Wright 87). Wright believes so strongly, in fact, that women are inferior mental beings that he refuses to ever say that women "think." Throughout his treatise, he says only that women's minds "picture." His book suggests that you can never convince women of their mental deficiency because they are entirely unconscious of their limitations (Wright 92-93). As Rene's comments about the cérébrale demonstrate, women's hubris is that they think that they can think.

Rene excludes Sasha from the category of intellectual by suggesting that "she feels better than she thinks," a comment that reflects a gendered and racialized separation of emotion and thought that has a long history. The hierarchization of rational thought and unreliable emotion was a crucial feature of early twentieth century research that biologized mental limitations. In Wright's argument, this manifests in an assertion that there is no evidence that woman can ever overcome her "personal" or "emotional" interests through increased education (93-94). In her

work on the history of emotions, Ute Frevert points out that in the eighteenth century "philosophers, theologians, pedagogues, and doctors" argue that nature "had established a 'radical difference' between men's and women's physical and mental organization" (147). "Since it was women's natural destiny to give birth," the argument goes, "their limbs were more delicate than men's, their nerves highly irritable, and their emotions feeble and unstable" (Frevert 148). Within this framework, even if women have minds, they are emotional, not rational, and in a system of citizenship that privileges a conceptualization of personhood defined by rationality, suggesting that women "feel better than they think" is a damning claim.

As I will argue, Rhys's texts push back against the separation of emotion and thought embedded in Lockean definitions of humanity. It is important to emphasize, though, that Rhys's novels demonstrate the issue of emotion versus rationality for gendered minds as inextricable from issues of race and colonialism. Nicole Eustace explains that a history of emotion shows the "oft-advanced proposition that civilized people were better at controlling their emotions than savage ones" (1490).[8] In Wright's analysis of women's minds, he repeatedly links women's intelligence to that of "natives," "negroes," and immigrants, arguing that we should be skeptical of women's claims of intelligence because "the educated native… also tells us that he is pulling up level with the white man" (97). For Wright, it is ridiculous to believe that native minds are comparable to white minds - a stance that is widely held in the period and only becomes more entrenched after the eugenics movement adopts intelligence testing. Wright's research contends that to concede that women have minds would also mean having to become "an advocate for the political rights of natives and negroes" (43). Giving women the right to vote would be a slippery

[8] The privileging of a civilized mind permeates other modernist literature. Take, for example, two of the taglines for the magazine *The Smart Set*. In 1913: "Its Prime Purpose is to Provide Lively Entertainment for Minds that Are Not Primitive." In 1914: "The Magazine for Minds That Are Not Primitive."

slope to submitting to the “logical compulsion” to think “it unjust to experiment on an animal” or to “take the life of even verminous insects” (Wright 43). Wright depicts women’s rights as the top of end of a hierarchy that both links their experience to that of “natives” and “negroes” even as it positions them higher on the scale of intellectual capacity.

Rhys’s work is a complex representation of conceptualizations of race, gender, and nationality informed by colonial movement. As a white, native West Indian who moves from colonial outpost to modern metropole, Rhys depicts modern life infused with experiences of ethnic displacement and racial self-alienation. Her protagonists often articulate a sense of shared oppression with black characters, but they rarely give them the space to blossom into full participants in the narrative arc. As Sasha listens to Rene define her mental skills and call her stupid, for example, the representation of the dialogue is interrupted by Sasha imagining herself as Rene’s man-hating cérébrale, the kind of woman who is “so pleased with herself, like a little black boy in a top hat. . . .” (*Midnight* 162). In her mind, it seems that both the little black boy in the top hat and Sasha, the cérébrale, fail at achieving the respectability to which they aspire. Both, that is, are pleased with themselves because they are unaware that they are performing an identity that is defined in ways that always already excluded them. In this construction of a shared experience of marginalization, though, Rhys’s work fails to consider the substantial differences between her character’s experience as a white woman and that of a little black boy. In this way, Rhys’s characters do not escape essentializing discourses of race and gender.

It is precisely Rhys’s characters’ white Creole experiences of marginalization that mark cognitive dissonance not as a universal modern experience but as a means to denaturalize colonialist hierarchies. As Veronica Gregg has articulated so powerfully, “there is in all of Rhys’s writing a knotted dialectic tension between the ontological negation/appropriation of ‘black people’ and a formidably critical intelligence that understands and analyzes the

constructed nature of the colonialist discourse that passes itself off as natural and transparent" (73). Focusing on intertextuality as a narrative strategy, Gregg contends that to "write her self," Rhys must "write through the constructions of selfhood assigned to her within prior and dominant [European discourse on the West Indies]" (51). In what follows, I argue that one of the other strategies Rhys deploys for marking the constructed nature of colonialist discourse is the cultivation of a stream of consciousness form that suggests an alternative model of cognitive experience, one that does not hierarchize the interpolated processes of rational and emotional cognitive capabilities.

IV.

Modeling the Mind of the Colonial Modern Girl

While the digressive, dialogic, confessional inner speech characteristic of Rhys's novels has allowed her work to be read both as a representation of female victimhood and as a modernist anti-developmental novel, I contend that the loops of fragmented and associational inner dialogue in Rhys's texts should not be read simply as traumatized fragmentation or stalled development but as a demonstration of the cognitive strategies necessary for negotiating modern, colonial life. Jessica Berman suggests that Rhys "shows us not only…the potential of narrative folds and gaps to generate ethical relations and resist their political foreclosure but also the power of convoluted life stories to refuse the political imperatives of twentieth century colonial geographies" (77). I contend that those "convoluted life stories" push back against colonial discourse because they represent daily cognitive processing.

Unlike stream of consciousness novels that separate articulated inner thought from records of sensation, Rhys's stream of discourse blurs the distinction between thought and feeling, past and present, internal and external. She depicts cognition in ways that represent the various mental experiences that accrue around any action, perception, or sensation. Rhys attends

to how shifts in cognitive attention or process occur. Her experimentation with stream of consciousness highlights how easily ideas about atomized, western cognition are marked as universal and objective, demonstrating not just the contradictions and limitations of Lockean conceptualizations of the self but also the problematics of universalizing discourse about the mind and its construction of identity. In the end, Rhys's texts use narrative form to depict the story of a colonial modern girl not as one of frozen youth or of maturation and marriage, but as a process of self-formation forged through the cognitive dissonance that marginalization necessitates. For this reason, Rhys's novels should be read not just as a call to attend to the politics of narratives of progress but as a revision of how we analyze representations of fictional minds as separate from discussions of citizenship defined through a cognitive modernity that constructs race and gender hierarchies.

Analyzing the language used to represent fictional minds is particularly important when we think about how quickly descriptions of thought get attached to conceptualizations of selfhood, subjectivity, humanity, and citizenship, how quickly, that is, that ideas about the mind become political. In her seminal text on the narration of consciousness, *Transparent Minds*, Dorrit Cohn argues that the "singular power possessed by the novelist" is that the author is a "creator of beings whose inner lives [they] can reveal at will" (4). The idea that one of the unique aspects of fiction is its ability to narrativize thought and "other mind stuff" is precisely one of the reasons the field of cognitive narratology has flourished. As Kay Young poignantly articulates in *Imagining Minds*, novels are interesting for the ways in which they tell the mind's story. Though debates about the role of narrative and language in the experience of cognitive processing are contentious, cognitive historians, especially those who work on the history of emotion, have argued that the language we use to describe our cognition is a crucial aspect of the way we come to experience our own minds. While I do not propose that fictional minds are mirrors of real

minds, I do believe that we can consider them as models, or as David Herman might call them, "scripts," through which authors revise and reify dominant ideas about the mind.

The hierarchization of rational thought and emotion that manifests as a part of discussions of gendered modernity plays out in scholarship that discusses stream of consciousness narrative techniques. Erwin Steinberg for example, distinguishes stream of consciousness narration focused on "pre-speech, non-verbalized" aspects of cognition like "psychological images, sensations, and perception" from interior monologue that represents the consciousness of "a character who has organized his thoughts into language" (6, 156, 157). His account produces a schema that isolates intertwined processes of cognition. And, in doing so, it creates a model that allows for the creation and political implementation of a hierarchy of cognitive processing. Steinberg's privileging of certain kinds of cognition is perplexing, particularly because William James – who is widely credited with constructing the philosophical underpinnings through which literary scholarship came to discuss stream of consciousness as a narrative form – describes our mental processes as always complexly inter-related:

> In most of our concrete states of consciousness […] classes of ingredients are found simultaneously present to some degree, though the relative proportion they bear to one another is very shifting. One state will seem to be composed of hardly anything but sensations, another of hardly anything but memories, etc. But around the sensation, if one considers carefully, there will always be some fringe of thought or will, and around the memory some margin or penumbra of emotion or sensation. (Steinberg 44).

James's metaphor for cognitive experience depicts the constant interplay between linguistic thought and what he calls "other mind stuff," and it is not one that is easily interpolated into a liberal construction of modern cognitive citizenship. Rationality cannot be a privileged and exclusionary quality of the mind when it is always interpolated into other cognitive systems.

Rhys's stream of consciousness novels present a model of the mind more in line with James's theorizations. They depict the nuanced attachment between various cognitive states, pushing back against the atomization of the individual mind, the separation of emotion and thought, and the linear narrative of development to which those ideas adhere. Using parentheticals, ellipses, blank space, repetition, tense change, and different forms of narrative address to demonstrate a shift in cognitive attention or process, Rhys works to represent the various mental experiences that accrue around any action, perception, or sensation. I turn, here, to the opening passage from Rhys's novel *Good Morning, Midnight* to analyze how her narrative technique accomplishes a more nuanced representation of cognitive processing.

> 'Quite like old times,' the room says. 'Yes?' 'No?' There are two beds, a big one for madame, a smaller one on the opposite side for monsieur. The wash-basin is shut off by a curtain. It is a large room, the smell of cheap hotels faint, almost imperceptible. The street outside is narrow, cobble-stoned, going sharply uphill and ending in a flight of steps. What they call an impasse. (Rhys, *Midnight* 9)

The novel begins with a question that simulates the way Sasha's hotel room makes her feel and continues into a description of aspects of the room that evoke particular sensations. Though we may initially be unsure of the addressee of the question, the details of the subsequent description suggest Sasha's subjective impressions: the almost imperceptible smell, the street that "they" would call an impasse. It is only after the account of stimuli connected to cognitive experience that the narrating "I" shows up in the text: "I have been here five days. I have decided on a place to eat in at midday, a place to eat in at night, a place to have my drink in after dinner. I have arranged my little life" (Rhys, *Midnight* 9). This moment of articulated inner thought, ostensibly internal monologue, triggers a shift to memory. Within the internal monologue, Rhys represents a mental transition from authoritative narrative account to a wandering digressive thought and

then to memory by placing a gap in the text and then a narrated repetition of one part of the previously self-articulated statements of belief and action: "The place to have my drink in after dinner. . . . Wait, I must be careful about that. These things are very important. Last night, for instance. Last night was a catastrophe" (Rhys, *Midnight* 9).

In *Good Morning, Midnight*, shifts from inner monologue ("The street outside…" "The place to have my drink") to second-person address ("What they might call an impasse.") often transform into moments of emotive fragmentation signaled by ellipses ("The place to have my drink in after dinner. . . .Wait"). These transformations demonstrate the inextricability of perception, memory, thought, and emotion. In depicting the connection between inchoate, unquotable "mind stuff' and cognitive categorization, Rhys's texts demonstrate contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum's claim that "[e]motions are not just the fuel that powers the psychological mechanism of a reasoning creature, they are parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creature's reasoning itself" (3). Another example comes just three pages into Sasha's wandering record of memories when we realize that we have been following her mental activity as she tries to fall asleep. When the narrative returns to the present, it is with an action statement - "I put the light on"- and is followed by a description of what she is aware of seeing: "The bottle of evian on the bedtable, the tube of luminal, the two books, the clock ticking on the ledge, the red curtains. . . " (*Midnight* 12). This narration of perception is followed by a slide, via ellipses, into interior monologue that shows how the survey of the room triggers her mind to imagine how her friend might have chosen this room for her: "I can see Sidonie carefully looking round for a hotel just like this one. She imagines that it's my atmosphere" (*Midnight* 12). It is unclear whether this representation of thought is fully articulated in language in her mind or if it is a mental image of Sidonie imagining her. The next sentence, though, is a clear change to articulated inner thought, a version of free indirect discourse that marks a movement from

imagining self to narrating self: "God, it's an insult when you come to think about it!" (*Midnight* 12). This epiphany about how she feels is followed by an abstraction. The interruption of self-conscious thought report manifests as a fragmentation of sentence structure, evoking anxiety without naming it: "More dark rooms, more red curtains…." (12).

The transition from first to second- or third-person address is one of Rhys's most recurrent tools for speaking to the socially embedded way that information and stimuli are codified and acted on. In Genette's narratorial schema, *Good Morning, Midnight* is autodiegetic - it has a narrator that is also the protagonist of the story. Monika Fludernik specifies that "autodiegesis restrict[s] the histoire to the narrator's own experience" (220), but in Rhys's text the internal monologue often slips into second- or third-person address. Rhys's choice to have her characters mobilize various forms of narrative address within stream of consciousness narration depicts a consciousness produced through sociocultural intertexts. The example I have outlined above gestures to the communicative, and thus always social, nature of the mind, but other sections of Rhys's novel heighten our awareness of social cognition. When Rene asks Sasha why she is afraid, ostensibly of taking him to her apartment to sleep with him, Sasha dissociates from the current moment, thinking to herself or maybe just experiencing a moment of floating away from her own sense of self: "You are walking along a road peacefully. You trip. That's the past – or perhaps, the future. And you know there is no past, no future, there is only blackness, changing faintly, slowly but always the same" (*Midnight* 172). Out loud she asks Rene, "You want to know what I'm afraid of?" and then proceeds to answer her own question by telling him she is afraid of men, and women, because they are "a pack of damned hyenas" (*Midnight* 172-173). The act of expressing her anger pulls her out of dialogue with him and into her own mind again: "Thinking: 'Oh, shut up. Stop it. What's the use? But I can't stop. I go on raving'" (*Midnight* 173). Sasha tells Rene that when she says she is afraid she means she hates

"their eyes," "their voices," "the way they laugh," "the whole bloody business" and then the novel slides into another description of cognitive sensation and inner dialogue:

> Everything spoiled, all spoiled. Well don't cry about it. No, I won't cry about it. . . .but may you tear each other to bits, you damned hyenas, and the quicker the better. . . .Let it be destroyed. Let it happen. Let it end, this cold insanity. Let it happen. (Rhys, *Good Morning* 173)

The first paragraph of this passage expresses a linguistic representation of feeling, something she might be thinking in words in her own mind or maybe just feeling without words. Then there is a distinct shift to internal dialogue between a voice that addresses her inner self as you - "Well, don't cry about it" – and a voice that accepts that internalized directive – "No, I won't cry about it." The passage moves quickly to an inner voice that addresses an ostensibly external 'you,' maybe the kind of external 'you' that would tell her not to cry about it: "but may you tear each other to bits, you damned hyenas, and the quicker the better." And then there is another, subtle alteration when Rhys's writing demonstrates a movement from anger to despondent resignation. The entire record of her interaction with Rene obfuscates and confuses narrative address. Sometimes 'you' seems to be a generalized public, sometimes it is internalized conversation between a 'you' and an 'I,' and sometimes it is just a linguistic representation of her emotional state or the movement from one kind of mental experience or emotionally inflected thought to another (immersive, conflicted, angry, observational, etc.). Rhys's use of "you" and "they" in internal monologue, or what I think may be more accurately described as internal discourse, is a way of making visible what Alan Palmer describes as an intersubjective, social mind, a representation that links how narratives of consciousness are connected to the kinds of social cognition that sociopolitical interaction requires.

V.

Conclusions:

Politicizing Stream of Consciousness

The temporal discontinuity and fluidity of how different “mind stuff” adheres within stream of consciousness novels is part of what makes them ideal for undermining narratives of progress, but the form also allows for sociopolitical ideas about gender and race to be naturalized in narrative space. Debates about the nature and universal experience of cognition and self-consciousness were prevalent and influential at the beginning of the twentieth century. Rhys’s texts intervene in these discussions, demonstrating that ideas about the mind are never neutral. While other stream of consciousness novels are likely to traffic in representations of social cognition and of a variety of cognitive experiences, Rhys’s thematic and formal attention to the politics of cognition deserve recognition. Her use of stream of discourse demonstrates how representations of consciousness reflect sociocultural ideas about the mind. Her characters share a subordinated status that allows them to demonstrate the inequities of normative conceptualizations of cognitive capabilities, yet they reify certain forms of racial inequality.

As scholars, when we analyze stream of consciousness as a narrative form, we need to be alert to what aspects of cognition are emphasized, how they are patterned, and in what ways they are marked as valuable or policed as problematic. Depicting cognitive processing as complex and inevitably social, Rhys’s novels illustrate how representations of fictional minds problematize, revise, and re-pattern the conventionally natural mind. Though depictions of fictional minds can never serve as a record of the lived experience of an individual or group, they demonstrate the limitations of prominent conceptualizations of subjectivity and cognition. Moreover, they provide models, through narrative experimentation, that create space for the articulation, circulation, and interpolation of different experiences of consciousness.

Early scholarship marked Rhys's writing "as [a] highly personal account of an individual woman's unhappy lot" (Carr 1). Though reviewers and critics conceded that her work was written with precision, they positioned it derivatively as "women's fiction," autobiographical and confessional in ways that were limited in "scope and significance" (Carr 1). In this chapter, I have argued that Rhys's narrative experimentation reflects a historical moment in which an atomized individual conceptualization of the mind had immense power and when "ambiguity, hybridity, fluidity, and indeterminacy" were often penalized (Reddy 1510). This argument is a reflection of my academic background, one focused on the richness and breadth of scholarship that positions hybridized forms as subversive and resistant, but it is also a product of the continued relevance of making visible how easily ideas about atomized, western cognition are marked as universal and objective. Rhys's work, even in 2000 was marketed as a narrative of progress in which a woman bravely confronts loneliness in a quest for self-determination and emancipation. Furthermore, narrative and modernist scholarship, like scholarship in neuroscience, often privileges accounts of the mind that "naturalize Western, especially North American, cultural patterns to provide accounts of the brain-basis of behavior that make naturalized patterns appear to be genetically pre-programmed" (Reddy qtd AHR 1510).[9] Rhys's work asks us to stay vigilant to the fact that when we study cognition in narrative, we analyze the power dynamics indexed in dominant conceptualizations of the mind.

[9] Reddy is speaking specifically about the history of emotion. I expand his commentary here by suggesting its import for other humanistic scholarship analyzing cognition.

CHAPTER V

Pelonas in Periodicals:

María Cristina Mena and Narrative Revision

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the work of an author who is frequently positioned as part of experimental modernism. I contended that Jean Rhys's work deserves attention not just for its participation in modernist trends but for the ways that it questions the value of depictions of the mind that privilege diachronic unity and rationality. In this chapter, I shift my attention to an author whose formal experimentation is much less likely to be positioned alongside a history of modernist authors intent on the rupture of narrative form, but who is equally invested in undermining any notion of a universal hierarchy of cognitive capacities. Maria Cristina Mena's work has often been dismissed as "local color" literature, and though scholars like Amy Doherty, Tiffany Ana López, Elizabeth Ammons, and Melissa González have deftly argued for understanding her use of that form as subversive, Mena is still rarely considered in the context of modernist literary history. Mena, though, like Larsen, Rhys, Fitzgerald, Fauset, and Loos is interested in modernity and the mind. Indeed, before Loos's blonde bombshell, Lorelei Lee, writes that if she "took a pencil and a paper and put down all of [her] thoughts it would make a book […] a whole row of encyclopediacs" (Loos 11), Mena writes of a blonde, Anglo flapper protagonist who claims that "[t]he famous author who has written that enormous book portraying the thoughts of a young man in one single day of his life, would have nothing on me" ("Game of Perdition" 14).[1] Mena's reference to Joyce, and to his ability to "depict the rapid stream of

[1] This excerpt comes from an unpublished short story called "The Game of Perdition." In it, Mena tells of an Anglo-American flapper whose desire for independence and autonomy backfires, and for whom a confident assertion of her

emotions and thoughts" in *Ulysses*, reflects her interest in the formal innovations necessary to depict the daily experiences of cognition.[2] However, though Mena joins Rhys in commenting on the need to revise the male-oriented stream of consciousness novel, she does not use stream of consciousness form in her work. Instead, her fiction – and, in many ways her non-fiction – focuses its narrative attention on social cognition (collective or group oriented), on the ways that thought and emotion develop through interpersonal connection, not inside an isolated mind. Her fiction suggests that representing "the rapid stream of emotions and thoughts" of the "heart and soul" is a project that requires attention to social situations, to the moments of contact, translation, and interpolation through which people make meaning and develop a sense of self and strength.

Mena uses representations of gendered modernity as a means for revising theories of hemispheric cultural contact. Unlike the other authors in this dissertation, Mena's attention is not exclusively on the representation of women's minds. Instead, her focus is on social interactions, on the connected minds of characters of different races, cultures, and genders. In this chapter, I argue that her depictions of gendered modernity across difference make visible the racialization of cognitive hierarchies of modernity. I begin the chapter by outlining the transnational history of gendered modernity that Mena taps into, linking it to scholarly conversations about Chicana/o authors and assimilationist rhetoric. I then proceed to close readings of two of her stories of cultural contact. Throughout her career, Mena writes four versions of a story that outlines the relationship between a Latin American boy and a blonde Anglo flapper. Two of them focus on

---

self-worth leads to her sexual abuse. In the end, the protagonist finds peace by returning home to care for her family and work in her garden. Connection and care help her to heal from the pain of her abuse.

[2] Both Rhys and Mena seem to suggest that Joyce's representation of the mind is flawed – Rhys rewrites the ending of *Ulysses* at the conclusion of *Good Morning, Midnight* and Mena suggests that her record of the mind of a modern girl would outmatch that of Harold Bloom. However, unlike Loos's Lorelei Lee, Mena's character suggests that although she is positive that her thoughts are more interesting than Bloom's, she is not skillful enough to write a story in stream of consciousness form.

depicting barriers to cross-cultural understanding, and two of them suggest opportunities for positive cultural interaction. “The Education of Popo” and “The Americanization of Carlos Ramos” are Mena’s two early publications that focus on cultural critique. I contend that these stories demonstrate Mena’s commitment to depicting the challenges of cross-racial understanding even as they suggest cultural contact as a space that requires mutual transformation. Positioning these short stories alongside her 1925 women’s page in *The Great Neck News*, I build on scholarship that identifies Mena’s tendency to undermine the fetishization of other cultures. Outlining her innovative use of periodical form in *The Great Neck News*, I argue that Mena’s revision of stories of cultural interaction are a manifestation of how she uses the recursiveness of periodical form to make space for narratives that resist Americanization or assimilationist rhetoric. Writing during a moment of increasingly anti-Mexican sentiment, Mena mobilizes the silences of periodical form (the gap or gutter on a periodical page and the time between the publication of stories) in ways that reveal barriers to equity in cross-cultural contact.

In the end, I argue that Mena’s stories and editorials depict different cultural viewpoints in order to shift the work of cross-cultural interaction to the citizens of the United States, demonstrating productive relationships that develop through an acknowledgment that rational individualism is not the only route through which to define modern cognitive citizenship. Returning to the second set of story revisions, the ones in which she depicts successful cultural mediation and meaningful friendship, I argue that Mena pushes back against the privileging of liberal conceptualizations of cognitive autonomy in favor of mental models that are social and relational. In 1943, Mena writes a novel, *The Two Eagle;* a short story, “The Friends/Los Amigos”; and an editorial, “My Protocol for the Sister Americas.” In these texts**,** Mena outlines the distance between cultural understandings of modern cognitive citizenship in Mexico and the United States and demonstrates the need for a revision to discussions of cultural contact. In

"Protocol," she aligns arguments about the anti- or pre-modern state of Latin American countries with negative conceptualizations of "enslaved" Latin American social minds, and she argues for the recognition of the modernity of Latin American people. In the literary texts, she focuses on social cognition, emphasizing the mutual work of cultural contact by representing the mind as embodied and highlighting the adaptation of mental capacities (like perceptions, belief systems, habits, and feelings) that occur in moments of cross-racial exchange. Indeed, her work suggests that Anglo American notions of independent cognition fail to acknowledge the myriad ways in which social cognition contributes to productive interpersonal interactions.

Mena's focus on the cognitive work of cultural mediation produces an alternative to contemporaneously circulating narratives of Americanization or assimilation. By disrupting and denaturalizing the centrality of the independent, individual mind in her work, Mena undermines the validity of what Michael Omi and Howard Winant call the "bootstraps model" of racial formation, an understanding of immigration theory in which success is defined by the ability to pull yourself up by your bootstraps and become "incorporated into 'normalized' white society (a goal whose desirability is unquestioned)" (43-44). In this model, if Chicanos/as work hard enough to be "American" they can achieve the American dream of economic success and social acceptance, but if they do not succeed, it is because of their ethnic values, not because of discrimination, economic factors, poor quality education, etc. By replacing the independent, individual mind with a social, relational one, Mena undermines the logic of what John Alba Cutler describes as the "US myths of self-making and possessive individualism" that sit at the heart of Americanization and assimilation rhetoric (12). Instead of assuming that modernity rests in acculturation into Anglo American modernity, Mena argues for the modernity of social cognition in Latin American cultures, providing an alternative model of modernity that resists narratives of American cultural dominance. Her representations of cognitive change in cultural

contact mitigate opportunities for deploying universalizing conceptualizations of modern cognitive citizenship and propose a way to develop more equitable interactions between Latin America and the United States. She depicts hemispheric contact as a space in which Anglo-Americans must learn to adapt in response to the cognitive modernity of Latin Americans.

I.

American Flappers and Mexican *Pelonas*

In 1924, a group of male medical and preparatory students dragged two female vocational students from the streets of Mexico City and shaved their heads. The women were *pelonas* – *chicas modernas* who had bobbed hair and short skirts – and the assault on them was a response to the women's rights debates fermenting in Mexico City. The press marked *pelonas* as a threat to national and even racial purity because they were inextricable from the global aesthetic represented in foreign films and the lax morals that were associated with such material (Rubenstein 62). However, the *pelona* was also a manifestation of a movement toward modern hygiene and athleticism, one that lined up with the politics of revolutionary Mexico.[3] In the 1920's, the government created the *Secretaría de Educación Publica*, diverting large amounts of funding to the creation of new educational opportunities. Women, particularly women who were not from upper- or middle-class families, fled the effects of years of revolutionary strife to take advantage of the increase in urban vocational education (Rubenstein 26). More likely to be from rural areas, to have darker complexions, and to be from working class backgrounds, these women were also less likely to be constrained by the Victorian mores of their upper- and middle-

[3] Rubenstein suggests that "[t]he tension between these two ways of thinking about *las pelonas*, either as white, elite young women participating in an international fashion trend or as poorer and darker-skinned young women participating in the revolution, helps explain some of the confusion and anger that led to physical violence against real-life *pelonas* in the summer of 1924" (64). Despite this, though, the first woman attacked was from the *Escuela Nocturna Doctor Balmis*, a "new vocational night school," which means that "she would most likely have been mestiza and working-class: a perfect representative of the kind of 'quasi-flapper' disdained even by elite *pelonas*" (Rubenstein 68).

class counterparts (Rubenstein 26). They aspired to middle class futurity and took advantage of all the modern trappings of Mexico City – from tramlines to cinemas, dance halls, and cabarets (Rubenstein 26). The vocational schools they attended were ostensibly spaces for learning how to be the ideal mother in a revolutionary family, but they were also where young women learned about birth control, divorce, and how to earn money outside the home (Rubenstein 26). Although elite women also bobbed their hair in this moment, the violence that erupted in 1924 began with an attack on a vocational student, a visible sign of ostensibly disintegrating gender, race, and class boundaries in Mexican culture.[4] The *pelona* was thus an intensely fraught figure in Mexican politics. A representation of resistance to conservative gender norms and to the hierarchies of racial division in Mexico, *pelonas* were also positioned as a threat to national identity because of their association with an American aesthetic.

Mexican American treatment of the Modern Girl is inextricable from this history. For many Mexican immigrants, gender conservativism became crucial to a sense of pride in their national heritage. In the 1910s, Mexican immigration to the United States increased both because of the Mexican Revolution and because of labor shortages in the United States after World War I. American immigration laws were more flexible for Mexican laborers, but Mexicans were still seen as an inferior race, never meant to be fully integrated in American society (Molina, *Race* 95). Scholarship on immigrant print culture by Nicolás Kanellos has demonstrated that Spanish language periodicals in this historical moment were intensely focused on protecting the Latino community from prejudice and persecution. They sought to maintain what Kanellos calls "an unmeltable ethnicity" ("Recovering" 439). His work shows that Latino publications routinely wrote of the "low moral standards practiced by Anglo-Americans" and attacked an American

[4] Despite critique in periodicals before the attack, *pelonas* were mostly defended by the media and by other students. As Anne Rubenstein outlines, the moment of violence enacted against the transgression of sociocultural mores allowed for the defense of *pelonas* to be positioned in terms of a return to traditional gender norms, where male students protect their female counterparts (Rubenstein 63).

"culture [that] was aggressively degrading even while discriminating against Hispanics" ("Recovering" 441). In the midst of intense Americanization campaigns that demanded that "immigrants shed their ethnic identities and show they were 100 percent American" (Molina, *Race* 95), Mexican American immigrants used Spanish language newspapers as a vanguard of resistance, a space for producing community and cultivating political power. Kanellos's work positions these newspapers as a reaction to and a protection against the kinds of discrimination, both legal and sociocultural, that Mexican American immigrants experienced. However, in seeking to create a "Mexico de afuera" within American society, they simultaneously strengthened a cultural identity that included a strict gender hierarchy (Kanellos, "Recovering" 441).[5]

Kanellos's scholarship speaks pointedly about the ways that American and Mexican modern girls served as focalizing figures for critiques of Americanization. He outlines how Latino authors, of both working class and elite backgrounds, positioned the white flapper as "a threat to Latino male power and prerogatives" ("Recovering" 447). If Anglo flappers were "aggressive blonde beauties," though, "the absolute worst flapper of them all was the Mexican or Latina who adapted American ways" ("Recovering" 447). Many of the Mexican American authors Kanellos analyzes have allegiances more in line with the men attacking the *pelonas* in Mexico City than with those defending them. Their conservative treatment of Mexican, American, and Mexican American modern girls characterizes the flapper as an irredeemable figure. Moreover, the vilification of the Latina flapper, in particular, demonstrates the ways Mexican cultural mythology about La Malinche translates across national boundaries. La Malinche, also known as Malintzin or Marina, is the "Aztec noble woman who was presented to

[5] As with United States debates about the flapper, there are, of course, Mexican immigrant writers who are complicating conservative gender dynamics in Spanish language newspapers. Nonetheless, the vitriol aimed towards the *pelona*, the Anglo flapper, and the Americanized Mexican flapper is widespread and functions as a means for supporting a sense of Mexican national pride in immigrant populations.

[Hernán] Cortés upon landing" and who became a symbol for "the mother-whore, bearer of illegitimate children, responsible for the Spanish invasion" (Alarcón 182). As Jonathan Alba Cutler articulates, la Malinche is "synonymous with female treachery in Mexican and Chicano/a culture" (14). The flapper becomes the focalizing figure for the translation of the racialized gender dynamics of Mexican mythology into American contexts. If La Malinche betrays Mexico for Spain, the Latina flapper betrays Mexico for America.

Mena's work has not been placed in the context of *pelona/*flapper history, and positioning her alongside these concerns about race, gender, and nationality reroutes initial analyses that mark her as a figure who fails to be acceptably "anti-assimilationist." It also extends scholarship that positions Mena as a predecessor to Chicana feminist revision of the "virgen/puta" dichotomy (Garza Falcón 147). Early scholarship accused Mena of pandering to Anglo audiences in her representation of indigenous Mexican characters **(**Paredes 50**).** In a well-known critique, Raymund Paredes describes Mena as a "talented story teller" whose portrayals are "ultimately obsequious," arguing that "if one can appreciate the weight of popular attitudes on Mena's consciousness, one can also say that a braver, more perceptive writer would have confronted the life of her culture more forcefully" (Paredes 50). Kanellos, though he explicitly defends Mena against critiques like Paredes's, still positions her as a writer whose work is distinct from, and in some ways less politically productive, than the anti-assimilationist writing found in Spanish language newspapers in the same period. Mena, for Kanellos, is an author whose "fundamental objective was to inform North American youth about the life and culture of her native country, which she never forgot even though she lived in an Anglo American environment" (*Handbook* 79). Though the second clause of that sentence expresses a tepid acknowledgment of her ties to Mexico, elsewhere Kanellos describes writing directed toward an Anglo audience in ways that position it in opposition to the immigrant writing he sees as the

vibrant center of Hispanic literary heritage. Immigrant writing, in his opinion, is an "epic story of pulling up roots and resettling in the US while experiencing the continual tug of the homeland and the need to preserve language and culture" (Kanellos, "Recovering" 451). For Kanellos, Latinos like Mena who prefer to "write in English" often assume "a stance of an American-raised observer of the culture of Mexico," and thus do not accurately represent the story "of the displaced Latin American author" (Kanellos, "Recovering" 451). Both Kanellos and Paredes position Mena as an author who is invested in American audiences, and who, though she never forgets where she comes from, somehow fails to engage seriously with the racism and xenophobia of Americanization and assimilationist rhetoric in her historical moment.

Early critiques of Mena shaped subsequent analysis of her work. Scholars have worked to recover Mena's political investments and push back against accusations that her work is assimilationist or inconsequential. Citing Mena's use of bilingual text, local color form, double-voicedness, and irony, scholars have analyzed Mena's investments in "debunk[ing] exoticizing myths," challenging "established notions of the Mexican woman as being dichotomized," and commenting "on the meeting of U.S. and Mexican cultures both as 'interpreter' and critic" (Toth, "Imperialism" 93; Garza Falcón 147; Doherty xi). [6] Amy Doherty, for example, argues that Mena is critical of both the U.S. and of Mexico, and that her work is a nuanced analysis of cultural contact. And, Melissa Marie González argues that Mena's work provides Anglo readers "with a version of Mexico imprinted with the subjectivity of her own intercultural position and fraught with assertions of un-translatability" (125). What I want to suggest here, though, is that Mena provides not just a critique of Mexican and American interactions or a less problematic vision of Mexico, but a depiction of cultural contact that stands outside of assimilation and Americanization models.

[6] For a compelling analysis of Mena's use of language and local color form see Melissa Marie González. And, for an inciteful discussion of trickster discourse in Mena's work see Tiffany Ana López.

Much of Mena scholarship focuses on rescuing her from the critique of readers who saw her work as "too obsequious," but this approach has obscured the ways in which her oeuvre creates new models of cultural contact and gendered modernity. Jonathan Alba Cutler describes anti-assimilationist literature as a category of writing focused on "[c]ultural nationalism" in which "Chicanos and (more often) Chicanas who depart from a narrowly defined vision of cultural authenticity" are marked as having "betrayed themselves and their people" (Cutler 10). He suggests that there is another branch of Latino authors that "do not presume to give transparent access to Chicano/a culture but are instead conscious of mediating and thus transforming culture through the act of representation" (11). Mena, I argue, invests in "producing culture rather than merely describing it" (Cutler 11), and she does so, in part, because of her exploration of the political challenges of translating gendered modernity across transnational boundaries. What Mena writes is not a reproduction of Mexican life but a production of cultural mediation (instead of assimilation or Americanization).

II.

Escaping Americanization

Mena moves to the United States from Mexico in 1907 at the age of fourteen. In 1913, at the age of 21, she publishes her first short story in *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*. When she arrives in the United States, Americanization is the paradigm for discussing immigration, but, as Jonathan Alba Cutler outlines in *Ends of Assimilation*, by the 1920s the "dominant model for interpreting race relations in the United States" is assimilation (4). Meant to be a "progressive reaction to the intense nativism" of Americanization rhetoric, assimilation focuses on "combatting racial thinking by emphasizing the mutability of ethnicity" (Cutler 8). Where Americanization argues "that immigrants should submit to a monolithic American cultural ideal" and promotes "social programs aimed at teaching immigrants how to reach that

ideal" (7-8), assimilation describes cultural contact as a "process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (Burgess qtd. in Cutler 4). However, as Cutler points out, the "classic version of individual-level assimilation" is one in which "someone moves from one group to another group without any real change to the boundary itself" (11). In this model for theorizing intercultural contact, "the onus of assimilation" is "on minority individuals," and the successful immigrant must learn and adapt to American ways. In this way, assimilationist rhetoric quickly becomes a system that reproduces "racial thinking by drawing a bright line between white and nonwhite groups and assuming the inferiority of non-white cultures" (Cutler 8). In this chapter, I draw attention to the changes in sociological discussions of cultural contact to demonstrate, as Cutler does, that assimilation and Americanization are constructions of paradigms for understanding interaction; they do not describe realities that exist outside of that discourse (Cutler 9-10). Mena publishes from 1913 to 1953. She writes both before and after this shift in rhetoric happens and, given the increased racialization of Mexican Americans in this historical moment, analyzing her literary representations of cultural contact is crucial. [7] Engaging explicitly and implicitly with Americanization and assimilation discourse, Mena's work produces a different model of inter-racial contact. She rewrites moments of transnational movement in ways that do not capitulate to a concept of cultural contact that does not also alter U.S. culture.

[7] Natalia Molina details the history of racism towards Mexicans saying, "[b]y the 1910s, with the increase of Mexican immigration, […] other immigrant groups had shaped the racial terrain on which Mexican immigrants would now be understood" (Molina, "Examining" 527). She contends that "[d]ecades before the influx of Mexicans, Los Angeles officials had used racial stereotypes and negative representations of Asian groups to guide their decisions regarding the distribution of city resources, including where they built (or failed to build) important infrastructure, such as water and sewer systems, and which people they let live and work in certain areas of the city. In short, by the early twentieth century, Mexicans became targets of the personal racism once directed at Asians and bore the burden of the structural racism embedded in the city" (Molina, "Examining" 527-528).

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Mena returns to the same story line - Latino boy meets Anglo girl – several times throughout her career. At least once, she explicitly links that encounter to debates about Americanization. In 1915, Mena drafts a short story called "The Americanization of Carlos Ramos" about an Argentinian University boy who meets and falls for an American girl, Bee Strong, with "hair the color of saffron" ("Americanization").[8] When Carlos travels to the United States a year after she returns home, he goes to reconnect with Bee only to find that she is married and has two children. The story is unfinished, an archive fragment, and what we have of it concludes right after Carlos arrives at Bee's estate still thinking that he must have misunderstood that she is married and a mother.[9] Mena's story tells the kind of Americanization narrative that Kanellos's periodical authors depicted with derision – a Latino man is seduced by the sexual freedom, androgyny, and self-possession of modern Anglo women. Travelling to the United States, Carlos leaves behind the culture and language of Argentina in favor of the promise of a less serious, unfettered American life. Bee Strong is characterized as an American flapper, one of the "extraordinary women" of the United States who have "skin like *nacar* and bodies of tantalizing boyishness" (Mena "Americanization").[10] Carlos is entranced by women like Bee who have "superb legs" and the pale "faces of the blessed virgin" (Mena "Americanization"). The story develops around his intense interest in being able to "begin enjoying the new existence […] what they call in the U.S.A. 'living the life'," and it locates that "life" in a love affair with an American woman:

[8] Margaret Toth describes this as a story about a Mexican character traveling to the United States, but the story says Carlos is from Buenos Aires and mentions that his wealth comes from "nitrate deposits in the Andes." Though there is a *colonia*, a neighborhood, called Buenos Aires in Mexico City, it seems unlikely that this is where Carlos Ramos is from, given Carlos's wealth (the Mexican neighborhood, Buenos Aires) is a historically impoverished area). It seems more probable that Mena has moved her story of cultural contact to another Latin American country, Argentina. This is particularly true because Mena does this in another piece of writing – she sets "Los Amigos," in Guatemala.

[9] The draft cuts off with the following action: two "adorable" children with "golden hair appeared around a far corner of the garden, looked at him and […]" ("Americanization").

[10] *Nácar* is mother-of-pearl.

> It was already July, the warm air made Carlos even more restlessly impatient; there was a strange quality of restlessness – over and above the incessant movement native to New York – in the very air, which urged closer acquaintanceship, at once, with some Americana. (Mena "Americanization")

Carlos is ready to participate in an American culture in which it is the "powerful American female who led in all things, decided all things –including one's fate—with the wisdom of an Hypatia and the face fresh as the roses, the eyes dancing and the teeth showing in generous smile" (Mena "Americanization"). All of his desires, for American women and a new existence, stem from Carlos's belief that the state of mind of *los Americanos* – who embrace flagrant sexuality, strong women, and casual, if somewhat volatile love affairs – is "why everybody [is] so healthy and rich" (Mena "Americanization").

In analyzing "The Americanization of Carlos Ramos," Margaret Toth writes that if Mena's "narratives about US travelers in Mexico arrive at unpromising conclusions about cross-cultural understanding, 'Carlos Ramos' is downright bleak" (Toth, "Transnationalism" 229). She contends that "Mena organizes Carlos's experience in the United States around acts of alienation and self-erasure" (Toth, "Transnationalism" 229). For her, Carlos, like so many "immigrants and people of color in early-twentieth century New York City" is "in the city but not of it" (Toth "Transnationalism" 229). While I agree with Toth's analysis that this is a story about Carlos's disorientation, I believe that Mena's other representations of gendered modernity make it possible to imagine a less bleak conclusion to the story fragment, one in which Carlos and Bee learn, even if only in some small way, from their contact with one another. In shifting analytic focus towards the possibilities for change that Mena depicts, I do not seek to undermine or revise scholarship that has noted Mena's critiques of Anglo-American cultural ideals or of U.S. capitalist intervention in Latin America. I want to note, instead, that it is possible to say that

Mena depicts opportunities for cultural mediation while also critiquing and highlighting aspects of cross-racial contact that stand in the way of mutual transformation (like Mexican gender conservatism, cross-cultural fetishization, the naturalized hierarchies of American exceptionalism, and the unequal capitalist power structures of U.S. Latin American economy).

"The Americanization of Carlos Ramos" shares its thematic interest in the independent minds of Anglo flappers with a number of other stories in Mena's oeuvre. Dated April 4, 1915 in the Maria Cristina Mena Chambers Archives at University of Houston, "Carlos Ramos" is written one year before Mena publishes a short story called "The Education of Popo." Though "Popo" is set in Mexico, it tells a similar tale about a young Latino led astray by a modern Anglo woman. This time, the story focuses on a 25-year-old divorcée flapper with "hair like daffodils," Alicia Cherry, who visits Mexico with her family (Mena 49). Alicia basks in the romantic attentions of Popo Arriola, the 14-year-old son of the Mexican family with whom she and her family are staying. The story concludes, though, when she returns to her wayward husband and leaves Popo both scandalized by her behavior and "educated" in the flirtatious and headstrong ways of American women. Toth suggests that "[b]oth Alicia and Popo's friendship and the transcultural possibilities it encodes are shut down at the end of the narrative" ("Transnationalism" 339). But, if Popo receives the "education" that the title implies, so does Alicia. The story concludes with Alicia using her experiences in Mexico to reconcile with her ex-husband, Ned. She tells Ned that she has come to understand that "it's the healthiest kind of fun to be perfectly frank with—with an old pal" (Mena, "Popo" 62), asking him, earnestly, if they can try to relate to one another like that in the future. [11] This is a shift from the coquettish obfuscations that allowed her to promenade with Popo without telling him that she was a dyed blonde divorcée who was eleven years his senior, and, ostensibly, from how she behaved when

[11] Much attention has been paid to the way Mena represents the accent and grammar of Latinos/as speaking English, but it seems of equal import to note that Mena represents the particularities of Anglo "flapper speech" as well.

she was married to Ned in the first place. Alicia's encounters with Popo help her find value in relationships, instead of in assertions of independence. Mena's juxtaposition of the independent mind of Anglo modernity and a Mexican mental disposition focused on sociality (what Mena calls the Mexican "heart" and "mind") is a theme that will resurface in Mena's other representations of American flappers and in her discussions of cultural difference.

In noting that both of these characters receive an "education," I do not mean to suggest that this is a story that represents Mena's ideal of cultural interaction. Instead, I am arguing that "Popo" is a story that functions in two connected ways. First, it demonstrates the kinds of beliefs and habits that hinder cultural understanding, and second, it outlines cultural contact as inevitably impactful for Anglo American characters as well as for Latin American ones. Even in this story, where Popo and Alicia do not entirely change their ways, their belief systems and mental orientations shift because of their interaction with one another. Popo is highly conservative in his understanding of women and fetishizes Alicia's white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes. Likewise, Alicia is a vain, coquettish flapper who wants "a summer flirtation" and who fetishizes Popo for his "lustrous black orbs of the languishing tropics" (Mena, Popo 59, 60). Popo's fascination with American looks mirrors Alicia's romanticization of Latin Americans. As Leticia Garza-Falcón articulates, in Mena's stories, "people, right or wrong, imagine others in other cultures in ways which bring their mirror-images of each other so close as to be in certain respects interchangeable" (145). The effect of this mirroring within the story world is that both characters are disillusioned. In "Popo," neither character reforms or works to develop new ways of interacting. Popo, as far as we know, does not stop judging women for their "treacherous" or "angelic" ways, and Alicia still concludes the story by describing Popo as a "little monkey" and his refusal to kiss her as "his Indian revenge" (Mena, "Popo" 62). Nonetheless, "Popo" is a story that demonstrates that even when characters fail to communicate responsibly, interacting forces

them to confront the stereotypes that guide their interactions with people of different genders or races. Unlike assimilation or Americanization narratives, Mena's depictions, even of problematic cultural contact, demonstrate that when people come in contact with other groups or individuals, the boundaries between them change.

III.

On Generative Gaps

In 1925, Mena produces a women's page for *The Great Neck News* of New York. In it, she writes interviews from the perspective of a "shy foreign woman" in awe of the Anglo-American world she engages with, but as the creator of content for the page, she also positions herself as an authority on United States culture. Writing as "The Woman Who Hears," Mena interviews local political figures and celebrities, writes stories in which marriage and family life serve as the grounds for exploring alcohol abuse and commodity consumption, and interacts with research in anthropology and psychology. What unites much of her writing, though – whether it is editorials, stories, or interviews – is an interest in undermining hasty judgment across difference. Mena's body of work rewrites narratives that at times appear overly simple. In this section, I draw attention to the way she uses the blank space of the periodical women's page to create contested narratives out of what might be considered superficial writing at first glance. Seeing Mena's use of space (both the physical space of the periodical page and the gaps between periodical publications) as a tool that she mobilizes throughout her career demonstrates her intense interest in shifting the habitual ways in which cultural difference is approached through stereotypes. Moreover, it demonstrates Mena's insistence that Anglo Americans, likely her main audience in this periodical publication, needed to re-orient their approach to other cultures and communities.

Mena's use of the arrangement and space between stories generates meaning without articulation. What I mean, is that Mena's women's page demonstrates how narrative can be generated through the skillful positioning of seemingly disparate articles. Although blank space may seem to be non-narrative, scholars like Robyn Warhol have demonstrated that the ''unnarratable'' does not always lead to narrative silence or to what Meir Sternberg has called ''blanks'' and ''gaps'' (222). In comic and periodical studies, the blank area between two frames on the page is called the gutter. In the space of the gutter, our minds make correlative jumps in order to narrate the relationship between one frame, the next frame, and the overall page itself. Mena uses the gutter on her women's page as a means through which she creates narrative meaning in non-narrative space.

On September 19, 1925, for example, Mena's women's page positioned two sections alongside one another, one titled "Intimate Glimpses" and the other called "Close-Ups - Emotions of Rose-Love." In "Intimate Glimpses," Mena records an interview with an actress from New York named Miss Elsie Ferguson. Mena's narrating interviewer positions herself as a "shy foreign visitor, who has sat in [the] bewitching company [of Miss Elsie Ferguson], lost in wonder at so much beauty and wisdom combined" (Mena "Intimate"). In a manner characteristic of flapper stereotypes, Ferguson gushes to the interviewer: "Do you know I love Spanish things?" […] I don't know how it is, but I've always loved them. All things Spanish have always had a great fascination for me. Spanish people, their music, their voices, movements, native songs —everything Spanish" (Mena "Intimate"). Mena's narrator analyzes Miss Ferguson's comment, suggesting that Elsie Ferguson is in love with "Romance itself" (Mena "Intimate"). And, the interviewer concludes the article with the following statement: "It seems to be the keynote to the celebrated actress's life— her wondrous eyes for-ever looking in childish wonder for hidden beauty in the stars over her garden, or the flowers growing there" (Mena "Intimate).

Though Intimate Glimpses seems to suggest a validation of Miss Elsie Ferguson's views, the story's placement next to "Close-Ups" provides the opportunity for an alternative reading. In "Close-Ups" a narrator tells the story of a young woman (Rose-Love) who is infatuated with an Italian orchestra director. For weeks, Rose-Love buys a box seat every day because she is enamored with his "slender long fingers" and "sombre dark face" – "the essence of beauty" – but when she finally gets an audience with him, she is disillusioned (Mena "Close-Ups"). She finds that "[b]ehind the scenes, in a very unkempt room, with his wife and five children, the maestro sat devouring his macaroni with hunger" (Mena "Close-Ups"). His hands, "yes, long and thin and artistic – were anything but clean" (Mena "Close-Ups"). And the "muffler he affected on the neck and which Rose-Love thought very original… turned out to be in very much the same condition as the hands. Besides, it had served to cover nothing artistic – just an every-day carbuncle on the neck" (Mena "Close-Ups").

Considering Miss Ferguson's interview alongside "Close-Ups" revises the simple admiration expressed for Miss Ferguson's strongly held opinions. One reading of this disjuncture might be to assume that Mena's use of periodical spacing allows her reading audience to feel smug about their ability to see the flaws of Miss Ferguson's ways. Another, more cutting analysis would acknowledge that the gutter, the space between these two articles, is one where Mena creates space for meaning to proliferate depending on the reader's politics, orientation, and knowledge base. The September 1925 women's page is just one instance where Mena uses the gaps and pauses inherent in the recursive form of the periodical page to revise the seemingly superficial commentary of any single story. Throughout her time writing the page, she will continue to return to discussions of cultural fetishization and misunderstandings of Mexico and Mexican culture. While the interview with Miss Ferguson may focus on the romance of Spain, not Mexico, Mena publishes recipes and positive recollections of Mexico and Mexican culture.

In her hands, the gutter between the two articles and the time between publications serve as a strategic space for the creation of multiple and divergent narratives.

Scholars who have sought to demonstrate Mena's cultural critiques have noted her tendency to demonstrate "a modulation of viewpoints" (Garza Falcón 147). Mena, they argue, "weaves back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico, revealing misconceptions […] and showing her readers a different version of reality" (Doherty xxix). What I argue in this section is that this approach manifests formally in her use of periodical format, and that her formal innovation deserves to be recognized as a tactic that supports the development of a theory of cultural contact. Mena's focus on revealing misconceptions through a "modulation of viewpoints" develops through her use of periodical space. The gaps on the page and the space between recursive revisions of the same story line do not just show a different version of reality, they make room for a model of cross-cultural interaction that exists outside of the assimilation/anti-assimilation paradigm. In the intervals between various essays and stories, there is unnarrated critique, an opening that suggests that this is not the end of an analysis or of a story. Her tendency to return to similar themes and stories in the women's page encourages readers to make connections between seemingly disparate essays or editorials. The time between serialized publications functions similarly. It is a gap that, like the periodical gutter, allows narrative meaning to accumulate.

In the next section, I return to an analysis of Mena's stories about Anglo flappers and Latino boys. While "Popo," "Carlos Ramos," and Mena's women's page all seem to focus on the challenges of cultural contact, Mena publishes another set of stories that focuses on representations of successful cultural mediation. Amy Doherty contends that "[a]lthough undervalued as art, short stories are a useful vehicle for telling various tales, showing many different aspects of a society" (xxix). I want to extend Doherty's argument by considering the

fact that the periodical story format allows Mena to provide multiple refractions not just of different aspects of society but of different conceptualizations of modern gendered identity, Mexican and white, and thus to create the gaps and spaces in which a false superficiality can generate productive narratives of dissent. By revising, revisiting, and even republishing stories in different publications and historical moments, Mena uses the seemingly short and bound periodical format in ways that allow for an accretion of narrative meaning.[12] By the end of her career, she transforms her short stories into a novel, fleshing out the theories of cultural change she has been grappling with for more than a quarter century.

IV.

Social Minds and Cultural Mediation

Alan Palmer, in his work on fictional minds, argues that our minds "are public and social," situated and embedded (*Fictional* 5, 130). Palmer lays out two different conceptualizations of cognitive functioning: subjective first and intersubjective first (also called internalist and externalist) (*Fictional* 5, 130). The subjective first, or internalist perspective, aligns with a Western philosophical tradition that "assumes that human minds are inherently separate in their purposes and experiences, seeking rational clarity, autonomous skills, and self-betterment" (Trevarthan qtd. in Palmer, *Fictional* 4). The intersubjective first, or externalist perspective, foregrounds dialogue and intermental engagement drawing attention to "interpersonal awareness, cooperative action in society, and cultural learning" (Trevarthan qtd. in Palmer, *Fictional* 4). Palmer argues that historically, narratological and literary scholarship takes a subjective first approach, and that we need to shift critical attention away from aspects of narrative that highlight the individual mind in an effort to explore the underexamined social mind. Palmer's interest in an intersubjective first approach, though, does not interrogate why

[12] Mena republishes, for example, her 1913 *Century Magazine* short story "The Gold Vanity Set" in *Household Magazine* in 1934 as "Miracle of Miracles" with virtually no changes to the text.

scholarship has been dominated by a subjective first approach. Analyzing Mena's work demonstrates that the pervasiveness of a subjective first or internalist perspective reflects the predominance of western conceptualizations of liberal citizenship – what I have been calling modern cognitive citizenship. In noting Mena's attention to social minds as culturally significant, I argue that the reason for the wealth of scholarship on the rational, individual Western philosophical mind is that it has been historically privileged in scholarship and literature. I am not contending that Mena is the only author whose work highlights social minds – Palmer has published two books and numerous articles that demonstrate that depictions of social minds are everywhere in narrative fiction. Instead, I am arguing that representations of fictional minds have social and cultural stakes, and that the depiction of social minds in Mena's work is a politically engaged one.

In 1943, at the age of 50, Mena writes that "the problem of having the people of the United States know and understand the country of my birth (Mexico) has been my life's work" (356). This excerpt is from an essay, "My Protocol for the Sister Americas," in which Mena responds to the *Pan-American Magazine*'s prompt, "How to approach the Latin American mind." Mena argues that her authority on the topic "comes from years of dedication to" a "problem very near to [her] mind and heart" (356). Mena's essay is dated Aug 18, just a few short months after the highly publicized and violent Los Angeles "Zoot Suit Riots."[13] The riots, located in mostly Mexican-American neighborhoods, were a "week-long series of skirmishes" in which "[c]ountless youth who wore drape pants and fingertip-length coats were stripped of their clothes, beaten in front of gathering crowds of onlookers, and subsequently arrested for disturbing the peace, vagrancy, and a number of other offenses" (Alvarez 155-156). Though multiracial in nature and a complicated reflection of war time geopolitical issues, the attacks

---

[13] We do not have a published version of this article. It seems not to have been published in 1943, and there is evidence that Mena revisits it in 1958 (Toth, "Transnationalism" 355).

were predominantly discussed as a response to the juvenile delinquency of Mexican American youth.[14] Despite being historically received as an apolitical author, Mena writes in "Protocol" that "the time has come to expose false notions" (356). Moreover, Mena's 1943 articulation of increased urgency around anti-Mexican sentiment is simply an explicit articulation of the politics that had been circulating in her fiction for many years. As Margaret Toth maintains, Mena's arguments in "Protocol" "echo ideas submerged in the subtext of her early stories, sometimes quite explicitly" (Toth, "Transnationalism" 338). Mena's narrative fiction demonstrates her "Protocol" advice in action, highlighting, in particular, her attention to the political import of recognizing the distinction between cultural understandings of modern cognitive citizenship.

In "Protocol," Mena argues the necessity of understanding the modernity of Latin Americans without mandating that their modernity manifest in a mimicry of Anglo-American sociocultural belief systems, systems she links explicitly to mental states or dispositions. She notes, "I don't think we can approach the mind of our friends and neighbors south of the Border if we persist in thinking of them as 'old-fashioned,' or as belonging to the 18th century" (Toth, *Legacy* 356). The "social ways" that Latin Americans find "work best for them" are "not old at all"; they are "forever young and 'modern'" (356). Though this may not immediately seem to be a commentary on the minds of Latin Americans, Mena's work describes Mexican "social ways" as a cognitive disposition. We can think of mental dispositions as the "habits of thought" or "recurring patterns" into which minds interpolate "a particular mental event—a thought, sensation, emotion, or feeling" (Palmer, *Social* 29). What Mena is doing in "Protocol" is arguing for a modernity that is not situated in a habit of thought that assumes that sociality is a weakness of the mind. Mena presents an example of a young American teacher who comes back from

[14] Both Luis Alvarez and Eduardo Obregón Pagán have pointed out that the violence perpetrated during the riots was not just a reflection of anti-Mexican reporting, but indeed a reflection of relational racism and structural inequality. For more on the geopolitics of the attacks see Pagán. For more on the multiracial and cross-gender nature of the attacks see Alvarez.

Mexico and contends the Mexican children are in an "enslaved mental state" because they kiss their parent's hand (356). For Mena, this is precisely the kind of argument that results from Anglo conceptualizations of modern cognitive citizenship that devalue interconnectedness and interpersonal respect.

"Protocol" focuses on the aspects of cross-racial contact that Mena believes need to change, but it also reveals much about Mena's theorization of how best to navigate cultural contact. The solution to cultural conflict that Mena offers in "Protocol" is to understand that the minds of Latin Americans are deeply connected to their hearts. Mena concludes her essay by suggesting that it is "the heart, as well as the mind of our friends and neighbors in all the Americas" (358) that matters in moments of cross-cultural contact. In her work, to understand the heart of another culture is to engage respectfully with their belief systems, language, and ways of moving through the world. Respectful interaction means acknowledging that other ways of life have value and modernity.[15]

Mena's fictional depictions of positive cultural contact highlight the importance of not hierarchizing one set of cultural belief systems and of recognizing the importance of linguistic translation. Mena's short story, "The Friends," a piece that she had been working on since 1913, focuses on a friendship that develops between a Costa Rican boy and an Anglo-American girl, this time with "hair like gold."[16] "The Friends" encourages Anglo-Americans to engage with Latin Americans in Spanish, and it demonstrates the role that respect plays in defining equitable relationships. Crucially, the friendship of the young people, Nicoya and Helen/Elenita, is

---

[15] The positive historical example Mena provides in "Protocol" is the Vice President of the United States, Henry Wallace. Wallace was the first US representative to attend a Mexican inauguration and to make an effort, as an official representative of the United States, to tour the countryside of Mexico. Historians note that Wallace's interest in agriculture meant that he engaged with Mexicans by discussing their habits and that his ability to communicate in Spanish made him immensely popular in his travels (Culver and Hyde, 248-249).

[16] Initially, Mena had written the story with a Spanish title, "Los Amigos," but when it is published in 1943, it is titled in English, "The Friends."

facilitated through the mediation of the Anglo-American mother, who knows enough Spanish to speak with Nicoya and his mother. Mena's story highlights the importance of linguistic facility in respectful cross-cultural contact, but instead of Latin Americans learning English, it is Americans, including the readers, who must engage with Spanish. Moreover, though the friendship between the two children is ostensibly the result of a simple exchange of goods – Nicoya gives Elenita his sombrero and Elenita returns the gesture by sharing her candy – the story depicts a moment of cultural contact that functions without the erasure or devaluation of Latin American culture. Both Nicoya and Elenita exchange things that matter to them, but their friendship develops because they both feel that they have something of value to offer. In "Carlos Ramos," one of the first things Carlos does, upon arrival in the United States, is stop wearing his hat, and so it seems telling that in "The Friends," Nicoya does not hide his difference. As soon as he sees the American visitors coming towards the house, he runs to get his sombrero, a hat he has made himself. He sees the sombrero's utility in protecting Elenita from the hot sun. And Elenita is gratified by his gift, immediately asking her mother if she can respond to his gesture by giving him her candy. In the story, Nicoya's labor, belief systems, and way of dressing are what help to develop the friendship between the two children.

Mena's 1943 novel *The Two Eagles* takes the positive model of cultural contact in "The Friends" and maps it onto a narrative of geopolitical allegiance. The novel expands "The Friends," but it also revises the story of unfulfilled cross-cultural friendship in "The Education of Popo." In *The Two Eagles*, Marcos Arriola of "Popo" is still a young Mexican boy (though he is 15 this time) and the "ladies Cherry" are still visiting Mexico while Mr. Cherry conducts business with Marcos's father. The young Miss Cherry, though, is no longer Alicia, the flapper divorcée of "Popo." She is Florence, a young flapper who hopes to publish a story about her time in Mexico to win a 1000-dollar magazine prize. By the conclusion of the novel, Marcos and

Florence are not just friends; they are "the two eagles," a representation of the possibilities of modern friendship between their two countries, a symbol "uniting Mexico and the United States" (176, 111).

It is crucial, in this context, to notice how Mena outlines their growing friendship through an attention to the transformations of their different conceptualizations of a modern state of mind. In "Protocol," Mena insists that Anglo-Americans invest in understanding the modernity of the hearts and minds of Latin Americans. Her commentary demonstrates an awareness of an Anglo division between (and hierarchy of) emotion and rationality, heart and brain, that is often mobilized as a means for marginalization. In *The Two Eagles*, the distinction between heart and mind manifests as a cultural difference in imagining social cognition and modernity. Marcos, for example, notes that everything Florence does is "all very American and beyond [his] understanding" but that this must be how "the young people in the United States accomplished things; without any emotion, just with the head" (88). And Florence suggests that what puzzles her about Marcos is that he "didn't seem to have a mind of his own," noting that "[i]t was all very strange—and Mexican" (67). Florence describes Marcos this way because he is hyper attentive to the desires and moods of the people around him, particularly his family, and Marcos describes Florence as having no emotion because she does not ask for permission from or seem to care about the opinions of anyone around her. Throughout *The Two Eagles*, Mena shorthands the embodied nature of the modern Mexican mind by describing Marcos and his mother as characters who "speak with their eyes." Likewise, she focuses on the verbosity of the Ladies Cherry as a sign of their Anglo-American rationality.

In *The Two Eagles*, Mena depicts cultural difference at the level of thought description. The novel is a fictional world in which public, social thought is marked as culturally important to Mexican modernity, and this focus plays out in a hyper attentiveness to the extended mind as it is

represented in language, behavior, and habit. Extended mind, also called intersubjectivity, is a concept in contemporary cognitive theory that argues that humans are "best regarded as an extended system, a coupling of biological organism and external resources" (Palmer Fictional 162). As Colwyn Trevarthen describes it, intersubjectivity is "the process in which mental activity –including conscious awareness, motives and intentions, cognitions, and emotions – is transferred between minds" (qtd. in Palmer Fictional 162). Intersubjectivity or the extended mind is a system integral to "cultural learning, and the creation of a 'social reality' of conventional beliefs, languages, rituals, and technologies" (Trevarthen qtd. in Palmer Fictional 162).

The opening section of *The Two Eagles* develops through a description of the Arriola family's attentiveness to mental states that are embedded in external spaces and manifest in embodied movement and habitual actions. The story opens with Marcos Arriola trying to find the perfect time to ask his mother if he can transition from wearing shorts, the costume of boyhood, to trousers. The shift in apparel would mark his movement from child to man, a transition he is very concerned with cementing before the arrival of the Cherry family. The opening lines of the novel depict Marcos's silent interpretation of his mother's habits:

> Marcos Arriola stood outside of his mother's room, which adjoined his own. He was listening intently, trying to divine her mood on that morning of all mornings. He heard her measured pacing to and fro, her opening and shutting of drawers, and the clatter of dainty cup and saucer as she sipped her morning chocolate. (Mena, *Eagles* 9)

Marcos decides that these are not auspicious signs of her mental state, saying, "I'm not completely sure that Mamá is in a cheerful mood" (Mena, *Eagles* 9). [17] Mena's description of

[17] This description is lifted almost entirely from another of Mena's short stories from the early 1900s, "The Emotions of Maria Concepcion": "María Concepción, having a favor to ask of her papá that morning, listened at the door of his dressing-room, which adjoined her own and tried to augur an auspicious mood from the accent of the abstruse little cough with which he punctuated every delicate task. She heard his measured pacing to and fro, his opening and shutting of doors, and the clash of dainty cup and saucer as he sipped his black coffee" (Mena, *Collected Stories* 29)

what we now call the extended mind continues, shifting to a representation of the thoughts of Marcos's father, Don Fernando. Don Fernando imagines skipping his morning *reflexiónes* because of the busy day, only to realize that he needs his time in the peaceful gallery because it is the only space into which he is able to release his heavy thoughts. "This meditation, this thinking over of the heavy matters of state in the peaceful gallery of his home," he decides, is "all important" (Mena, *Eagles* 11). Above him, Marcos awaits his departure anxiously, listening for the signs of his absence so that he can try to confront his Mamá again. Don Fernando's departure from the house acts "as decisive as a signal gun," catalyzing the household's spring into action (Mena, *Eagles* 131). The details of this opening section stand as a testament to the silent intimacy of familial cognition.

The household in *The Two Eagles* is what cognitive theorists call an intermental unit, a mental unit that shares "skills, propensities, capacities, tendencies, and habits" (Geertz qtd. in Palmer 30).[18] Mena links the Arriola family's domestic intermental unit to a cultural cognition. Mena's descriptions of the space and community of the town around the household suggest a similar investment in the unspoken, embodied nature of intermental cognition. When the Cherry women attend an evening *serenata* in the town square, for example, Mrs. Cherry thinks to herself that she feels she is "back in the eighteenth or some other old century," Florence expresses confusion about the custom, and Marcos feels unable to explain it to them (41, 42). Mena describes that moment in these terms:

[18] In Mena's texts intermental thought does not always result in perfect knowledge of the beliefs and minds of others. There may be an increased ability to engage with the minds of people within an intimate community or group because of shared experiential knowledge, but social cognition is not a perfect process. In her novel, there are moments of shared recognition and accurate interpretation, but there are also moments of communication failure. Her work suggests the importance of engaging in learning the habits and belief systems of others, without purporting that every bodily action gives a direct view into the minds of others. This, indeed, is one of Mena's main critiques of cross-racial communication. In highlighting social and cultural cognition in this text, I am only drawing attention to the fact that Mena conveys intersubjectivity as an accumulative and recursive practice. Revision and reinterpretation are always necessary.

> Marcos mumbled something and change the subject. He really couldn't tell Florence, not in a few words – and English words at that. These things had to do with the intimate life of the people. This concerted coil of languid movement, with constant interplay of salutations and compliments, as the people walked round and around, was only for the Mexicans to understand. (Mena, Eagles 42-43)

Given Mena's comment in "Protocol" about the problem of approaching "the mind of our friends and neighbors south of the Border if we persist in thinking of them as 'old-fashioned,' or as belonging to the 18th century," this description of the shared knowledge and habits embedded in the ritual of the community *serenata* stands as a corrective to Mrs. Cherry's observations. That is, the description conveys Mena's belief that social cognition is a modern model, an embodied ritual of shared, untranslatable mental experience that marks the social ways of Latin Americans as "forever young and 'modern'" (Mena, "Protocol" 356).

In contrast to descriptions of Marcos and his community, early representations of the thoughts of Florence and Mrs. Cherry are often cordoned off from environmental factors and occur through language alone, not bodily actions. For example, Mena's first representation of Florence's thoughts suggest an entirely self-absorbed mental space:

> "[Florence] felt exhausted by emotion from the romantic and picturesque and charming evening. Besides she had loads of material for that contest she had entered and felt she could dash off a paper on Mexico that would surprise everybody. The one thing she didn't feel like doing was unpacking her suitcase and no one had even thought of loosening the tight straps which always broke her fingernails. 'In this Romeo and Juliet house a little thing like opening a suitcase is unheard of, I expect,' she thought and began to unpack" (47-48).

Florence's thoughts focus only on herself - her own desires and emotions. Even though the text tells us that she is in the room with her mother, her mother's thoughts, actions, or feelings never enter into Florence's reflections. Mena's narrator does not describe Florence interpreting the environment or people around her, and this fact manifests formally in the free indirect discourse of the passage and the turn to articulated internal thought – "In this Romeo and Juliet House…" – at the end of the passage. Even the moment in which Florence conceptualizes social cognition, when she is upset that no one has thought to open her suitcase, suggest that she imagines social thought as a means through which subordinates serve the desires of an individual. Florence expects that someone would have thought of her, but she does little to imagine how economies of social cognition might function reciprocally. The representation of Florence's self-oriented thoughts stands in stark opposition to Marcos's investment in communal mental processes that manifest in embodied, physically visible ways.

A pivotal turning point in the *The Two Eagles* comes in the form of a transformation of Florence's orientation toward cultural contact. Because of Florence's desire to write an essay about Mexico, she begins the novel with the intention of learning about Mexico and its culture, but, at first, she wants to learn about the community and its language only because she intends to win the contest. She is ever in search of "snapshots" and spends her time asking Marcos "in a strong even voice one thousand questions about Mexico," but "without budging an inch from her restful posture" (86, 87). She does not intend to change. About midway through the book, though, her relationship with Marcos makes her realize that her way of moving through the world could use some adjustment. Marcos gives Florence a verse that he wrote for her freckles, which she had just spent a day at the doctor's trying to get removed. Florence bursts out in uncontrollable laughter, both because he loves the freckles she has tried to erase but also because he is so serious in sharing his emotions. Her laughter hurts him, and the chapter concludes with

Florence "recovering her real self" and arriving "at a new understanding" (85). The new understanding Florence comes to is that she will not laugh at the differences between their cultures (95-96). In the rest of the novel, Florence changes her relationship with Marcos, his family, and the community around the Arriola household. She does not laugh at Marcos's unselfconsciousness and she spends time watching how people move through the household and the community. This process, ceasing to laugh at the people and the culture around her, is "the beginning of a great friendship," and it allows her to learn a bit about the systems of communication in that community (97). Towards the end of the novel, she is able to understand Marcos's "eyes telegraph[ing] a desperate plea," and she begins to communicate with him, not through language but with things like "a friendly gesture to make him feel some of the things she was thinking and couldn't tell him" (131, 133).

Mena's work to mark the mind as embodied – a social, emotional corporeality – undermines Americanization or Assimilation logic by depicting the value of different conceptualizations of cognitive modernity. In "Protocol," Mena argues that it is a "misleading…psychological experiment" to believe that racism can be mitigated by stating that "[t]here is no difference at all," between Anglo Americans and Latin Americans. She explicitly rejects attempts to contend that Latin Americans "think the same," "dress the same," and thus, "are the same" as Anglo Americans (357). She believes that making the argument that there is no cognitive or sartorial difference between cultures, does not help to create "new and sincere rapport between our different races" (357). The new and sincere rapport comes from a recognition that cultural difference does not mean anti-modernity. *The Two Eagles* works to represent a recognition of cultural difference that does not hierarchize rational individual thought over social, embodied thought. The novel suggests that Anglo-American notions of independent

cognition fail to acknowledge the myriad ways in which social cognition contributes to generative modern interactions.

V.

Conclusions

In *Imagining Minds*, Kay Young argues that "the novel is an aesthetic map to an experiencing of the nature of the mind-brain," but the representation of fictional minds is also a space through which authors undermine ideas about the mind that have been naturalized (9). The nature of the mind-brain is not singular. Continuing to engage in universalizing rhetoric about cognition perpetuates the hierarchizing of cognitive capabilities and modernities through which marginalized people are relegated into liminal space. Outlining the difference between cultural understandings of modern cognitive citizenship in Mexico and the United States, Mena's work articulates a necessary revision to discussions of cultural contact and the processes of racialization that accompany them. Mena's representations of gendered modernity across racial difference demonstrate the need to acknowledge disparity while still focusing on communication across division. Her recommendations for cross-cultural contact can seem naïve – an interpersonal approach that fails to acknowledge the systemic oppression of American racism – but attending to her portrayal of social minds highlights a decisive critique of the exclusionary systems of marginalization she experienced in hemispheric immigration. Though, as with all of the authors in this dissertation, her means of intervening in an excluding culture are inevitably flawed, her work vividly demonstrates the centrality of discussions of cognitive capabilities to definitions of modernity and race developing at the beginning of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER VI

Afterword:

Theorizing the Mind(s) of Modernism

In 1922, Otto Jespersen delineates an example of women's cognitive capabilities that outlines the kinds of gender oppression the authors in this dissertation confront. Jespersen describes a "rapidity of perception" test conducted by another academic, Havelock Ellis, in which a group of men and women are given the task of reading a passage in a set time and then writing down all they remember of it once the passage is taken away. Jespersen says, "[i]t was found that women were usually more successful than men in this test. Not only were they able to read more quickly than the men, but they were able to give a better account of the paragraph as a whole" (252). The conclusion that the researchers make is that "rapidity was no proof of intellectual power" (Jespersen 252). Women's minds, they say, are able to read and summarize faster because they are more empty; they take information in "without inspection to fill the vacant chambers of [their] mind" (Jespersen 252). Men, on the other hand, are unable to complete the task as well or as quickly because their full, complex minds get in the way of their ability to perform. In the mind of the slow (male) reader, "every statement undergoes an instinctive process of cross-examination; every new fact seems to stir up the accumulated stores of facts among which it intrudes" (Jespersen 252).

The conclusions made in the Ellis study always strike me as extraordinarily powerful because they demonstrate how prevailing models of the mind were (and, in some ways, still are) created through available sociocultural narratives of gender and racial difference. In this historical moment, literature is one of the most important spaces in which ideas about the minds of other

people circulate and are naturalized. Throughout his work, Jespersen cites literary texts as supporting evidence for his claims about women's language use and their coordinating cognitive capabilities. To ground the obvious validity of a conclusion about women's tendency to leave their sentences unfinished (because they "start talking without having thought about what they are going to say"), Jespersen cites George Meredith describing the linguistic symptoms of psychologically deficient women who "thought in blanks, as girls do" and Thomas Hardy describing a character as "that novelty among women – one who finished a thought before beginning the sentence which was to convey it" (251). As problematic as Jespersen's claims seem today, his argument that literary descriptions of women's minds reflect real language use demonstrates the historical power of literary representation. In her monograph, *The Experimental Imagination*, Tita Chico argues that in the British Enlightenment, researchers relied on literariness to present experimental science.[1] "Writers during this period," she says, "understood the fictionality of objectivity and details, representing science as not only forged but also improved by the literary imagination" (Chico 2). Though the early twentieth century is a different historical moment, Jespersen's citational practices suggest a continued reverence for the truth value of literary representations. In this context, the history of marginalized people arguing for the importance of telling their own stories takes on new urgency. These stories circulate as evidence, or, more accurately, as counter-evidence.

Virginia Woolf's writing conveys the political expediency of formal innovation at the turn of the century. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf calls for an alternate history for women, one that fills the void of accounts of women's historical lives and counters the depiction of women in fiction written by men. "Indeed, if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men," the narrator contends, "one would imagine her a person of utmost importance," but in fact, "she

[1] She also argues the reverse, suggesting that representations of science in literary texts were seen as arguments for "the epistemological superiority of literary knowledge" (Chico 1).

was locked up, beaten and flung about the room" (*Room* 43). The solution Woolf suggests in *A Room of One's Own* is to have women write about their own experiences and create a "supplement to history" (45). In "Women and Fiction," though she argues for something more radical, contending that women do not need to merely write their realities, they need to develop a sentence structure that allows them to escape the formal constructs of historically masculine narrative technique. She says that "the very form of the sentence [does] not fit" women's experiences, and that because of this women authors thus need to work on "altering and adapting the current sentence until [it takes] the natural shape of [their] thought without crushing or distorting it" ("Women and Fiction" 48). In this dissertation, I have analyzed literary texts by liminal women authors who participate in the historical resistance that Woolf so aptly describes. This project investigates not just how women writers escape or, as Janet Wolff articulates, "intervene in an excluding culture," but also how they explicitly engage with the terms of their exclusion, with the feminine sentences found in the history of literary texts as well as the feminine sentences mapped onto their writing, their speech, and their bodies (10).[2]

What unites the authors I have analyzed is a preoccupation with depicting socio-politically embedded minds – minds that are inextricable from discursive constructions of race and gender. In 1927, Opera and film star Mary Garden argues that the modern girl bob can be understood as much as "a state of mind" as it is "a new manner of dressing [her] head" (8). But the authors I have analyzed demonstrate that if modernity is a "state of mind" that state of mind is not a universal one: it is a historically and geopolitically embedded one. Their work reminds us that the mind is always defined in relationship to embodied, situational experiences of race, gender, nationality, class, ability, and sexuality. The authors I study explore the stereotypes of women's

[2] Janet Wolff argues that feminine sentences are always "formulations and expressions…of women's own voice – the way that they escape the sentences of containment and silence in a patriarchal system" (10).

language and cognitive capabilities across difference in order to critique conceptualizations of modern cognitive citizenship. They use narrative form to undermine discursive regimes that mark them as less than human, less than capable, and less than modern.

What I want to explore further at the end of this project is how we can see these texts as part of a genealogy of literary experimentations that use narrative to negotiate gender oppression across racial and ethnic difference. If these texts do not tell us about a universal shift towards epistemological doubt or a movement towards a freedom from binaries and boundaries, what they do tell us is that there is a long history of authors who use narrative form to create alternate knowledge systems.

I.

Larsen and a Genealogy of Texts Resisting Reliability

Larsen's mobilization of narrative unreliability demonstrates the privilege of claiming unreliability in a moment in which citizenship necessitated a coherent narrative of individual identity. However, her text also suggests that discussions of modernity and unreliability are inevitably intertwined with discussions of racial passing and of sociopolitical marginalization. That is, an analysis of the cognitive biases embedded in the novel *Passing* makes visible the pervasiveness of issues of reliability for marginalized people. *Passing* deserves to be understood as just one novel in a genealogy of texts in which women authors create unreliable characters, narrators, and speakers as a means for engaging with discourses that mark women as unreliable narrators within books and outside of them. In 1927, for example, Loos's creation of the iconic gold-digging flapper Lorelei Lee uses unreliable narration. In her prefatory remarks to *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Loos asserts that she created Lorelei after realizing that her friend H.L Mencken always fell for vapid, blonde women. Loos creates an unreliable flapper femme fatale, Lorelei Lee, in order to position herself as a woman with "real brains."

Almost sixty-five years after *Passing* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* are published, Sandra Cisneros writes "Loose Woman," a poem in which the speaker claims unreliability as a power and a protection. Asserting, "I am the woman of myth and bullshit, (True, I authored some of it)," the speaker claims myth and bullshit both as weapons that she uses to attack as a "shoot-sharp, sharp-tongued" woman and as tools that she uses to protect herself: "I built my house of ill repute. / Brick by brick. Labored, / loved and masoned it" (65). Cisneros's speaker suggests that there is strength in being a "shoot-sharp, sharp-tongued, sharp-thinking, fast-speaking, foot-loose, loose-tongued, let-loose, woman-on-the-loose, loose woman" who uses evasive self-articulation as a strategy for protecting herself from the violence of misreading (66). Her poem acknowledges the still pervasive critiques of the minds of women from marginalized sexual and racial backgrounds, using self-narration and poetic creation to break out of the systems that seek to undermine her power.

II.

Finding Community through the Narration of Emotion in Jean Rhys

Jean Rhys comes from a long line of authors who worked to find narrative styles that would allow them to describe women's experience. In *Evelina*, Frances Burney experiments with epistolarity, and in *Emma,* Jane Austen describes Emma's thoughts as quoted internal dialogue. These authors, like Rhys, contribute to the creation of a network of associated cultural narratives, an accretion of stories, characteristics, and images that narrate previously unnarrateable experiences.[3] Each author adds to a transhistorical conversation about experiences of gender

[3] As I noted in the introduction, Robyn Warhol builds from Gerald Prince's *Dictionary of Narratology* to describe the "unnarratable" as "'that which is unworthy of being told,' 'that which is not susceptible to narration,' and 'that which does not call for narration' or perhaps 'those circumstances under which narration is uncalled for.'" ("Neonarrative" 222). She identifies some of the possible forms the unnarratable might take saying that there is "that which (1) 'needn't be told (the subnarratable), (2) 'can't be told (the supranarratable),' (3) 'shouldn't be told (the antinarratable),' and (4) 'wouldn't be told (the paranarratable)" ("Neonarrative" 222). Warhol contends that what needn't be told is untold because it is "normal," but that which wouldn't be told is untold because of formal convention (226). Warhol's example of the paranarratable is of a heroine in the "feminocentric nineteenth-century

oppression, shifting the narratable and creating what Robyn Warhol might understand as neo-narrative opportunities.[4] These novels do not circulate in ways that radically reorganize dominant historiography about women's minds, but they do create a genealogy of texts that speak to similar experiences of marginalization. In fact, the citational system Rhys deploys in *Good Morning, Midnight* encourages thinking about literary texts as connected (and potentially cumulative) attempts to narrate difficult and often obscured cognitive experiences. The title of *Good Morning, Midnight* is a reference to an Emily Dickinson poem that Rhys uses as an epigraph for the novel:

Good morning, Midnight!
I'm coming home,
Day got tired of me –
How could I of him?

Sunshine was a sweet place,
I liked to stay –
But Morn didn't want me – now –
So good night, Day!

The Dickinson poem stands as an opening meditation on the feelings of loneliness and alienation Rhys's character, Sasha, navigates throughout the novel. In 2012, a reviewer on the social reading network *GoodReads* notes the power of this connection arguing, "Why in a world full of

---

novel" being consigned to either marriage or death ("Neonarrative" 226). I have argued in this dissertation that narrative representation of divergent models of the mind is also "paranarratable" until the authors of the modernist period take up the task of writing women's experiences of cognition. Woolf's insistence that there is a need to explore the nature of reality and experience for women in narrative form is a representation of that which was previously "paranarratable."

[4] Warhol argues that experimentation with narrative form or content to narrate previously unnarrateable experiences can create genre change. "Neonarratives" are "narratorial strategies for making narrative genres new" ("Neonarrative" 221).

people must we feel so damned lonely sometimes?" In the vein of Rhys's stream of discourse style, the reviewer goes on to answer her imagined conversant, saying, "Jean Rhys understands. She gets it. *Good Morning, Midnight* takes its title from an Emily Dickenson poem. Who was lonelier than Emily Dickenson? No one. Jean understood Emily and I understand Jean. I'll see your darkness, lady, and raise you one" (Jenn(ifer) Aug 27, 2012). Though Rhys's novels are preoccupied with describing the cognitive toll of social alienation, Rhys's experimentation with narrative form produces a text that evokes a complex cognitive experience, loneliness, in a way that communicates across time and space. Literature, as Sowon Park describes it, is "the place where our embodied social existence reveals itself. Literature shows us who we are, what we are capable of, what we hope for, what we fear. If literature can be said to do anything for minds, it is not as reified objects but as a human practice, whose meaning is grounded in our senses and situated in history." Rhys's experimentations function as a part of a history of embodied social existence, a social network (one that *GoodReads* formalizes in internet structure) developed through narrative expression.

III.

Mena Undermining Universalizing Theories

While Larsen and Rhys illustrate the uses of literary production and circulation, María Cristina Mena's work speaks to the uses of literary criticism. Mena is the only author I write about who also explicitly describes her political investment in literary representation. She connects her narrative depictions of interpersonal, cross-racial interactions to a geopolitical argument about gendered modernity, thereby undermining arguments that determine modernity and personhood via hierarchies of cognitive capabilities. The power of her work, much of which has only been recently recovered from the archive and deserves much more critical attention, is

that it reminds us as scholars to interrogate models of the mind as they appear in the texts we read and in the scholarship we produce.

Though the aforementioned Ellis/Jespersen study may seem easy to dismiss, current research in cognitive studies relies on hierarchies of cognition that are similarly marginalizing. Theory of Mind is a widely used paradigm in cognitive studies, but it is a category defined through the dehumanization of neurodiverse people. The term Theory of Mind, used in cognitive philosophy, psychology, and more recently, literary scholarship, describes "our ability to explain people's behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires" (Zunshine 6). Mind-reading happens, for example, when "we see [a woman] reach for a glass of water" and "assume that she is thirsty" (6). In an analysis of literary texts, cognitive narratologists have used Theory of Mind to describe what happens when characters either unconsciously or consciously draw conclusions about other characters based on actions, clothes, words, or a variety of other external markers. Mind-reading is also at work when a character narrates or rationalizes his or her feelings or physical sensations in order to make sense of personal experience.

In an article co-authored with Melanie Yergeau, Bryce Huebner, a philosopher of cognitive science, describes the history of research on Theory of Mind. Scientists, he says, position mind-reading as a "distinctively human capacity, which distinguishes us from other animals," while at the same time suggesting that "autistic children have a Theory of Mind deficit" ("Minding" 274). He points out that despite an expansion of research on the topic, "it is still common to suggest that autism is a pathological form of mind blindness" and, subsequently, to convey the idea that "autistics lack many of the sociocognitive capabilities that make humans unique" ("Minding" 275). Yergeau and Huebner argue that these "essentialist understandings of ToM reveal a limited theory of other minds—one that privileges neurotypical minds and ignores all others, while simultaneously working to deny, undermine, and delegitimize autistic concepts of identity and

community" ("Minding" 275). In an essay published with Paul Heikler, Yergeau suggests that discussions of autism that fail to engage with autistic people create a hierarchy of deficits instead of seeing a landscape comprised of difference ("Autism" 496). This approach is harmful because it privileges an understanding of social interaction that demands that autistic people, whose rhetoric may differ from dominant rhetoric, do all of the work of cross "cultural" contact in a performance of neurotypicality or else be marked as lacking in social and emotional capabilities ("Autism" 494-495). I raise this example as a reminder that the histories of cognitive exclusion that Mena depicts in her writing are still very live today. Her work speaks to the urgency with which we as scholars should investigate how literary texts and literary theories engage with, undermine, and reify dominant models of the mind. Moreover, noting the ways that literary analysis can break down the narratives that ground implicit bias (across disciplines and mediums) should remind us of the continued value of literary analysis as a cross disciplinary skill.

IV.

Reconsidering the Minds of Modernism

Robyn Warhol argues that "[w]hat can be deduced from literary texts are their attitudes toward gender oppression," and that although gender "is always and only a virtual construction….[t]he more we can understand about narrative's role in the constitution of gender, the better positioned we are to change the oppressive ways that gender norms work in the world" (*Core Concepts* 13). The authors in this dissertation explicitly confront cultural narratives of gender oppression, attending to specific racial and ethnic communities and taking into account varied experiences of modern mobility (across border and identity categories). They do not create a field of unified, universalisms, though they share a preoccupation with the difficulties of negotiating a world in which epistemological doubt is a privileged condition. Seeing cultural

conceptualizations of gendered modernity develop in and alongside literary representations gives us an opportunity to think critically about how we engage with narratives of cognitive difference inside and outside of literary texts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"A College View." *The Literary Digest*, 24 June 1922, pp. 1.

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Alarcón, Norma. "Chicanas Feminist Literature: A Re-vision Through Malintzin/or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzalduá. SUNY Press, 2015, pp. 182-191.

Aldaraca, Bridget. *El Angel Del Hogar: Galdos and the Ideology of Domesticity in Spain.* 1991.University of North Carolina, PhD Dissertation.

Alvarez, Luis. The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II. University of California Press, 2009.

Allen, Frederick L. *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties*. Harper & Row, 1957.

Ammons, Elizabeth. *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. Oxford University Press, 1987.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Interviews/Entrevistas*, edited by AnaLouise Keating. Routledge, 2000.

Barton, Ralph. "Lorelei Reading." Line Drawing. *"Gentlemen Prefer Blondes": The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady*. Boni & Liveright, 1925.

Benstock, Shari. *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940*. University of Texas Press, 1986.

Berman, Jessica. *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism.* Columbia University Press, 2011.

Blackmer, Corinne E. "African Masks and the Arts of Passing in Gertrude Stein's 'Melanctha' and Nella Larsen's *Passing*." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1993, pp. 230-263.

Blackmore, David L. "'That Unreasonable Restless Feeling': The Homosexual Subtexts of Nella Larsen's *Passing*." *African American Review*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1992, pp. 475-484.

Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret*. Ed. Natalie M. Houston, Broadview Press, 2003.

Braxton, Joanne M. *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition within a Tradition.* Temple University Press, 1989.

Brody, Jennifer DeVere. "Clare Kendry's 'True' Colors: Race and Class Conflict in Nella Larsen's *Passing*." *Callaloo*, vol. 15., no. 4, 1992, pp. 1053-1065.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* Routledge, 2015.

Carr, Helen. *Jean Rhys*. Tavistock, 2012.

Case, Alison. *Plotting Women: Gender and Narration in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century British Novel*. University Press of Virginia, 1999.

Caughie, Pamela. "Passing as Modernism." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 12, no. 3, Sept. 2005, pp. 385-406.

---. "'The Best People': The Making of the Black Bourgeoisie in Writings of the Negro Renaissance." *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 20, num. 3, Sept. 2013, pp. 519-537.
Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Cornell University Press, 1978.
Chambers, María Cristina Mena. "Americanization of Carlos Ramos." N.d. ts. María Cristina Mena Chambers Papers. Box 1, Folder 12.
---. "The Game of Perdition." N.d. ts. María Cristina Mena Chambers Papers. Box 1, Folder 1.
---. "Los Amigos (The Friends)." In *Pictures and Stories*. 1943. Clipping. María Cristina Mena Chambers Papers. Box 1, Folder 4.
---. "My Protocol for Our Sister Americas." 1943. ts. María Cristina Mena Chambers Papers. Box 1, Folder 4.
---. *The Two Eagles.* Oxford University Press, 1943.
---. "Intimate Glimpses." *The Great Neck News*, Sept 19, 1925, pp. 17. The María Cristina Mena Chambers Collection: Articles. Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project. University of Houston. Internet Resource.
---. "Close-Ups- Emotions of Rose-Love" *The Great Neck News*, Sept 19, 1925, pp. 17. The María Cristina Mena Chambers Collection: Articles. Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project. University of Houston. Internet Resource.
Cisneros, Sandra. "Loose Woman." *Loose Woman*. Knopf, 2001, pp. 112-115.
Cohn, Dorrit. *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton University Press, 1978.
Cooper, Brittney. *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thoughts of Race Women*. University of Illinois Press, 2017.
Culver, John and John Hyde. *American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace*. Norton, 2000.
Cutler, John Alba. *Ends of Assimilation: The Formation of Chicano Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2015.
Cutter, Martha J. "Sliding Significations: Passing as a Narrative and Textual Strategy in Nella Larsen's Fiction." *Passing and the Fictions of Identity,* edited by Elaine K. Ginsberg, Duke University Press, 1996, pp. 75-101.
Dávila, Arlene M. "Introduction." *Contemporary Latina/o Media: Production, Circulation, Politics*. Ed. Arlene M. Dávila and Yeidy M. Rivero. New York University Press, 2014. pp. 1-21.
Dewey, John. *The Later Works*: *1925-1953*. Edited by Jo A. Boydston, Southern Illinois University Press, 1981. Print.
Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Edited by Kathleen Tillotson and Stephen Gill, Oxford University Press, 2008.
Doherty, Amy. Introduction. *The Collected Stories of María Cristina Mena,* by María Cristina Mena, edited by Amy Doherty. Arte Público, 1997.
DuBois, W.E.B. "The Souls of Black Folk." *W.E.B. DuBois: Writings*. Penguin Books, 1986, pp. 357-548.
Dulaney, Marvin. *Black Police in America*. Indiana University Press, 1996.
Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. Oxford University Press, 1997.
Eliot, T.S. *T.S. Eliot and the Idea of Tradition*. Edited by Giovanni Cianci and Jason Harding. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
Esping, Amber and Jonathan A. Plucke. "Alfred Binet and the Children of Paris." *Handbook of Intelligence: Evolutionary Theory, Historical Perspective, and Current Concepts*, edited by Sam Goldstein, Dana Princiotta, and Jack Naglieri. Springer Press, 2015, pp. 153-161.

Esty, Jed. *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development*. Oxford University Press, 2013

Eustace, Nicole and Eugenia Lean, Julie Livingston, Jan Plamper, William M. Reddy, Barbara H. Rosenwein. "*AHR* Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 117, no. 5, 1 December 2012, pp. 1487–1531, doi.org/10.1093/ahr/117.5.1487.

Evans, Elizabeth. "Two Paths for Writing by Women in Modernist Studies." *The Future of Women in Modernism*, special issue of *Literature Compass*, vol. 10, issue 1, Jan. 2013, pp. 30-37.

Fauset, Jessie R. *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral*. Beacon Press, 1990.

Ferguson, Roderick. *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *Flappers and Philosophers*. Edited by James L. West III, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

---. *Tales of the Jazz Age*. Edited by James L. West III. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

---. "The Crack-Up." Esquire, Feb.1936, pp. 41,164.

Fitzgerald, Zelda. "Eulogy on the Flapper" *The Collected Writings of Zelda Fitzgerald*, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli, Scribner, 1991, pp. 391-394.

Fludernik, Monika. "Second Person Fiction: Narrative 'You' as Addressee And/Or Protagonist." *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*. vol. 18, no. 2, 1993, pp. 217-247.

Frevert, Ute. *Emotions in History: Lost and Found*. Central European University Press, 2011.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. "'Beyond' Gynocriticism and Gynesis: The Geographics of Identity and the Future of Feminist Criticism." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, vol. 15, no. 1, spring 1996, pp. 13-40.

Gallez, Paula. *The Rhys Woman*. Macmillan Press, 1990.

Garden, Mary. "Why I Bobbed My Hair." *Pictorial Review*, April 1927, pp. 8.

Gardiner, Judith Kegan. "Good Morning, Midnight: Good Night, Modernism." *Boundary 2,* vol 11, no ½, Autumn 1982, pp. 233-251.

Garza-Falcón, Leticia M. *Gente Decente: A Borderlands Response to the Rhetoric of Dominance.* University of Texas Press, 1998.

Gelman, Rochel. "Cognitive Development." *The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Encyclopedia of the Cognitive Sciences,* edited by Robert A. Wilson and Frank Keil, MIT Press, Aug 1999, cognet.mit.edu.proxy.lib.umich.edu/erefschapter/cognitive-development. Accessed 28 Nov. 2018.

Gilbert, Sandra M, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale University Press, 1979.

Glyn, Elinor. *IT.* The Macaulay Company, 1927.

Gonzalez, Christopher. *Permissable Narratives: The Promise of Latino/a Literature*. The Ohio State University Press, 2017.

González, Melissa Marie. "Resisting the 'Fatal Allurement' of Local Color: María Cristina Mena's Mexico in American Magazine and The Century Magazine." Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage, vol. 6, edited by Antoñia I. Castañeda and A. Gabriel Meléndez, Arte Público Press, Houston, 2006, pp. 124-142.

Greenwood, John. "Intelligence Defined: Wundt, James, Cattell, Thorndike, Goddard, and Yerkes." *Handbook of Intelligence: Evolutionary Theory, Historical Perspective, and Current Concepts*, edited by Sam Goldstein, Dana Princiotta, and Jack Naglieri. Springer Press, 2015, pp. 123-135

Gregg, Veronica. *Jean Rhys Historical Imagination: Reading and Writing the Creole*. The

University of North Carolina Press, 1995.
Hall, Gladys. "Flappers Here to Stay, Says Colleen Moore." *The Flapper: Not for Old Fogies*, Nov. 1922, pp. 2.
Hegeman, Susan. "Taking Blondes Seriously." *American Literary History*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1995, pp. 525-554.
Heileman, Myrtle. "The Modern Riddle." *Flapper Magazine: Not For Old Fogies,* Flapper Press, Nov. 1922, pp.2.
Herman, David. *Story Logic: The Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. University of Nebraska, 2004.
Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Harvard University Press, 1994.
Hine, Darlene Clark. "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture of Society*, vol.14, no. 4, Summer 1989, pp. 912-920.
Howard, June. *Publishing the Family*. Duke University Press, 2001.
Hutchinson, George. *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line*. Belknap Press, 2006.
It. Dir. Clarence Badger and Josef von Sternberg. Perf. Clara Bow, Antonio Moreno, and Elinor Glyn. Paramount,1999.
James, William. "The Teaching of Philosophy in Our Colleges." *Essays in Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, 1978.
---. "What Pragmatism Means." *Pragmatism*, Penguin Books, 2000.
Jenn(ifer), Review of *Good Morning, Midnight*. GoodReads, 27 Aug 2012, goodreads.com/review/show/284306780. Accessed 29 Nov. 2018.
Kaplan, Amy. "Manifest Domesticity." *American Literature*, vol.70, no. 3, Sep. 1998. pp. 581-606.
Kanellos, Nicolás. "Pre-Chicano Literature: Process and Meaning (1539-1959)." *Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States: Literature and Art,* edited by Francisco Lomelí, Nicolás Kanellos, and Claudio Esteva-Fabrigat, Arte Publico Press, 1993, pp. 62-85.
---. "Recovering and Re-Constructing Early Twentieth Century Hispanic Immigrant Print Culture in the US." *American Literary History*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1 July 2007, pp. 438–455, doi.org/10.1093/alh/ajm010.
Keating, AnaLouise. "Editor's Introduction: Re-envisioning Coyolxauhqui, Decolonizing Reality/Anzaldúa's Twenty-First Century Imperative." *In Light in the Dark/Luz en Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* by Gloria Anzaldúa edited by Ana Louise Keating. Duke University Press, 2015. Ix-xxxvii.
Keene, Donald. *Dawn to West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984.
Keyser, Catherine. *Playing Smart: New York Writers and Modern Magazine Culture.* Rutgers University Press, 2010.
Kim, Sue J. "Decolonizing Narrative Theory." *Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol. 42, no. 3, 2012, pp. 233-247.
LaGreca, Nancy. *Rewriting Womanhood: Feminism, Subjectivity, and the Angel of the House in the Latin American Novel, 1887-1903.* Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009.
Lanser, Susan S. *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*. Cornell University Press, 1992.
---. "Toward a Feminist Narratology." *Style*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1986, pp. 341–363.
---. "Are We There Yet? The Intersectional Future of Feminist Narratology." *Foreign*

Literature Studies, vol. 32, 2010, pp. 32–41.
Larsen, Nella. *Passing: Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*. 2007. Edited by Carla Kaplan, Norton & Company, 2007.
Locke, Alain. “The New Negro.” *The New Negro*: *Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, edited by Alain Locke, 1925. First Touchstone ed., Simon & Schuster, 1997, pp. 3-18.
Locke, John. “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and a Treatise on the Conduct of Understanding.” Philadelphia, Kay and Troutman, 1847. HathiTrust Digital Library. Internet resource.
---. “Of Civil Government: Second Treatise.” Chicago: Henry Regnery Co, 1955.
Loos, Anita. *"Gentlemen Prefer Blondes": The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady*. Boni & Liveright, 1925.
López, Tiffany Ana. “María Cristina Mena: Turn-of-the-Century La Malinche, and Other Tales of Cultural (Re)Construction.” *Tricksterism in Turn-of-the-Century American Literature: A Multicultural Perspective*, edited by Elizabeth Ammons and Annette White-Parks, University Press of New England, 1994, pp. 21–45.
Madigan, Mark J. “Then Everything Was Dark”?: The Two Endings of Nella Larsen’s “Passing.” *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 83, No. 4, 1989, pp. 521-523.
Mao, Douglas and Rebecca Walkowitz. “Introduction: Modernisms Bad and New.” *Bad Modernisms*, edited by Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, Duke University Press, 2006, pp 1-18.
Marciniak, Katarzyna, Anikó Imre, and Áine O’Healy. “Introduction: Mapping Transnational Feminist Media Studies.” *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media*, edited by Katarzyna Marciniak, Anikó Imre, and Áine O’Healy, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp.1-20.
Margolin, Uri. “Focalization: Where Do We Go From Here?” *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization: Modeling Mediation in Narrative*, edited by Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid, and Jörg Schönert, Walter de Gruyter, 2009, pp. 41-58.
María Cristina Mena Chambers Papers. Recovering the US Hispanic Literary Heritage Project. University of Houston. Internet Resource.
McDowell, Deborah E. Introduction. *Quicksand and Passing,* by Nella Larsen, 1986, 8th ed., Rutgers University Press, 1994, pp. ix-xxxvii.
Meade, L.T. “The Lot of the Modern Girl.” *Woman’s Life*, 1899.
Melamed, Jodi. *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
Mena, María Cristina. “The Education of Popo.” *The Collected Stories of María Cristina Mena*, edited by Amy Doherty. Arte Público, 1997.
Mezei, Kathy, editors. *Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers.* University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
Miller, Joshua. Accented America: The Cultural Politics of Multilingual Modernism. Oxford University Press, 2011.
Moi, Toril. “I am not a Woman Writer.” *Feminist Theory*. 1 December 2008, vol.9, no 3, pp. 259-271.
Molina, Natalia. “Examining Chicana/o History through a Relational Lens.” Pacific Historical Review, vol. 82, no. 4, pp. 520-542.
---. *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts*. University of California Press, 2014.
Nünning, Angar. “Reconceptualizing the Theory, History, and Generic Scope of Unreliable

Narration: Towards a Synthesis of Cognitive and Rhetorical Approaches." *Narrative Unreliability in the Twentieth-Century First-Person Novel,* edited by Elke D'hoker and Gunther Martens, De Gruyter, 2008, pp. 29-77.

Nussbaum, Martha. *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions.* Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Olson, Greta. "Reconsidering Unreliability: Fallible and Untrustworthy Narrators." *Narrative,* vol. 11, no. 1, 2003, pp. 93–109.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation in the United States*. Routledge,

Pagan, Eduardo Obregan. Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A. The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Page, Ellen Welles. "Flapper's Appeal to Parents." *The Outlook,* 6 December 1922, pp. 607.

Palmer, Alan. *Fictional Minds*. University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

---. "Ontologies of Consciousness." *The Emergence of Mind: Representations of Consciousness in Narrative Discourse in English,* edited by David Herman, University of Nebraska Press, 2011, pp. 273-298.

Paredes, Raymund. "The Evolution of Chicano Literature" *Three American Literatures*, edited by Houston Baker, The Modern Language Association of America New York, 1982, pp. 33-79.

Park, Sowon. "Featured Minds: Sowon Park." *Literature and the Mind,* mind.english.ucsb.edu/category/blog-live-minds/. Accessed 29 Nov. 2018.

Patmore, Coventry. *The Angel in the House: The Espousals.* Ticknor and Fields, 1856.

Phelan, James. *Living to Tell about It*. Cornell University Press, 2005.

Phelan, James and Mary Patricia Martin. "The Lessons of 'Weymouth': Homodiegesis, Unreliability, Ethics, and The Remains of the Day." *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, edited by David Herman, Ohio State University Press, 1999, pp. 88–109.

Raiskin, Judith. *Snow on the Cane Fields: Women's Writing and Creole Subjectivity.* University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Reid, Margaret. "Has the Flapper Changed?" *Conversations with F. Scott Fitzgerald*. Edited by Matthew Bruccoli and Judith Baughman. University Press of Mississippi, 2004, pp. 90-94.

Rhys, Jean. *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*. Norton, 1997.

---. *Good Morning, Midnight*. Norton, 1986.

---. *Voyage in the Dark.* Norton, 1982

Roberts, Mary Louise. *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-De-Siècle France*. The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

---. "Making the Modern Girl French: From New Woman to Éclaireuse." *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, edited by Weinbaum, Alys Eve, and Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, Tani E. Barlow, Duke University Press, 2008.

Rossetti, Christina. "In an Artist's Studio." *Christina Rossetti: The Complete Poems*, Penguin, 2005, pp. 796.

Rubenstein, Anne. "The War on 'Las Pelonas': Modern Women and Their Enemies, Mexico City, 1924." *Sex in Revolution: Gender, Politics, and Power in Modern Mexico*, edited by Jocelyn Olcott, Mary Kay Vaughn, and Gabriela Cano. Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 57-78.

Saretzky, Gary. "Brigham, Carl Campbell" *American National Biography*. Oxford University Press,1999.

Schalk, Sami. “Transing: Resistance to Eugenic Ideology in Nella Larsen's *Passing*.” *Journal of Modern Literature* vol. 38, no.3, Spring 2015, pp. 148-161.

Shire, Warsan. "Home." *Black Renaissance/Renaissance Noire*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2015, pp. 102-103.link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A436383116/GRGM?u=umuser&sid=GRGM&xid=fa6e4878. Accessed 27 Nov. 2018.

Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narrative*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

Sorensen, Leif. *Ethnic Modernism and the Making of US Literary Multiculturalism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Stanton, Elizabeth C. *Solitude of Self*. Paris Press, 2001.

Steinberg, Erwin. *The Stream of Consciousness Technique in the Modern Novel*. Kennikat Press, 1979.

Stevens, Sarah E. “Figuring Modernity: The New Woman and the Modern Girl in Republican China.” *NWSA Journal*, vol. 15, no. 3. Vol. 15, No. 3, Autumn 2003, pp. 82-103.

Stravo, Elaine. “Rethinking Identity and Coalitional Politics, Insights from Simone de Beauvoir.” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique,* vol. 40, no. 2, June 2007, pp. 439-463.

Tanizaki, Jun'ichirō. *Naomi*. Trans. Anthony H. Chambers. Vintage, 2001.

Tate, Claudia. “Nella Larsen’s *Passing*: A Problem of Interpretation*.” Black American Literature Forum*, vol. 14, 1980, pp. 142-146.

“The Flapper Age.” *Chicago Defender,* 29 Jan 1922, pp. 12.

"The New Fashioned Girl." *Flapper Magazine: Not For Old Fogies*, Flapper Press, 1922.

The Smart Set. vol. XXXIX, no. 3, March, 1913, pp 11.

---. vol. XLII, no. 2, February, 1914, pp 11.

Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*.
Oxford University Press, 1985.

Toth, Margaret. “Framing the Body: Imperialism and Visual Discourse in María Cristina Mena’s Short Fiction.” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2009, pp. 92-118.

Toth, Margaret. “María Cristina Mena, Transnationalism, and Mass Media: Untold Stories in the Archive.” *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, vol. 30, no 2, 2013, pp. 331-354.

Tynan, Kenneth. "The Girl in the Black Helmet." *The New Yorker*, June 11, 1979, pp. 45.

"Typical Flappers." *Weekly Journal-Miner*. August 2, 1922. Image. Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, Prescott, AZ. Image 1, col. 3. Web.10 July 2015.

"Want Flapper Called ‘Modern’; Camp-Fire Girls War on Term." *New York Times*, Oct. 6, 1925. Proquest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1810-2010) pp. 29.

Warhol, Robyn. “A Feminist Approach to Narrative” *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates,* edited by David Herman, James Phelan, Peter Rabinowitz, Brian Richardson, and Robyn Warhol, Ohio State University Press, 2012, pp. 9-13.

---. *Gendered Interventions: Narrative Discourse in the Victorian Novel.* Rutgers University Press, 1989.

---. “Neonarrative; or, How to Render the Unnarratable in Realist Fiction and Contemporary Film.” *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by James Phelan, Peter Rabinowitz. Blackwell Publishing, 2005, pp. 220-231.

Weinbaum, Alys Eve, and Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger,

Madeleine Yue Dong, Tani E. Barlow, editors. *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization.* Duke University Press, 2008.
Wright, Almwroth. *The Unexpurgated Case Against Women's Suffrage.* Constable, 1916. The Gerritsen Collection of Women's History. Internet Resource.
Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Harcourt Brace Jovanavich, 1989.
---. "Modern Fiction." Common Reader,
---. "Professions for Women." *Selected Essays,* edited by David Bradshaw, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp.140-146.
---. "Women and Fiction" Women and Writing, edited by Michéle Barrett, Harcourt Inc, 1979, pp. 43-52.
Wolff, Janet. *Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture*. Blackwell Publishers, 1990.
Yergeau, Melanie and Bryce Huebner. "Minding Theory of Mind." *Journal of Social Philosophy*, vol. 48, no. 3, Sept. 2017, pp. 273-296.
Yergeau, Melanie and Paul Heilker. "Autism and Rhetoric." College English, vol. 73, no. 5, May 2011, pp. 485-497.
Young, Kay. *Imagining Minds: The Neuro-Aesthetics of Austen, Eliot, and Hardy*. Ohio State University Press, 2010.
Zerweck, Bruno. "Historicizing Unreliable Narration: Unreliability and Cultural Discourse in Narrative Fiction." *Style*, vol. 35., no.1, 2001, pp. 151-176.
Zhang, Dora. "Naming the Indescribable: Woolf, Russell, James, and the Limits of Description." New Literary History, vol. 45, no. 1, Winter 2014, pp. 51-70.
Zunshine, Lisa. "What is Cognitive Cultural Studies*?" Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*, edited by Lisa Zunshine, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, pp. 1-34.