

WRITING COMMUNITIES: AESTHETICS, POLITICS, AND LATE MODERNIST
LITERARY CONSOLIDATION

by

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Introduction: Writing Communities

Writing on the neglect of tradition in *After Strange Gods* (1934), T.S. Eliot declared, “What is disastrous is that the writer should deliberately give rein to his ‘individuality’, that he should even cultivate his differences from others; and that his readers should cherish the author of genius, not in spite of his deviations from the inherited wisdom of the race, but because of them.”¹ This moment signals a development in Eliot’s communalist turn, his increasing preoccupation with the bonds of collectivity offered by religious and (for him, European) cultural tradition. Though many of his fellow writers would take issue with the particular tenor of Eliot’s assessments in *After Strange Gods*, they too were increasingly contemplating the tensions between innovation and tradition, individuation and association. Indeed, the 1930s and the subsequent wartime years stand as a period during which contrasting visions of community dominated the social and political landscape. Communism, Left-ism, New Deal politics, and Fascism (to span the political spectrum) all diverged from Liberalism’s emphasis on the individual to refocus attention on the social body. Community accordingly re-emerged as a live topic of both political and aesthetic debate. *Writing Communities: Aesthetics, Politics, and Late Modernist Literary Consolidation* sets out to examine several key late modernist re-articulations of literary community that occurred alongside and in conversation with the era’s more recognizable politicized communities. It argues that late modernist constitutions of literary community entailed not only an aesthetic response to and corrective of a 1920s strain of individualism, but also a self-conscious attempt to influence the paradigms and figures by which modernist communities were beginning to enter into cultural memory.

¹ T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1934), 33. The collection is a print version of the speeches that Eliot delivered as the Page-Barbour Lectures at the University of Virginia in 1933. Eliot would further explore the notions of religious and cultural community in both his later poetry, including notably *Four Quartets*, and works of social and religious criticism like *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) and *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948).

In conjunction with the larger social and political turn to community, the 1930s saw the emergence of new ethnographic projects. In the United States, the New Deal had occasioned a number of anthropological initiatives. Under the auspices of the WPA, the Federal Writers' Project began compiling an archive of oral histories and produced a series of the State and Local Guides. In England, Mass-Observation set about compiling what it termed an "anthropology of ourselves." Beginning in 1937, the project sought to record the opinions, experiences, and quotidian activities of ordinary British citizens through work of citizen "observers" and volunteer self-reports.² This heightened interest in what has elsewhere been termed "auto-ethnography" was also found in modernist circles, where, I argue, it expressed itself in part as an increased attention to the dynamics of and narratives surrounding literary community.³ But let us begin by way of example.

In 1939 the *Partisan Review* submitted a questionnaire to a "representative list of American writers" in order to assess, as it titled the results, "The Situation in American Writing."⁴ One of the survey's seven questions asked respondents to reflect upon their intellectual pedigree and the place of communal affiliations in their writing: "Do you find, in retrospect, that your writing reveals any allegiance to any group, class, organization, region, religion, or system of thought, or do you conceive of it as mainly the expression of yourself as an individual?"⁵ Wallace Stevens replied by formulating an ironic counterpoint between his own views about his writing and those of readers (presumably) outside of the world of modern literature:

²For a concise summary of Mass-Observation's activities, see Angus Calder, "Mass Observation 1937-1949," in *Essays on the History of British Sociological Research*, ed. Martin Bulmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

³James Buzard, "Mass-Observation, Modernism, and Auto-ethnography," *Modernism/Modernity* 4, no. 3 (1997). Buzard notes that Mary Louise Pratt also uses the term "autoethnography," though in a different context, in her *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁴The writers and critics whose responses were published in the Summer 1939 issue of the magazine were: John Dos Passos, Allen Tate, James T. Farrell, Kenneth Fearing, Katherine Anne Porter, Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, John Peale Bishop, Harold Rosenberg, and Henry Miller. A second installment was published in the Fall 1939 issue and contained responses that the editors explained had been received too late to be published with the first set. The respondents in the second installment were Sherwood Anderson, Louise Bogan, Lionel Trilling, Robert Penn Warren, Robert Fitzgerald, R.P. Blackmur, and Horace Gregory. "The Situation in American Writing; Seven Questions," *Partisan Review* VI, no. 4 (1939); "The Situation in American Writing; Seven Questions (Part Two)," *Partisan Review* VI, no. 5 (1939).

⁵"The Situation in American Writing; Seven Questions," 27.

Unquestionably and notwithstanding the fact that I indulge in a good deal of abstraction, I do not regard my poems as mainly an expression of myself, nor as modern in the sense in which that unpleasant commonplace is so frequently used. Still, some time ago, when I sent one of my books to an honest man in England, he wrote to me saying that he found it personal and modern, and that these qualities were not his dish of tea.”⁶

Less facetious was fellow poet William Carlos Williams, who was quick to acknowledge his own writing’s indebtedness to ideas circulating in the various communal settings of his youth, including “the grammar school ideas of my public school bringing up” and “things I learned in my father’s own Unitarian Sunday School,” as well as the inspiration offered by “the past of the United States.”⁷ He was, however, more reluctant to identify himself with any particular community of writers, especially where such an association might be construed as superseding other connections. “But I am passionately one, not of a writers’ group, but with a potential right feeling and thinking man of the world, the kernel of all groups [...],” Williams explained.⁸ In her reply, Gertrude Stein declared simply, “I am not interested.”⁹ The varying degrees of resistance evident in these responses suggests a shared ambivalence about situating one’s authorial self and one’s writing in relation to communal identities, particularly as they pertain to literary allegiances.

However, the questionnaire itself offers a manifestation of communal affiliation that is perhaps even more illuminating than those found in Stevens’s, Williams’s, and Stein’s statements. During the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s the questionnaire surfaced in little magazines as a discursively revealing, if not explicitly articulated, alternative to the manifestos that had dominated the literary landscape of the teens and early twenties.¹⁰ The publication of artists’ responses to

⁶ Wallace Stevens, “The Situation in American Writing; Seven Questions [Response],” *Partisan Review* VI, no. 4 (1939): 40.

⁷ William Carlos Williams, “The Situation In American Writing; Seven Questions [Response],” *Partisan Review* VI, no. 4 (1939): 43.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Gertrude Stein, “The Situation in American Writing; Seven Questions [Response],” *Partisan Review* VI, no. 4 (1939): 41.

¹⁰ I do not mean to imply that the questionnaire replaced the manifesto. Manifestos remained a part of modernist discourse, as evinced by the *Partisan Review*’s publication and endorsement of Diego Rivera and André Breton’s “Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art” only a few issues prior to “The Situation in American Writing” questionnaire. However, as a genre, the survey allowed for an alternative expression of community that invoked and was predicated on communal associations without positing a shared credo. Unlike most manifestos, it is literally a multi-vocal text, and as such offers an alternative to the notion of

questionnaires in the pages of the *Little Review*, the *Partisan Review*, and *transition* marked a shift away from the strident collective voice of the manifesto in favor of a more multi-vocal model of literary affiliation.¹¹ Though in reality the mono-vocal, unified, jeremiad of the manifesto often masked the heterogeneous nature of the community it purported to represent, and the multiple voices of questionnaire responses implied a forum more open to diversity of opinion than it sometimes was, this trend nonetheless reflected a shift in the discursive strategies of communal constitution.¹²

At the same time, the assembling of responses to a single set of prompts necessarily engages in a mode of communal consolidation. Such consolidation transpires, for example, in the initial decision of which figures to include in the *Partisan Review*'s "representative list of American writers." Moreover, like a less reductive version of the political polling now so ubiquitous in twenty-first century news reporting, the questionnaire permits the reader to take the responses proffered and track them by generation, political orientation, and formal and generic leanings, to tease out trends and principal points of consensus and disagreement. In the specific case of the *Partisan Review*'s 1939 writers' survey, such consolidation is further amplified by the fact that the questions posed are ones that invite the respondents to assess the American literary scene. The questionnaire reflects an

community as unity. Diego Rivera and André Breton, "Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art," trans. Dwight Macdonald, *Partisan Review* VI, no. 1 (1938).

¹¹ In addition to the questionnaires and responses printed in little magazines, the methodology of the questionnaire (or where a single prompt has been offered, symposium) informed various endeavors, from political collections such as *Authors Take Sides* (1937), which surveyed writers on whether they supported Franco or the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, to more overtly literary ones, such as *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (1929), which, though it was not an actual survey, offered fourteen writers' responses (twelve positive, two [facetiously] negative) to James Joyce's *Work in Progress* (published ten years later as *Finnegans Wake*).

¹² While the questionnaire, with its participatory format, allowed authors to weigh in on various issues--literary and political, its discursive freedom was often limited by the horizons of expectation associated with the publications in which the questionnaires appeared and by the posturing and self-censorship that often marked the replies. William Carlos Williams, for example, was one of the few respondents to a *Partisan Review* questionnaire published while the journal was still linked to the Communist Party to assert "the American tradition is completely opposed to Marxism" and that "the very premises of the revolutionary writers prevent an organic integration with the principles on which the American Spirit is founded." In its next issue, the magazine published a letter by Charles Forrest criticizing Williams under the heading "Sanctions Against Williams" and appended an editorial note stating that "the editorial position of PARTISAN REVIEW is utterly opposed to the direction of thought shown in Mr. Williams's contribution." The New Jersey poet felt that he had been misled into naively providing an earnest answer where many others realized that this was the moment for a recapitulation of the party line. William Carlos Williams, "What Is Americanism [Response]," *Partisan Review* III, no. 3 (1936): 13, 14; Paul Mariani, *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 388-89.

ethnographic approach to literary community. The individual remains important, but he or she signifies in relation to the contextual framework of the group. By querying writers on issues ranging from their consciousness of a “usable [literary] past” to the United States’ possible entry into the “next world war,” the *Partisan Review* engages in a public production of aesthetic community whose basis for affiliation is discursive and comparative rather than rooted in a shared identity or set of values.¹³

Writing Communities: Aesthetics, Politics, and Late Modernist Literary Consolidation seeks to reorient critical conversations surrounding modernist community and its literary consolidation from the perspective of late modernism. I argue that the years between 1930 and the mid 1950s served as an important period of consolidation during which the aesthetic and political legacies of modernist communities, both past and contemporaneous, were being actively contested and codified through a variety of discursive and representational practices. In chapters treating the genre of modernist memoir, the later writings of William Carlos Williams, New Directions press, and the Cold War cultural periodical *Perspectives USA*, I explore how sites of communal constitution, often treated as contexts for the literary, in fact helped to determine the narratives of modernism that circulate to this day. Attending to these productions and theorizations of community illustrates how paradigms central to the concept of modernism—including the imbrication of the literary in commodity culture, the relation of the aesthetic to the quotidian, the notion of the “New,” the international character of literature, and the political function imagined for literature—underwent significant revision during the mid-twentieth century as writers, publishers, and patrons actively sought to influence the incorporation of their individual and communal legacies into cultural memory.

Though community has served as an important category of inquiry in such classic second-wave modernist studies as Marjorie Perloff’s *The Futurist Moment* (1985) and Shari Benstock’s *Women of the Left Bank* (1986), scholarship in the field has largely focused on early- and mid-modernist venues: the pre-WWI communities in London, and the Left Bank and Greenwich Village

¹³ "The Situation in American Writing; Seven Questions," 25, 26.

communities of the 1920s and early 1930s.¹⁴ Examining the forums for and constitutions of late modernist communities, however, yields unexpected iterations of modernist tropes which highlight the complexity of this literature's shifting relations to institutional structures and mass culture. Modernist literary consolidation has often been read as a function of New Critical praxis. However, different political and aesthetic principles emerge when we explore the strategies by which late modernist communities sought to influence their own adoption and reception by both the public at large and the expanding and increasingly professionalized field of literary study. In developing an analytic that draws on both text and context, this project traces the nuanced negotiations central to modernism's transition from a self-declared countercultural movement to mainstream phenomenon. This transition, I will argue, was both solicited and resisted by the constitutions of community that I explore.

Although the specific communities and communal negotiations that I treat in *Writing Communities* are limited to certain, principally canonical, strains of Anglo-American modernism, my methodology entails a broader recuperation of literary community as a category of critical inquiry. It is a lens, I argue, that offers insight into how literary paradigms shift in response to different historical contingencies. These shifts both allow us to track the purchase of various aesthetic concepts on the cultural imaginary and call attention to our own scholarly entanglements in the production, perpetuation, and revision of such paradigms. Accordingly, to explore the constitutions of late modernist literary community is also to confront the ways in which our own critical representations are overwritten with the social, political, and aesthetic dynamics animating our current historical moment.

¹⁴ An important exception to this trend has been scholarship treating literature of the Left during the 1930s. Studies such as Daniel Aaron's early but influential *Writers on the Left* (1961), Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front; the Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (1996) and Alan Wald's recent *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth Century Literary Left* (2002) have explored the literary networks of the American Left. Samuel Hynes's *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s* takes up related questions from a British perspective focusing on a slightly younger generation of writers. The authors and sites of publication that I discuss in my dissertation differ significantly from those covered in these studies.

I. Notes Towards (and Away from) a Definition of Community

Three principal vectors structure this study: literary community, literary consolidation, and late modernism. In treating community, I seek to redraw the term's parameters by invoking models of discursive engagement rather than commonality. In her recent polemic entry on "Community" for the *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (2007) project, Miranda Joseph observes that the term is used so pervasively in contemporary American culture that "it would appear to be nearly meaningless."¹⁵ Because it carries "only positive connotations—a sense of belonging, understanding, caring, cooperation, equality—," she argues, it has been deployed strategically to mobilize support for a wide range of causes and speakers alike.¹⁶ As the title of her 2002 study *Against the Romance of Community* suggests, Joseph rejects idealized and organized visions of community, arguing instead that "capitalism and, more generally, modernity depend on and generate the discourse of community to legitimate social hierarchies."¹⁷ Joseph impugns lines of thought in which community is posited as either capital's other or its romanticized predecessor in favor of recognizing the two constructs' supplementarity.¹⁸ Accordingly, her *Keywords* entry advocates that critics investigate how "community is constituted by or complicit with capital and power" as a means of recuperating and rearticulating "the needs and desires for social change that are so often coopted by the uncritical deployment of the term."¹⁹ I share with Joseph the desire to "situate communities and the discourse of community in

¹⁵ Miranda Joseph, "Community," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), 57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), viii. The entry on "Community" that Joseph contributed to *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (2007) offers an extremely condensed version of the arguments she advances in theoretical sections of her earlier book-length study. What the *Keywords* entry does not—for obvious reasons—replicate are Joseph's case study analyses.

¹⁸ In *Against the Romance of Community*, Joseph argues for a symbiotic—or, as she terms it, supplementary—relationship between community and capital. Not only is community complicit with capitalism (it "is deployed to shore it up and facilitate the flow of capital"), but capital also supplements community since community is "constituted through the performativity of production" (that is, "capitalism is the very medium in which community is enacted") (xxxii). Thus Joseph asserts that "community both supports and displaces capitalism" (xxxiii).

¹⁹ Joseph, "Community," 60. That invocations of "community" remain pervasive despite intense critique from post-structuralist, postcolonial, and feminist perspectives, Joseph argues, suggests the "extraordinary power and persistence of a dominant discourse of community." Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, xxx. This is why she does not advocate abandoning the concept altogether.

the social processes in which they are constituted and that they help to constitute.”²⁰ However, my analysis necessarily proceeds from a different starting place. Whereas Joseph’s primary preoccupation in both texts is with identity-political social formations or “new social movements” with distinct activist objectives, the communities that I investigate do not labor under any assumption of a shared organic identity. When Brett Ashley throatily confers or denies the title of “one of us” to characters in *The Sun Also Rises*, it is an assertion that Hemingway’s reader learns to treat with skepticism, a sign of her desperate attempts to order a society still reeling from the Great War, to create pockets of empathy by policing the identities of others.

The word community itself is used only sparingly by the figures that feature in my analysis—an absence explained less by a lack of interest in the subject than by a distrust of those same warm and fuzzy connotations that Joseph decries. Even so, notions of literary affiliation permeate modernists’ lived experiences, publication practices, and public pronouncements. Indeed, the development of modernism has often been read in relation to the emergence of various aesthetic “isms” (symbolism, expressionism, imagism, vorticism, dadaism, surrealism, to name a few), sites of publication such as *The Egoist*, *The Little Review*, *The Dial*, and *Others*, and the artists’ colonies that thrived in New York, London, Paris and other metropolitan centers. The interwar years following this initial flowering have alternately been described as a period in which “collectives were on the way out” (Louis Menand) or one in which modernism took an anti-individualist turn (Michael Levenson).²¹ If it is true that modernists seemed most inclined to ally themselves aesthetically with other writers during the heyday of the “isms” in the teens and twenties, it is also true that some of modernism’s most interesting meditations on and manifestations of literary community emerge from the more amorphous literary nexuses that characterized the 1930s and beyond. I contend that in these later years writers, publishers, and patrons framed and reframed the literary rebellions of the

²⁰ Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*, viii.

²¹ Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 123; Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 79.

first half of the twentieth century through compelling, if not always consonant, constitutions of community.

It is this dynamic of ambivalent association that Samuel Putnam captures in his expatriate memoir, *Paris Was Our Mistress* (1947). Having marshaled a series of anecdotes illustrating the at times strained relations between Left Bank expatriates and Americans there on brief visits from home, Putnam confesses that “it cannot be said, on the other hand, that all was harmony in our own ranks.”²² He then offers a telling articulation of expatriate communal dynamics:

The Left Bank as a whole was gregarious rather than collective, the tendency was to go in little groups within the larger mass. This was especially true of the Americans, who had carried over many of their transatlantic feuds, coteries, and snobbisms. The literary-artistic warfare that was waged by the French often took on what seemed to us an internecine intensity; but, when all was said, there was something impersonal, abstract, something disinterested about it as contrasted with the bitter and frequently unreasoning hatred that existed among the expatriates. Possibly it was just because we *were* so far from home and were unable to agree upon our reasons for leaving home—those reasons could be so important! However this may be, the feuds were numerous and sometimes laughable.²³

Here Putnam’s protean referents suggest the inchoate and paradoxical character of the community that he by turns evokes and denies. Putnam’s assertion that the Left Bank was gregarious rather than collective strains against his repeated use of phrases—“as a whole” and “within the larger mass”—that in fact serve precisely to *collect* individuals into a single body.²⁴ When he quickly bifurcates this larger “Left Bank” into French and American subdivisions (with other national groupings absent, though, one imagines, implicit), his use of the pronoun “we” marks a spectral affiliation among the Americans.²⁵ Paradoxically, however, this “we” emerges in the service of Putnam’s denial of collectivity. It is a “we” constituted not by identification but through a shared

²² Samuel Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress: Memoirs of a Lost & Found Generation* (New York: The Viking Press, 1947), 104.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ The first sense for the adjective “collective” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in fact uses the phrase “as a whole”: “Formed by collection of individual persons or things; constituting a collection; gathered into one; taken as a whole; aggregate, collected. (Opposed to individual, and to *distributive*: so also in sense 2.)” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Online Edition, <http://www.oed.com> (accessed May 21, 2008). Though Putnam is likely invoking the *OED*’s second definition “Of, pertaining to, or derived from, a number of individuals taken or acting together; common” in order to assert the absence of cooperation or consensus, these seeming linguistic contradictions reflect the semantic difficulty of designating a nexus of affiliation that is not premised on agreement or identification.

²⁵ Putnam in his earlier allusion to “our ranks” ambiguously invokes a community that may or may not include Left Bank denizens of varying nationalities.

discourse in which, among other things, the participants contest their reasons for leaving home. In these communal conversations, “bitter and frequently unreasoning hatred” serves as a thread of affiliation as real as (if admittedly not equivalent to) friendship. Putnam’s “we” names something larger than the individual little groups or coteries, yet its basis is not harmony but rather discursive engagement.

When Putnam denies collectivity, what he is denying is a homogeneity of opinion and purpose as well as straight-forward notions of cooperation. He offers his readers a related paradox of community when he playfully dedicates his book to “the Members of the Nonexistent, Always Existing Left Bank Club.”²⁶ This phrase opens itself to at least two interpretations. On the one hand, it may allude to the successive generations of artists who will always gather informally on Paris’s Left Bank, and, on the other, it might equally designate his community of peers who, though no longer physically congregated in Paris, will always constitute a club through the ties of that shared experience. This ambiguity, though not necessarily one that Putnam intends, points to the constitutive fluidity of associational nexuses. Though the idea of discursive (aesthetic) community may slip unnamed between Putnam’s various referents, there is nonetheless a *there* there. Moreover, it is there precisely because Putnam has chosen to represent it. He has, in fact, produced an entire book so that he might ensure the place (and influence the shape) of this community in cultural memory (a community which, of course, he in part constitutes through the very act of representation). If I have belabored Putnam’s diction in my reading, I have done so to underline how his language itself exhibits an unconscious struggle to articulate a notion of community that is not premised on, or even aspiring to, unity.

In order to allow for a definitional fluidity appropriate to the paradoxes animating Putnam’s meditation, my project examines late modernist constitutions and reconstitutions of literary community by mobilizing two interrelated models. First, I approach community as a forum for

²⁶ Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress: Memoirs of a Lost & Found Generation*, vi. Putnam’s full dedication reads, “To the Members of the Nonexistent, Always Existing Left Bank Club; To Pascal Covici, Who Made the Experience Possible; and to Riva and Hilary, Who Saw It Through.”

contestation and consolidation in which the relationship between individual identity and group affiliation is negotiated (though not necessarily resolved): *community as (discursive) practice*. Second, I also approach community as a representational construct that is shaped by individual and institutional forces both as it comes into being and retrospectively: *community as representation*. Attending to such constitutions of community is not merely a literary-historical project, but one with broader epistemological and methodological implications. My approach interrogates how the specific late modernist communal formations that are my focus have influenced and continue to influence how we approach texts as readers, critics, and teachers. Moreover, I hope to provoke a broader consideration so as to suggest the ways in which these associative webs function as a type of mental furniture. Cast in the language of textual and editorial theory, communities introduce a web of contextual codes that inevitably informs our readings, leading us to certain avenues of thought and obscuring others.²⁷

In order to rethink the concept of community, we must first disambiguate it from two overlapping terms that have had a significant purchase in modernist criticism during the past fifteen years: *coterie* and *public*. The connotations of exclusivity, limited scope, and more codified criteria of affiliation associated with the term *coterie* are ones that I do not intend to invoke in my analysis of community. It is these tensions surrounding the “club”ness of the *coterie* that have modulated its mobilization in modernist criticism.²⁸ In Jennifer Wicke’s “Coterie Consumption: Bloomsbury, Keynes, and Modernism as Marketing,” this tension is conceived as productive—enabling a rarefied

²⁷ Over the past fifteen years, textual and editorial theory has called for a closer attention to the ways in which the bibliographic and contextual codes of a particular textual instantiation inform how we read that text. As George Bornstein explains in the first chapter of *Material Modernism*, bibliographic codes include features such as “page layout, book design, ink and paper, and typeface” as well as broader features like “publisher, print run, price, or audience.” Contextual codes involve the relation of a given text to other texts within a manuscript, periodical, collection, or anthology. George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7. The logic underlying attending to contextual codes is that the context within which we approach a particular text inevitably impacts which features we attend to in our reading of it. Analogously, the communal associations of a given writer—that is, the contexts within which we often unconsciously place him or her—necessarily inform how we read his or her texts.

²⁸ Among the *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions for the term *coterie* are “A circle of persons associated together and distinguished from ‘outsiders,’ a ‘set’” and more specifically as “A ‘set’ associated by certain exclusive interests, pursuits, or aims; a clique.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Online Edition, <http://www.oed.com> (accessed May 12, 2008)

group to market a lifestyle that could be (and was) appropriated by a larger public. In order to advance her larger argument that “modernism altered our ideas of ‘markets’ and the practices of marketing,” Wicke analyzes Virginia Woolf’s writing through the prism of its Bloomsbury context. By developing a model of coterie consumption—which she defines as “both the consumption of art by a coterie, the “Bloomsberries,” and the marketing and consumption of their art (and thought and lifestyle) as produced by a celebrated coterie”—Wicke illustrates that small and seemingly solipsistic groups can effect a recalibration of the social whole.²⁹

In a different vein, Lawrence Rainey wields the term coterie as a weapon against H.D. In his deservedly infamous essay from *Institutions of Modernism* (1998), Rainey questions the poet’s position within the canons of modernism.³⁰ His essay responds in part to early feminist recovery work, such as Susan Stanford Friedman’s “Who Buried H.D.? A Poet, Her Critics, and Her Place in ‘The Literary Tradition’” which presented H.D. as a poet whose writing was thwarted by masculinist modernist literary communities and ignored or buried by the academic community of New Criticism. Reversing Stanford Friedman’s rhetoric of communal exclusion, Rainey dismisses H.D. as a *coterie* poet who, due to her partner Bryher’s financial patronage, “felt little impetus to engage in active or genuine dialogue with her contemporaries.”³¹ Citing the relative paucity of essays and reviews that H.D. published, her recourse to fine press and limited editions throughout the 1930s, and the circulation of unpublished work among a smallish circle of intimates, he argues that following World War I H.D. retreated from the discursive terrain of modernism and that the quality of her work suffered as a consequence. Stanford Friedman’s and Rainey’s contrasting narratives of communities and coteries reveal how central the ascription or denial of communal associations has been to the

²⁹Jennifer Wicke, “Coterie Consumption: Bloomsbury, Keynes, and Modernism as Marketing,” in *Marketing Modernisms: Self-promotion, Canonization, Rereading*, ed. Kevin J. H. Dettmar and Stephen Watts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 109, 110.

³⁰ An earlier version of Rainey’s essay was published in the 1991 collection *Representing Modernist Texts*. Lawrence Rainey, “Canon, Gender, and Text: The Case of H.D.,” in *Representing Modernist Texts: Editing as Interpretation*, ed. George Bornstein (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991). Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 155.³¹ Rainey further contends that H.D. has been revived as an important modernist not because of the quality of her writings or her prominence within modernist circles, but because her status as a lesbian and a leftist are more in keeping with current scholarly sympathies than the conservative and fascist politics espoused by modernists like Eliot and Pound.

critical assessments of modernist scholarship. Indeed, as the case of H.D. demonstrates, this trend has not abated. In the wake of Rainey's controversial reevaluation, recent work on H.D.'s participation in publics and counterpublics has offered convincing challenges to a number of his claims, including his assertions that H.D. did not engage in dialogue with her contemporaries (Georgina Taylor) and that Bryher's patronage hindered her development as a poet (Adelaide Morris).³²

If the term *coterie* for the most part designates a grouping that is smaller and more intimate than that which I intend to invoke with 'community,' then the term 'public,' by contrast, denotes a collection of individuals that is more open, more anonymous, and more passive. Because the model of "publics" has generally replaced the totalizing concept of "the public" in recognition of the implicit exclusions (by race, by gender, by age, by nationality) that the latter has historically entailed, drawing distinctions between literary publics and literary communities can be somewhat tricky. In his essay, "Publics and Counterpublics," Michael Warner argues that publics come "into being only in relation to texts and their circulation."³³ For Warner, a public is "a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself"; it is autotelic in that "it exists *by virtue of being addressed*," but it is not necessarily identical with a given text's rhetorical addressee since a public is always "in excess of its known social basis."³⁴ It is "a relation among strangers" that is "constituted by mere attention" to circulated discourse.³⁵ Literary community, in the sense that I develop throughout this project, requires more than "mere attention." Though its modes of engagement are not limited to the

³² Georgina Taylor, *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Women Writers, 1913-1946: Talking Women* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 9; Adelaide Morris, *How to Live / What to Do: H.D.'s Cultural Poetics* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 123.

³³ Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture*, no. 14 (2002): 50. Warner's use of the word "text" here does not simply refer to printed matter, but rather the more expansive definition in which, for example, an image or an audio file can count as text. The important point for Warner is that in order for the text to be oriented to a public, it must be expected to circulate. Indeed, Warner writes of print that it "is neither necessary nor sufficient for publication in the modern sense; not every genre of print can organize the space of circulation," citing the examples of a valentine or a bill as 'printed' items that are not meant for public circulation (63).

³⁴ *Ibid.*: 50, 55. Warner begins his treatment by distinguishing this type of "public" from two other ways in which the term is used: a 'public' in the sense of a "concrete audience," which is limited, visible, and temporally situated (as in a theatrical audience) or *the* public, which putatively designates "a social totality" (49-50).

³⁵ *Ibid.*: 55, 60.

discursive act of writing—patrons, publishers, editors, and intimates (of the friendly, romantic, and antagonistic variety) all potentially find shelter under its umbrella—its standard of participation surpasses that of Warner’s public. This active engagement that community requires may, however, be executed by proxy. In this manner, a dead writer may be enlisted as a member of a print community through the publication of his or her writing (as, for example, was the case in *New Directions*’ publication and editorial framing of Arthur Rimbaud as an emblematic innovator). Because literary community is not bounded, but fluid and subject to constant re-articulation, the lines between communities and publics are necessarily blurred.³⁶ For, at any given moment, a member of a text’s public can (through a variety of actions) become a part of the literary communities in which the text circulates.

Publics have had a currency in modernist scholarship in the past ten years that communities have not. Both single author and broader studies have taken publics and/or public spheres as either implicit or explicit pivots in their analyses.³⁷ In part this is because attending to publics emphasizes the imbrication of the literary in the social; that is, it offers a platform for investigating texts as historically situated and historically contingent entities that are conversant in and shaped by a variety of political, economic, social, and cultural discourses. However, as I hope to illustrate, the category of literary community offers this as well, even if its seemingly more limited scope has at times obscured this fact.

In drawing distinctions between communities, coteries, and publics, I seek to avoid generating an overly prescriptive model of community. To insist on any single rigid definition or to parse out memberships meticulously would be both historically disingenuous and methodologically

³⁶ It is important to note that affiliation with a literary community does not preclude participation in a variety of publics. Likewise, affiliation with literary communities is almost always multiple, overlapping, and fluid, since such communities are not discrete or bounded entities.

³⁷ See, for example, Melba Cuddy-Keane’s *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (2003) and Georgina Taylor’s *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Women Writers 1913-1946* (2001), and broader studies, such as Mark Wollaeger’s *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative from 1900 to 1945* (2006), Allison Pease’s *Modernism, Mass Culture, and the Aesthetics of Obscenity* (2000), Michael Szalay’s *New Deal Modernism: American Literature and the Invention of the Welfare State* (2000), Lawrence Rainey’s *Institutions of Modernism* (1998), and the Kevin Dettmar and Stephen Watt’s edited collection *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Re-reading* (1996).

counterproductive, not in the least because the mechanisms for the constitution of literary communities have necessarily changed throughout history. I strategically leave my discussions of community open enough to encompass the fluid networks of association and potentially idiosyncratic practices of affiliation that we encounter in studying late modernism.

In seeking out more supple models and methodologies, I emphatically do not want to adopt the same mischievous indeterminacy that Stanley Fish flaunts in his discussions of membership in interpretive communities. Whereas Fish proposes that the only “proof” of membership in an interpretive community is “fellowship, the nod of recognition from someone in the same community, someone who says to you *what neither of us could ever prove to a third party*: ‘we know,’” I prefer instead to stress the importance that the individual and collective imaginings of various writers, editors, and publishers will play in my analysis.³⁸ My thinking here is influenced by an idea central to Benedict Anderson's study of nationalism, *Imagined Communities*: that “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”³⁹ Literary community achieves its character and coheres, or fails to cohere (for both are potentially fruitful recognitions) in the eyes of its participants and observers, be they artists, critics contemporary to the period, or current scholars. Thus both the *Partisan Review*'s 1939 questionnaire and, for example, Terry A. Cooney's 1984 study *The Rise of the New York Intellectuals: Partisan Review and Its Circle* entail important acts of communal imagining.

II. Late Modernism / Belated Modernism

In a lecture given at The Choate School during her 1934-1935 tour of the United States, Gertrude Stein declared, “The world can accept me now because there is coming out of *your* generation somebody they don't like, and therefore they accept me because I am sufficiently past in

³⁸ Stanley Fish, “Interpreting the *Variorum*,” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (1976, 1980; New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 2089. Emphasis mine.

³⁹ Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended, 2nd ed. (London ; New York: Verso, 1991), 6.

having been contemporary so they don't have to dislike me."⁴⁰ By 1935, many of the figures associated with the older generation of American modernists—Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, and others—might likewise have been classified as “sufficiently past in having been contemporary.” Though the temporal and aesthetic shifts this designation implies may have been advantageous for Stein’s literary reception, they have presented a challenge for modernist studies. Long treated as a no man’s land between modernism and postmodernism, Late Modernism has been (perhaps predictably) late in receiving critical attention. Modernist scholarship has largely—though often implicitly—cast the late 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s as a period of modernism past its prime; so much so that it is easy to forget that some of the most canonical works of modernism were in fact written and published during this period: T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* (1935, 40, 41, 42), H.D.’s *Trilogy* (1944, 45, 46), Ezra Pound’s *Pisan Cantos* (1948), and William Carlos Williams’s *Paterson* (1946, 48, 49, 51, 58). In the past ten years, however, late modernism has come to be recognized as a site of much needed critical attention.

Leading this wave of interest was Tyrus Miller’s 1999 study, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars*, which argues for the emergence of a distinctive late modernist aesthetic embodied in the prose of Wyndham Lewis, Djuna Barnes, and Samuel Beckett. These writers, Miller argues, responded to modernist fiction’s emphasis on formal mastery with “a variety of satiric and parodic strategies” that “weakened the formal cohesion of the modernist novel and sought to deflate its symbolic resources, reducing literary figures at points to bald literalness or assimilating them to the degraded forms of extraliterary discourse,” thus dramatizing “a particularly violent discombobulation of body and thought, a mirthless comedy of bodily discomposure.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Gertrude Stein, "How Writing is Written," in *The Gertrude Stein Reader: The Great American Pioneer of Avant-garde Letters*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2002), 439.

⁴¹ Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 19, 20. In his first chapter, “Theorizing Late Modernism,” Tyrus Miller proposes seven basic characteristics of late modernist writing. These are (in abridged form): 1) the presentation of “a deauthenticized world in which subject and object, figure and ground, character and setting are only weakly counterposed or even partly intermingled” (62); 2) a “minimal ‘positionality’ of the authorial subject” that can be observed both as internal and external to the text (63); 3) “self-reflexive laughter” which preserves “subjectivity at risk of dissolution” and offers the late modernist work its formal

Though Miller makes a good case for the texts he reads, his limited scope means that his account can only offer one of several overlapping late modernisms. Moreover, in focusing on writing produced during the late twenties and thirties (he dates the onset of his late modernism to 1926), Miller overlooks those years—the late 1930s onward—most in need of scholarly attention.

It is precisely these years that Jed Esty targets in his widely praised *A Shrinking Island* (2004). Esty counters the narratives of decline implicit in much of the writing on mid-century English literature (including Hugh Kenner's *A Sinking Island*, from which he takes his title) by arguing that in the years coincident with the contraction of England's Empire (1930-1960), the country's literature did not so much decline in quality as take an inward anthropological turn. This turn, he asserts, replaced an earlier modernism's internationalist metropolitan focus with a contrasting investment in developing an ethnography of Englishness that was marked by a "new apprehension of a complete national life."⁴² He traces this phenomenon first in the later writings of canonical modernists, examining Woolf's, Eliot's, and Forster's representations of national public rituals such as the English tradition of the pageant play, up through to the rise of "culturalism" in the postwar years and its institutionalization in Birmingham-school Cultural Studies.⁴³ Though Esty's study is concerned with issues of community, his English focus situates his discussion of late modernism in a different context from my own; particularly as the retraction of the British Empire so central to his analysis coincides historically with the expansion of American power in the global arena—the onset of what first Stein (in reference to literature) and then Henry Luce (in reference to international politics) termed "the American Century."⁴⁴

unity (63); 4) a "major loosening of symbolic unity" (63); 5) the "predominance of grotesque bodies, motivated by the goal of provoking self-reflexive laughter" (64); 6) the "obsessive depiction or pure corporeal automatism" (64); and 7) the presentation of "subjectivity 'at play' in the face of its own extinction" (64). In theorizing Late Modernism in terms of a relatively narrow set of preoccupations, Miller fails to suggest how we might use his theory to approach either poetry of the period or writing that does not seem to fit his criteria.

⁴² Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁴ In the same Choate lecture discussed earlier, Gertrude Stein, speaking mainly in reference to literature, asserted that "the Twentieth Century has become the American Century." Stein, "How Writing is Written," 441-442. *The American Century* was the title of Henry R. Luce's 1941 book expanding upon a *Life*

What my, Esty's, and Miller's studies all identify in late modernism (though in varying manifestations) is a heightening of modernism's characteristic self-reflexivity. In Esty's study, it appears as the development of an anthropology of Englishness, in Miller's, a parodic approach to form, and, in this dissertation, I locate this increased self-reflexivity in a new attention to archiving and compiling an ethnography of modernist community itself. This phenomenon stems in part from the framework of belatedness that the term "late modernism" so emphatically heralds. Miller proposes that "the late modernist response to modernism is inseparable from its emergence as a *historically* codified phenomenon;" that is "Modernism had to have aged, had to have become in a way 'historical,' had to have entered into a certain stage of canonization" before the type of writing he examines could come into being.⁴⁵ If, as Miller has suggested, writers like Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf were responsible for the emergence of a "positive and broadly accepted image of the 'modern novel' in English at this time," other domains of modernist writing remained less lauded.⁴⁶ A noticeable rift still existed between modernism's achievement of a certain stage of canonicity within its own ranks and with so-called "high brow" readerships and the status of the bulk of that literature with a broader readership. This rift was something that late modernist sites of communal constitution and consolidation attempted to address.

For instance, this disconnect was a motivating force behind Laura Riding [Jackson] and Robert Graves's 1927 *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*.⁴⁷ Riding and Graves also saw modernism as having achieved a certain historical status, reflecting in their conclusion that "[i]t is now possible to reach a position where the modernist movement itself can be looked at with historical (as opposed to contemporary) sympathy as a stage in poetry that is to pass in turn, or may have already passed,

Magazine editorial published earlier that year. His use of the phrase refers principally to the United States' ascent to the dominant position in twentieth-century international relations. Stein, "How Writing is Written," 441-442.

⁴⁵ Miller, *Late Modernism*, 22-23.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁷ *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* was published in London in 1927 by Heinemann Ltd. It was subsequently published in the United States by Doubleday, Doran & Company in 1928. My citations are from the American 1928 edition.

leaving behind only such work as did not belong too much to history.”⁴⁸ However, as the body of their study makes clear, historicity is not the same as acceptance, and their book expends its energy on defending the poetic technique of e.e. cummings, Marianne Moore, T.S. Eliot and others against the antagonism and (in their view) outmoded reading practices of their putative audience, “the plain reader.” Though Riding and Graves may at times appear to overplay the hostility and bafflement with which “the plain reader” approaches modernist writing, it is nonetheless clear that such hostility still did exist. A review of their *Survey* first printed in the *Manchester Guardian* and then republished in the popular Boston periodical *The Living Age*, for example, disputed that what Riding and Graves were explicating was even poetry at all.⁴⁹ In reporting the pair’s claim that modernist poets seek to divorce themselves from “dead movements,” the reviewer retorts that modernism, as the survey’s authors present it, is “stillborn.”⁵⁰ Indeed, by the end of the review, the British critic’s contemptuous and nationalist ripostes target modernism almost as much as Riding and Graves’s *Survey*:

The significant fact is that [Modernist poetry’s] leading practitioners are nearly all Americans; for, however it may be with music, English poetry is not going to submit to Americanization for the sake of a Cummings or a Gertrude Stein. One of the chapters is headed “The Humorous Element in Modernist Poetry.” In! As if modernist poetry were not itself a joke, and a dull joke at that. But the real humor of the thing is that the authors of the book should have elucidated and defended the dreary jest with the portentous elaboration of three hundred pages.⁵¹

Without making too much of a single negative review, I want to suggest that what we find both in Riding and Graves’s *Survey* and in the *Manchester Guardian*’s review is a sense of the historicity of modernism coupled with a simultaneous attempt to influence how that history would be registered in the minds of a larger public. Here the sense of belatedness makes even more pressing the project of generating narratives for and cultivating the reception of modernism.

⁴⁸ Laura Riding [Jackson] and Robert Graves, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928), 258.

⁴⁹ The anonymous reviewer begins his/her hostile and incredulous review by noting that Riding and Graves’s survey suffers from a “cardinal weakness” in that it “assumes the stuff it is discussing and illustrating is poetry.” “Review of *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*,” Review, *The Living Age* 334, no. 4326 (1928): 560.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

A similar logic of consolidation would, ten years later, underpin editor James Laughlin's defense of publishing older modernists in his *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* annuals. In Laughlin's view, the acceptance of Stein and Cummings by contemporary critics only serves as proof that "their experiments are not failures" and consequently increases the importance of engaging in acts of communal consolidation.⁵² The fact that these writers are "still not accepted by more than a small public," he argues, "indicates that their work must be kept in current print if the value of their experiments is not to be lost."⁵³

The notion of belatedness is woven into the very fabric of the texts and sites of publication I explore in each chapter. The *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* annuals, the larger New Directions program, and the quarterly *Perspectives USA* all relied on reprinting previously published material as a part of their communal constructions. Such reprints facilitated a type of editorial consolidation not possible when trafficking in exclusively original materials. More obviously, modernist memoir's canonical interventions are premised upon backward-glancing biographic and ethnographic assessments of the Parisian expatriate communities of the 1920s. In the case of William Carlos Williams, the sense of belatedness manifests itself in the poet's attempt to enact a type of final epic integration of the literary and the local, the aesthetic and the quotidian, in his *Autobiography* and in his long poem *Paterson*. *Writing Communities: Aesthetics, Politics, and Late Modernist Literary Consolidation* demonstrates that despite these belated materials and retrospective points of departure, each of these ventures is oriented toward the future. That is, their constitutions of community speak to objectives whose fulfillment is yet to come—the fostering of a "living" genealogy for an imminent avant-garde, the advancement of strategic national interests, the contesting of the communal narratives to be consumed by future generations, and the pursuit of a poetics rooted in locality. Accordingly, I trace how belatedness functions not as a paralytic condition but as a generative one.

⁵² James Laughlin, "Preface," in *New Directions in Prose & Poetry 1938*, ed. James IV Laughlin (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation; reprint, 1967), xvi.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

III. Making Modernisms

Few critical labels invoke the degree of referential ambiguity and intellectual unease that modernism does. Because its history is so closely tied to the post-World War II professionalization of literary studies, the term has served by turns as a repository for institutional authority, a site of exclusion, and an object of contestation and revision. It is not my intention either to invoke or to produce a monolithic vision of “modernism.” Such notions have wisely been abandoned in favor of recognizing the plurality of intersecting and contiguous movements, communities, and paradigms that might lay claim to this designation—that is, in favor of what Peter Nicholls in his 1995 critical survey terms “modernisms.” However, the question remains, precisely which modernism does this study take up? Most of the writers and sites of publication that I discuss conform to the definition that Rita Felski cites in her discussion of the linguistic family, modernization, modernism, modernité, and modernity. There, modernism denotes “a specific form of artistic production, serving as an umbrella term for a mélange of artistic schools and styles which first arose in late-nineteenth-century Europe and America,” which is “characterized by such features as aesthetic self-consciousness, stylistic fragmentation, and a questioning of representation” and bears “a highly ambivalent and often critical relationship to the process of modernization.”⁵⁴

More importantly, however, I argue that it is precisely this question of “which modernism?” that is being posed and answered by the writers and sites of publication that appear in each chapter. A significant part of what this study attempts to illustrate is how, between the 1930s and the late 1950s, modernism—under that name, but also under others—was continuously being constituted and reconstituted through an assortment of overlapping cultural projects. These projects were by turns individual (William Carlos Williams’s later writings), collective (the discursive exchanges of modernist memoir), and institutional (New Directions and *Perspectives USA*). My discussion is not a comprehensive study of late modernist community—it does not, for example, take up the complex communal negotiations surrounding the Harlem Renaissance or explore those that arose in relation

⁵⁴ Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 13.

to the Spanish Civil War—but, in limiting itself to investigating four specific late modernist sites for and engagements of literary consolidation, it seeks not only to tease out some of the different strategies used to constitute communities, but also to investigate the political, social, and aesthetic lines along which these communities sought to establish their cultural relevance.

Modernist cannon formation has often been read in relation to New Criticism. John Guillory, for example, in his foundational study of cultural capital and canonization alludes to a “New Critical agenda of canonizing modernist poets.”⁵⁵ The intersection of modernism and New Criticism has likewise furnished important argumentative threads in studies such as Louis Menand’s *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context* (1987) and Gail McDonald’s *Learning to Be Modern: Pound, Eliot, and the American University* (1993). David R. Shumway proffers an alternative narrative in his *Creating American Civilization*, identifying the New York Intellectuals—William Phillips, Philip Rahv, Lionel Trilling and others—as the “American inventors of what has come to be called ‘modernism.’”⁵⁶ Shumway argues that it was these critics who, in their essays of the late 1930s through the early 1960s, “provided the definitive map” of the field of modernism, promoting it “as

⁵⁵ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital; The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 169. In Guillory’s narrative, it is in part on behalf of modernism that the New Critics undertook a rehabilitation of the concept of “difficulty”—a notion which had previously “circulated between the wars as a negative criterion of judgment, as the basis for the resistance to modernist poetry” (169). Guillory, drawing on the findings of Craig S. Abbott, proposes that it was through this valorization of difficulty that the New Critics succeeded in supplanting another extant canon of “modern” American poets, —Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg—poets whose progressive populism and accessibility were understood to be part of their “modern” credentials (170-172). It was thanks to “New Criticism’s success in installing a modernist canon of difficult poets,” he argues, that the “works of popular modernism fell precipitously to the level of mass culture” (172). This discussion emerges in the service of Guillory’s larger argument about how the New Critics succeeded in locating cultural capital in the institution of the University. The emphasis on literature “as the embodiment of a language distinct in its difficulty” meant that the university thus offered a different type of linguistic capital than that furnished by the literary curriculum in elementary and secondary schools (172). Guillory concludes, however, that ironically the New Critical “polemic on behalf of the difficulty of literary language, and against the degraded simplicity of mass culture,” following its success at the university, was expanded to teaching at lower levels of the school system, thereby enacting “a curious kind of rapprochement” through its attempt to divorce literary and mass culture (174).

⁵⁶ David R. Shumway, *Creating American Civilization: A Genealogy of American Literature as an Academic Discipline*, vol. 11, *American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 288.

an alternative literary tradition to the one academic Americanists and Popular-Front critics more or less shared.”⁵⁷

Both of these narratives fetishize the role of literary criticism in codification of the canons and governing narratives of modernism, an understandable consequence given that Guillory’s and Shumway’s studies take the university as their central institution. Though Guillory’s account recognizes the influence of T.S. Eliot’s literary criticism on the New Critics (and thus on the process of modernist canonization), his focus on the university as the principal site for the allocation of cultural capital means that his purview rarely extends to other sources of, and mechanisms for, literary consolidation. Since the terms “canon” and “canonization” are near-inextricably linked to literature as an academic discipline, my preferred terminology throughout this project is “literary consolidation.” By this I mean to denote the processes through which individuals, groups of writers, and literary paradigms achieve a certain purchase and naturalized authority in cultural memory.⁵⁸ Literary consolidation thus often overlaps with, but is not coterminous with, academic canonization. Though criticism has played (and continues to play) a significant role in literary consolidation, it occurs in conjunction with and alongside a whole variety of other mechanisms of literary promotion and consolidation—mechanisms that in the late modernism context include, but are not limited to, the publication of anthologies, literary journals, press series, and (auto)biographical writings. The differing aesthetic, social, and political frameworks built into each site of consolidation—contexts, for example, ranging from celebrity culture to (inter)national affairs of state—modulate the competing configurations of modernist community that they produce.

As Lawrence Rainey’s *Institutions of Modernism* (1998), Dettmar and Watt’s *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Rereading* (1996), and most recently Aaron Jaffe’s *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (2005) have all in varying manners illustrated, modernists and their literary

⁵⁷ Ibid. In a section provocatively titled “The Invention of Modernism,” Shumway details how the New York Intellectuals’ constitution of modernism first transpired in the pages of their principal organ, *The Partisan Review*, and then migrated into the academy as did they themselves in the 1950s (290).

⁵⁸ By “cultural memory” I intend to invoke both mainstream/hegemonic cultural memory, and the cultural memory of a variety of individual sub-cultures, which may be more and less represented within the former.

collaborators (publishers, editors, patrons) employed a variety of strategies, including ones associated with commodity culture, to influence the reception of their writing and the circulation of their literary reputations. In so doing, these studies have shown how the ‘great divide’ that (in Huyssen’s estimation) modernists sought to establish between themselves and mass culture was in fact traversed by all manner of footbridges, viaducts, zip-lines, and scaffolding. My project extends such work by exploring a series of late modernist sites of consolidation in which the negotiation of literary legacy transpires under the exigency of modernism’s mounting literary successes. Importantly, the types of literary consolidation that I examine are not ones that seek to shape the reception of an individual or a small group of writers, but rather ones which take as their project a much larger reevaluation and codification of literary community, offering competing accounts of modern literature’s central paradigms and figures. These public performances of modernist community are particularly fascinating because they often entailed confronting the increasingly glaring contradictions between one of the chief tenets of modernist self-presentation—the pose of aesthetic, political, and social rebellion against the principal currents of Anglo-American culture—and their own assimilation by that very culture, an assimilation that these performances in fact cultivated. In this manner, though modernist memoir, as a genre, is highly critical of the incursion of celebrity culture into the literary marketplace, the rhetoric of authenticity it uses to level this critique is one that is embedded in the discursive field of celebrity culture. Similarly, though *New Directions* sought to expand the audience for what it termed “books of permanent literary value” and “prose and poetry of unusual quality, [...] the work of individualists,” its promotional materials relied on a rhetoric of exclusivity—identifying its readers as “the appreciative few.”⁵⁹ I read such examples not as instances of disingenuousness or hypocrisy, but rather as paradoxes indicative of the complex and conflicting imperatives motivating such communal productions. Hence, late modernism becomes, I contend, a period in which a

⁵⁹ Promotional Circular, [ca. 1936], 1936 folder, Catalogs, Circulars and Printed Ephemera, *New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers*, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Catalogs, Circulars and Printed Ephemera, *New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers*, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

variety of figures (whether consciously or not) set about imagining how to generate and sustain a hegemonic iconoclasm or an iconoclastic hegemony.

An important consequence of my focus on the intersection of late modernist community and literary consolidation is that it draws much needed critical attention to publisher, editor, and poet James Laughlin (1914-1997). As founder of New Directions and publisher of *Perspectives USA*, Laughlin proves a key figure in the circulation and reception of (late) modernist writing. Fêted by Lawrence Ferlinghetti as the “last of the great gentlemen publishers,” Laughlin used family money to publish writers and books that commercial houses would not.⁶⁰ Indeed, denunciations of the ills of commercial publishing appeared regularly in both Laughlin’s early editorials and New Directions publicity materials. Begun in 1936 while Laughlin was still in college, New Directions Books quickly became the primary publisher of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams.⁶¹ During the press’s first ten years its publications included an annual anthology of experimental writing, titles by Kay Boyle, Robert McAlmon, Henry Miller, and Kenneth Patchen, Delmore Schwartz, Dylan Thomas, Franz Kafka, Federico Garcia Lorca, Edouard Dujardin and many others, important out-of-print modernist books, including Stein’s *Three Lives*, Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, and Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*, as well as criticism, ranging from a reprint of *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, a symposium on Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, to John Crowe Ransom’s *The New Criticism*. As my chapter on New Directions argues, Laughlin importantly revised an earlier modernist pose of radical rupture with literary history by fashioning a self-conscious communal genealogy for the

⁶⁰ Lawrence Ferlinghetti, “Dissent Is Not UnAmerican,” *Paideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship* 31, no. 1-3 (2002): 29. Laughlin was an heir to the Jones and Laughlin Steel Company. The colophon of New Directions books includes to this day (even following Laughlin’s death) a line that reads, “New Directions books are published for James Laughlin.”

⁶¹ During the 1950s, Williams published a number of prose works with Random House, having been lured there with promises of more money and better distribution and promotion by a former New Directions editor, David MacDowell. Williams had felt that Laughlin had not done enough to promote his books, and had harbored some frustrations dating back to New Directions’ publication of his novel, *White Mule* (1937), whose critical success had been stalled due to a shortage of copies ready for distribution while Laughlin was off on a skiing venture in New Zealand. Laughlin for his part was devastated that Williams would consider publishing elsewhere when the larger commercial publication houses had rejected his books prior to the success of *White Mule* and some of his other fiction. Though the relationship between Laughlin and Williams was rocky all throughout the 1950s, New Directions remained the publisher for all of Williams’s poetry books. Mariani, *New World Naked*, 601-603, 404.

modern movement (in general) and experimental writing (in particular). During the 1950s, as President of Intercultural Publications and publisher of *Perspectives USA*, Laughlin mobilized modernist texts to represent and propagandize on behalf of American aesthetic culture to an international Cold War audience. Though Laughlin's importance to modern literature has been acknowledged with many awards and honors, including, in 1992, the first National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters ever to be awarded to a publisher, his late emergence on the modernist stage has meant that critics have often relegated him to the footnotes of modernist scholarship.⁶² My project recovers and resituates his pivotal role in late modernist community.

IV. Overlapping Communities, Overlapping Inquiries

Writing Communities proceeds by examining a series of overlapping but varying configured sites of communal constitution, each with its own distinctive communal preoccupations, ontological anchors, and strategies of production.

My first chapter explores how modernist memoir served as an important communal economy. In texts such as Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return* (1934, 1951), Robert McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together* (1938, with chapters by Kay Boyle 1968), Samuel Putnam's *Paris Was Our Mistress* (1947), Sylvia Beach's *Shakespeare and Company* (1956), and Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964), writers vied not only to establish their own personal legacies, but to contest and determine the aesthetic and political principles for which the movements and communities of the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s would come to be remembered. In outlining memoir's mobilization of multiple communities, audiences, and genres, my chapter demonstrates how memoir generated both an alternate canonizing discourse and an intertextual discursive forum through which participants adopted an ethnographic approach to

⁶² The second and only other publisher to be honored with this medal was Clifton Fadiman in 1993. To date, only one major critical study, Greg Barnhisel's *James Laughlin, New Directions Press, and the Remaking of Ezra Pound* (2005), has taken up James Laughlin, a figure who, I contend, has played an integral role in shaping the canons and communities of literary modernism and the experimental avant-garde.

literary consolidation. To this end, I investigate how individual figures, such as Robert McAlmon and Ernest Hemingway, become important discursive objects through which memoirists call into question the types of “work” valued in modernist economies, probe the tensions between communal exchange and individual productivity, and debate the status of celebrity and literary persona in aesthetic culture. My analysis shows that memoirists sought to establish the cultural importance of the communities they depicted, while simultaneously questioning the feasibility of (in McAlmon’s phrase) being geniuses together.

My second chapter approaches constitutions of literary community through the lens of a single writer. It examines William Carlos Williams’s attempts in both his personal life and in his later writings—including his long poem *Paterson* (1946-1958) and *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (1951)—to bring about a rapprochement between his local community of Rutherford, New Jersey and the communities of American and, more problematically, international modernism. In both the *Autobiography* and *Paterson*, Williams self-reflexively thematizes this aesthetic mission, offering a meta-critical meditation on his attempts to create a discursive space in which his neighbors and his literary peers might meet. My analysis in this chapter probes the continuities and discontinuities in his representations of these communal negotiations so as to explore how the seemingly self-serving interventions of literary consolidation are simultaneously directed by substantive commitments of aesthetic principle.

My third and fourth chapters look to the communal productions emerging from sites of publication. Chapter Three examines New Directions press in relation to two crises that threatened the viability of avant-garde communities during the late 1930s: the dilemma of aesthetic belatedness and that decade’s imperative for literature to engage in social reform. This chapter traces how New Directions’ negotiation of these two formative predicaments evolved a publishing program that would reorient and redefine the temporal and political dimensions of modernism by constructing, consolidating, and canonizing its own tradition of the “New.” My analysis here focuses on the press’s pronouncements and publication practices during its first twelve years, from the inaugural

1936 issue of the avant-garde annual *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* to the 1947 publication of *Spearhead: 10 Years' Experimental Writing in America*. This chapter introduces New Directions' founder and editor James Laughlin IV as a central figure in the institutionalization of modernism.

My final chapter looks ahead to a decade that falls outside the dominant periodizing dates for modernism: the 1950s. Here, I examine *Perspectives USA* (1952-1956), a Cold War quarterly magazine overseen by James Laughlin and funded by the Ford Foundation. Published in four different language editions, *Perspectives USA*, sought to improve the standing of the United States with intellectuals abroad by disseminating American "high culture." The magazine occupies a fascinating position in the history of modernist literary consolidation in that it published works by modernists like William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, William Faulkner, and e.e. cummings alongside the essays of those critics who helped to explicate and canonize their writings. My chapter examines the conflicts that emerged in the magazine's self-conscious performance of American literary community for a world audience. In attempting to use modernism as a tool of cultural diplomacy or— cast more skeptically—cultural imperialism, *Perspectives USA*, I contend, throws into relief aspects of modernism and modernist community that were already vexed from the outset. I close with this chapter in order to suggest how modernist tropes of community continued to undergo revision in conjunction with new socio-political contexts such as the cultural Cold War.

Though my project focuses primarily on American modernisms—the presses, publications, and authors it takes up are American—the scope of the dissertation is more properly characterized as international. The communal and canonical negotiations scrutinized in each chapter suggest how modernist communities must be read in relation to the forces of expatriation, cultural exchange, and group affiliations that alternately reify and transcend national boundaries. This concern with the global plays out differently in each chapter. William Carlos Williams sought to reconcile the cosmopolitan expatriate emphasis of modernism with his own investment in the particularities of the American local. New Directions' emphasis on translation helped to reconfigure the (inter)national boundaries of experimental writing. Modernist memoir engages in its constructions of literary and

cultural history in relation to an often overtly moralized narrative of expatriation. *Perspectives USA* sought to win over foreign intellectuals by exporting its brand of American “high culture” to over forty-five countries in response to, and in the midst of, the increasingly polarized global atmosphere. In focusing on the convergence of late modernism, literary consolidation, and literary community, I hope to illustrate how each of these categories helps locate literature in the complex social nexuses from which it emerges.

Chapter 1. Left Bank Legacies: Modernist Memoir's Communal Economy

In penning his introduction to Jimmie Charters's 1934 memoir, *This Must Be the Place*, Ernest Hemingway opens not by discussing his friendship with Charters, the legendary barman at the Dingo who served up drinks to the artistic circles of the Parisian Left Bank, but by turning his attention to another recent memoirist.¹ "Once a woman has opened a salon it is certain that she will write her memoirs," Hemingway begins; and if you attend the salon, you will appear in her memoirs, that is, "if your name ever becomes known enough so that its use, or abuse, will help the sale of the woman's book."² This pointed, if superficially anonymous, attack targets Gertrude Stein, whose memoir *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* had been published the previous year. Hemingway proceeds to assail Stein for nearly two pages before even mentioning Charters's name. In a sentence whose parenthetical potshot threatens to overwhelm its principal clause, Hemingway observes,

The best way to achieve an exhaustive mention (outside of having the salon woman purchase your sculpture, your paintings, your wash drawings, or perhaps your embroidered diapers, if embroidering is your art, while these objects are still very cheap and continue to hold them after they become expensive so that mention of them would be calculated to increase their value) is to have the woman be fond of you and then get over it.³

¹ Jimmie Charters, a transplanted Liverpudlian, served as barman at numerous Parisian establishments including the Dingo, the Falstaff, the Trois et As, and the Jockey. Charters did not compose the memoir himself, but instead dictated impressions of and stories about his various clients to a stenographer hired by his collaborator Morrill Cody, an American journalist (and later cultural liaison) who also participated in Left Bank expatriate circles. The resultant text first appeared as "*This Must Be the Place; Memoirs of Montparnasse* by Jimmie the Barman (James Charters); edited by Morrill Cody ; with an introduction by Ernest Hemingway ; illustrated by Ivan Opffer and Hilaire Hiler." According to Cody, Charters undertook the memoir at the urging of American artist Hilaire Hiler, who served as Charters's initial ghost writer before he (Hiler) persuaded Cody to take over. Hugh Ford, Foreword, in *This Must Be The Place: Memoirs of Montparnasse* (1934; New York: Collier Books, 1989), xiii. *This Must Be the Place* was first published in England by Herbert Joseph Ltd. in 1934. Lee Furman brought out an American edition in 1937. Hugh Ford, who wrote the foreword for the 1989 Collier Books reprint, recounts that Morrill Cody solicited Charters's friend Ernest Hemingway to write an introduction for the memoir and that Hemingway agreed so long as he liked the contents. Hemingway looked over an early and rough version of the text with Cody and Charters at Shakespeare and Company while on his way from Key West to Africa in November 1933. Hemingway then mailed his introduction from Nairobi, Kenya in January 1934. Ford, xiv.

² Ernest Hemingway, Introduction, in *This Must Be the Place: Memoirs of Jimmie The Barman* (1934; New York: Lee Furman, Inc., 1937), ix.

³ *Ibid.*, ix-x.

If Stein had gotten over her onetime fondness for Hemingway, Hemingway certainly had not gotten over Stein's unflattering depiction of him in her memoir. Hemingway's bilious references to the speculative market he sees at work in Stein's text reveal his acute awareness of memoir's capacity to influence not only the rise and fall in the value of a piece of art, but also the standing of the artists and writers depicted within its pages. What most concerns Hemingway is not the economy that governs the price a Picasso will fetch at auction, but the related, though less quantifiable, economy in which his stature as a writer is measured alongside and in relation to that of Gertrude Stein and other literary figures of the period. In short, Hemingway's attack suggests the potency of literary memoir as a canonizing discourse.

This chapter examines the largely under-studied field of modernist memoir. Memoir, I argue, functions as an important communal economy and forum in which writers sought to influence the individuals and paradigms that would come to represent modernist aesthetic revolt in literary and cultural history. Beginning in the 1930s and extending through the 1960s, modernist memoir served as a supplementary canonizing discourse; one that often diverged in both its assessments and its methodologies from those operating in anthologies, literary reviews, and New Criticism. Whereas the appraisals of New Critics and contemporary periodical reviewers were generally occasioned by and framed in relation to the texts of a given author (e.g. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* or Carl Sandburg's "Chicago"), memoir tends to offer up the "lives" rather than the texts of writers in order to make its canonizing interventions. In adopting a biographical and ethnographic approach to modernism, memoirists were able to use their specialized knowledge as participants in 1920s literary communities to debate, consolidate, and revise the cultural and aesthetic legacies of those communities. What results is a body of literature that not only participates in, but also self-reflexively analyzes, the processes by which writers enter into (or fail to enter into) cultural memory.

The first section of this chapter will establish the generic, discursive, and historical contexts for modernist memoir, attending in particular to its distinctive mobilization of multiple genres, communities, and audiences. The second will explore how these memoirs offered an autopsy on the

communal dynamics of the Left Bank, a colony whose disappointment of its utopian potential led many memoirists to question the ultimate purpose and viability of literary community. Taking—as numerous memoirs do—writer, publisher, and memoirist Robert McAlmon as an illustrative case of the bright star gone dim, I will analyze how memoirists explain McAlmon’s fate in relation to the tensions between communal exchange and individual productivity, calling into question the types of “work” valued in modernist economies. The third and final section will examine modernist memoir’s critiques of and participation in the discourse of celebrity. If memoirists cast McAlmon as the Left Bank’s forgotten man, they approach Ernest Hemingway as one of its most (in)famous poster-boys. As such, he functions as an important discursive object through which memoirists debate issues of celebrity, literary persona, and the influence of the market. However, in so doing, the conflict between the memoirists’ discursive strategies and the content of their criticism exposes several key anxieties attending modernism’s evolving transition from a self-professed literature of revolt to a culturally hegemonic literary paradigm. Taken together, the findings of this chapter argue for a reconsideration of memoir’s complex role in shaping the processes of literary consolidation.

I. Conversations across the Page: Drawing the Discursive Field of Modernist Memoir

I have labeled the collection of texts that I examine in this chapter “modernist memoirs”—*modernist* because the authors of these texts figure themselves as a part of (in admittedly differing capacities) the literary revolt of the first half of the twentieth century to which critics often attach that endlessly troublesome term modernist; and *memoirs* because in general these texts focus not on the arc of an individual life, but on recording observations about the participants in and dynamics of a series of loosely defined and overlapping aesthetic communities during a delimited historical period (most often the 1920s).⁴ For the purposes of this chapter, I have chosen to reduce my scope even

⁴ A list of Anglophone memoirs and autobiographical writings treating the literary 1920s might include: Alfred Kreymborg’s *Troubadour: An Autobiography* (1924), Sisley Huddleston’s *Bohemian Literary and Social Life in Paris; Salons, Cafés, Studios* (1928) and *Back to Montparnasse* (1931), Margaret Anderson’s *My Thirty Years’ War* (1930), Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), Ford Madox Ford’s *It Was the Nightingale* (1933), Malcolm Cowley’s *Exile’s Return* (1934, 1951), Jimmie

further by focusing on American modernist memoirs whose remembrances play out against the backdrop of expatriate Paris, a field whose paradigmatic texts might include Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return* (1934, revised edition 1951), Robert McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together* (1938, abridged and reorganized with chapters by Kay Boyle 1968), Samuel Putnam's *Paris Was Our Mistress* (1947), Sylvia Beach's *Shakespeare and Company* (1956), Harold Loeb's *The Way it Was* (1959), and Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964), among others.⁵ The wide range of publication dates for these memoirs suggests the dominant position that the 1920s Parisian communities occupy in modernist mythologies. Memoirists writing in the 1950s, for example, continued to focus on the twenties rather than the years leading up to the Second World War.^{6 7} Moreover, these memoirs consciously converse with one another despite (and

Charters and Morill Cody's *This Must Be the Place* (1934), Harold Stearns's *The Street I Know* (1935), Claude McKay's *A Long Way From Home* (1937), Wyndham Lewis's *Blasting and Bombardiering* (1937), Robert McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together* (1938, abridged and reorganized with chapters by Kay Boyle 1968), Langston Hughes's *The Big Sea* (1940), Richard Aldington's *A Life for Life's Sake* (1941), Maxwell Bodenheim's *My Life and Loves in Greenwich Village* (1945), William Carlos Williams's *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (1951), Caresse Crosby's *The Passionate Years* (1953), Samuel Putnam's *Paris Was Our Mistress* (1947), Sylvia Beach's *Shakespeare and Company* (1956), Harold Loeb's *The Way it Was* (1959), Robert M. Coates's *The View From Here* (1960), Matthew Josephson's *Life Among the Surrealists* (1962), Man Ray's *Self-Portrait* (1963), Morley Callaghan's *That Summer in Paris* (1963), Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* (1964), John Dos Passos's *The Best of Times* (1966), Nancy Cunard's *Those Were the Hours* (1969), and John (Buffy) Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse* (1970).

⁵ I have chosen this group of texts because I believe it to be the dominant subgenre within the larger field of modernist memoir, but I recognize that this means overlooking a diverse and fascinating field of life narratives by American writers who did not possess either the inclination or the means to participate in the Parisian literary communities that I take as my focus. Indeed, as the following chapter on William Carlos Williams suggests, many American writers sought to produce life narratives that validated experiences other than those obtained through expatriate communities.

⁶ In the epilogue to the 1951 edition of *Exile's Return*, Malcolm Cowley notes the neglect of the 1930s as a subject of literature, memoir, and analysis. He points to the need for both fictional and non-fictional accounts of the history and way of life of that decade to match those for the 1920s. Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (1934; New York: The Viking Press, 1951), 293. Cowley himself would give an account of the 1930s in *The Dream of Golden Mountains*, a text which he began much earlier but did not complete and publish until 1980. Samuel Putnam's 1947 memoir *Paris Was Our Mistress* announces its intent to extend the scope of texts such as Cowley's, hoping to "supplement the earlier, incomplete ones, inasmuch as [*Paris Was Our Mistress*] deals largely with the period from 1926 to 1933, the years during which, whatever the quality of the *émigrés* as compared with their predecessors, the bulk of the migration came." However, in actuality Putnam barely ventures into the 1930s and the Anglophone writers to whom he allots the most space—Ford Madox Ford, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound—belong more to the Parisian communities of the 1920s than those of 1930s. Samuel Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress: Memoirs of a Lost & Found Generation* (New York: The Viking Press, 1947), 6.

across) the decades that separate them. Though I will soon discuss this phenomenon at greater length, modern memoir's intertextual forum might be succinctly illustrated here by pointing to Kay Boyle's decision to insert her own chapters into her revised and reorganized edition of Robert McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together*.

If, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson suggest in their primer *Reading Autobiography*, "acts of personal remembering are fundamentally social and collective" because they always entail the inter-subjective sharing of a social past, then those of memoir are doubly so precisely because the genre consciously seeks to contextualize its various "remembrances" within a communal setting.⁸

Modernist memoir entails several related constitutions of community. Remaining entirely inaccessible to the reader are the historical communities that ostensibly serve as the basis for the memoirists' texts.⁹ What the reader receives in their place are memoir's "narrated" communities—Stein's salon, Cowley's "lost generation", Beach's "the crowd."¹⁰ Though these often overlapping, more and less explicitly defined networks of association take historical communities as their

⁷ In *Modern Lives; A Cultural Re-Reading of the "Lost Generation,"* Marc Dolan points to two waves in the publishing of memoirs of the 1920s. The first wave took place during the 1930s. Dolan then observes that "[d]uring the 1940s, the decade-long flood of Lost Generation/expatriate memoirs and autobiographies had slowed to a veritable trickle [...] The 1950s and 1960s, however, saw a second wave of memoirs and autobiographies." Marc Dolan, *Modern Lives: A Cultural Re-reading of "The Lost Generation"* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1996), 24.

⁸ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 21. Smith and Watson define memoir as "a mode of life narrative that historically situates the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant; the memoir directs attention more toward the lives and actions of others than to the narrator" (198). I would revise the second half of this definition to suggest that the memoir directs significant attention to the lives and actions of others *in addition to* the experiences of the narrator.

⁹ As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, the nexus of intersubjective associations (spatial, textual, social, etc.) that constitute a community are largely a function of various types of imagining. In contradistinction to the individual subject, who at least has the nominal unifying structure of a single physical body to contain if not constitute the subject, communities lack a similarly (if not misleadingly) solid embodiment to which one might point. Communities, as Benedict Anderson suggests, are thus always a function of imagining—their membership and associative links are the product of the subject who seeks to name and define them (whether this subject is a participant in the community or not). Thus, though there may be some general consensus regarding those elements that serve as the basis for a given community at a particular moment in time, its character and boundaries are always fluid since they are dependent on the subject position (or vantage point) from which that community is imagined. Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended, 2nd ed. (London ; New York: Verso, 1991).

¹⁰ In delineating these distinctions I am working from and building upon Smith and Watson's theorization of the four Autobiographical "I's" (the 'real' or historical 'I', the narrating 'I', the narrated 'I', the ideological 'I'). Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 58-64.

foundation, they do not come into being in their particular incarnations until the moment of representation; that is, until they are constituted or “performed” within the text through each anecdote, each “remembrance.”¹¹ Finally, as memoirists conjure these communities within their individual texts, they simultaneously participate in yet another production of community. The genre itself becomes a communal forum in which memoirist-conversants use their texts to contest and consolidate the appraisals and assessments offered by fellow memoirists. Though their conversations obviously take place at a much slower pace than that afforded by literary periodicals, they also occur in a more enduring medium. This, for example, is what enables Samuel Putnam to publish a text in 1947 that seeks to expand the “valuable” but “partial and, by intent, a highly personalized, view” of the expatriate “movement” presented in Malcolm Cowley’s 1934 *Exile’s Return*.¹² As Smith and Watson suggest, “Communities develop their own occasions, rituals, and practices of remembering,” and the tide of Left Bank chronicles beginning in the 1930s evinces memoir’s importance as a modernist site and practice of remembering.¹³ Modernist memoir thus invokes at least three dimensions of literary community: the historic communities that remain inaccessible, the narrated communities that exist within the text as representational and discursive objects, and the community that arises in conjunction with the discursive acts of memoir-writing.

Memoir’s emergence as a late modernist communal forum has a generic antecedent in the profusion of questionnaires that appeared in little magazines during the late 1920s and 1930s. Both Margaret Anderson’s *My Thirty Years’ War* (1930) and Malcolm Cowley’s original 1934 edition of *Exile’s Return* invoke the questionnaire in their closing pages. Anderson reprints the questionnaire that served as the basis for the final issue of the *Little Review*. Cowley’s 1934 epilogue structures its closing pronouncements about “the problems of the artist in a new age” as “the answers to an

¹¹ For a foundational discussion of performativity in autobiography, see Sidonie Smith, “Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance,” in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Wisconsin Studies in American Autobiography* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

¹² Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 6.

¹³ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 20.

imaginary questionnaire” put to him by the reader.¹⁴ As discussed in the introduction to this project, the questionnaire itself offered a constitution of community that differed significantly from that found in the manifestos that had dominated the literary landscape of the teens and early twenties. Where the manifesto subsumes its signatories into a grammatically plural but (ostensibly) ideologically unified “we,” the questionnaire constitutes community through the juxtaposition of individual responses to a common set of prompts. Accordingly, the questionnaire offered a forum in which writers could contest their aesthetic and political ideas. Cowley and Anderson’s decision to invoke the questionnaire at such pivotal moments in their texts points to memoir’s participation in and extension of this type of forum. Here was each author’s opportunity to archive and interpret the events of the past twenty years and to propound his or her views on a range of issues confronting contemporary writers. However, unlike the questionnaire, in which the responses of fellow participants remain largely unknown until the publication of the set, memoir’s successive articulations—sometimes staggered over decades—meant that the interpretations and accounts of one author could be engaged, expanded upon, and contested by subsequent memoirists. In this sense, each participant offered his or her response to memoir’s diverse and evolving referendum on the significant features and figures of the literary 1920s.

It is the intertextuality of modernist memoir that most clearly signals its participation in and status as communal discourse. As the dialogism of these memoirs arguably reaches its pinnacle in Kay Boyle’s 1968 reconfiguring of Robert McAlmon’s 1938 *Being Geniuses Together*, it is worth briefly examining its intertextual approach. In inserting chapters of her own amidst her shortened, restructured, and revised version of McAlmon’s text, Boyle claims the resultant memoir as “part of a dialogue I have never ceased having with Robert McAlmon.”¹⁵ However, McAlmon certainly is not

¹⁴ Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Narrative of Ideas* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1934), 294. In rewriting his epilogue for the 1951 revised edition of *Exile's Return*, Cowley abandoned his use of the questionnaire, replacing its forceful but optimistic political call to arms with a more cynical view of the relationship between art and politics.

¹⁵ Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1968), 11. As McAlmon died in 1956, Boyle’s words suggest that she continues to respond to his ideas even after his death.

the only memoirist with whom she converses; the body and footnotes of her text allude to and quote from life writings such as *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*, Morley Callaghan's *That Summer in Paris*, Jimmie Charters's *This Must Be the Place*, and *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali*.¹⁶ Moreover, both she and McAlmon narrate their own versions of events recorded elsewhere by other memoirists. Though Boyle's text is more explicit, announcing many of its allusions with citations, McAlmon's 1938 text also engages those memoirists who had preceded him. In a 1938 chapter titled "Genius All Too Simple," for example, McAlmon disputes Stein's infamous assumption of "genius" status in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) and responds to her account of his Contact Editions' publication of *The Making of Americans*.¹⁷ On a more thematic and epistemological level, McAlmon participates in the ongoing conversations on the nature of genius and the significance of expatriation that Stein and Cowley respectively engaged in their earlier texts.¹⁸ In this fashion, by generating competing narratives and canons of modernist community, these memoirs helped to spawn a late modernist discursive community preoccupied with influencing the processes of literary consolidation.

Just as the communities invoked by modernist memoir are multiple, so too are the audiences. On the one hand, many of these memoirs speak in part to an audience of the writer's literary peers, offering a store of communal memories and evaluations. This stance reveals itself through the manner in which certain memoirists fail to provide adequate introductions to some of the more obscure figures they discuss, suggesting their invocation of a knowing audience of literary

¹⁶ The allusions are found in the 1968 edition of *Being Geniuses Together* as follows: *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (25, 26, 192), Morley Callaghan's *That Summer in Paris* (26, 205), Jimmie Charters's *This Must Be The Place* (55-56, 206-7, 320-321), and *The Autobiography of Emanuel Carnevali* (136).

¹⁷ As Boyle reorganized and often recombined McAlmon's 1938 chapters, she replaced his more thematic chapter titles with chronological ones, e.g. "Robert McAlmon 1925-1927," to match those of her own chapters, e.g. "Kay Boyle 1928-1930." For an analysis of Boyle's deployment of chronology in her structuring of the 1968 *Being Geniuses Together* see Craig Monk, "Textual Authority and Modern American Autobiography: Robert McAlmon, Kay Boyle, and the Writing of a Lost Generation," *Journal of American Studies* 35, no. 3 (2001).

¹⁸ Though McAlmon is in conversation with Cowley's narrative of exile and return, and alienation from and reintegration into American society throughout his text, one of his more overt evocations of Cowley is his archly titled chapter, "Native's Return." At the beginning of this chapter he rejects the notion that his sojourn in France constitutes a flight from his American identity.

intimates for whom such allusions require no further elucidation. Similarly, the publication of certain of these memoirs by small, writerly presses—such as the issuing of Caresse Crosby’s *The Passionate Years* (1953) by The Dial Press—suggests their ambition to find a readership among fellow writers and/or those who imagine themselves as readers with elite tastes. However, many of these texts also courted a more popular audience. Certain of the memoirs, for example, first appeared in periodical publications geared toward a wider readership than either little magazines or small presses could provide. It was with *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* that Stein achieved her long-held desire to be published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, which serialized excerpts from her text in 1933 just prior to its publication.¹⁹ Installments of what would become Malcolm Cowley’s *Exile’s Return* were first published in *The New Republic*. Jimmie Charters (Jimmie the Barman) first published some of the remembrances that would later be incorporated into his memoir in *Esquire Magazine*.²⁰ At the time that these memoirs began appearing in the early 1930s, the American reading public was better primed than ever to receive their tales of literary bohemia. The popularity of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s jazz age chronicles and the interest in Parisian expatriate life piqued by Hemingway’s 1926 bestseller, *The Sun Also Rises*, helped to create a circumstance in which accounts of the lives of America’s literary rebels seemed better positioned to find an audience than the literary writings that constituted this rebellion.²¹

The publication in 1933 of Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* further opened the market for expatriate remembrances. Stein’s memoir was an undeniable commercial success. As Phoebe Stein Davis notes, *The Autobiography* was chosen as a Book-of-the-Month selection and was ranked as one of the nation’s top 10 best-selling nonfiction books by *Publishers*

¹⁹ In *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937), Stein reveals that she “always wanted two things to happen to be printed in the Atlantic Monthly and in the Saturday Evening Post and so I told Mr. Bradley that I wanted him to try [serializing *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in] the Atlantic Monthly.” Gertrude Stein, *Everybody’s Autobiography* (1937; Cambridge: Exact Exchange, 1993), 47.

²⁰ Articles by Jimmie Charters appeared in the May and July 1934 issues of *Esquire Magazine*.

²¹ Factors contributing to audience receptivity for such memoirs include nostalgia and a desire for an accounting of the roaring twenties in the wake of the Depression, the increasing fame of some of the Left Bank’s denizens, and the cumulative effect of mainstream press articles on the Left Bank.

Weekly within only a month of its publication.²² Stein's case also showed that a well-received memoir might also procure a larger readership for an author's more avant-garde writings.²³ Though Stein had long been recognized, if not always respected, in modernist literary circles, it was her memoir that made her a bestseller and (perhaps of equal importance to her fellow writers) disseminated her assessments of her literary peers amongst the general reading public. Though many of her fellow writers critiqued Stein for *The Autobiography's* unabashed self-promotion, they could not help but recognize that it had yielded results, both in sales and in terms of Stein's position within American letters.

The promise of fame, a place in the tradition, or, in more academic terms, canonicity, proved enticing even to those who imagined themselves in revolt against the literary establishment. Sylvia Beach's memoir *Shakespeare and Company* records the seductive power of canonicity.²⁴ "In the middle twenties," Beach explains, "our friend Valéry was elected to the [French] Academy, the first among his friends to enter this institution. It was considered dusty at the time, and his colleagues disapproved, *but each and every one of them entered the Academy as soon as their turns came.*"²⁵ While noting the initial disapproval that characterizes the avant-garde French writers' stance towards this process, Beach's anecdote highlights their ultimate capitulation to their desire for the legitimization and recognition of their works that the Academy could provide. As there existed no national academy in the U.S. to canonize American authors, writers hoping to ensure both their literary legacy and that of their peers had to develop their own means of circulating their appraisals.

²² Phoebe Stein Davis, "Subjectivity and the Aesthetics of National Identity in Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 45, no. 1 (1999): 18.

²³ The publisher of *The Autobiography*, Harcourt, Brace and Co., republished *The Making of Americans* in 1934. As Stein details in *Everybody's Autobiography*, she developed a relationship with Bennett Cerf of Random House following the success of her first *Autobiography* and during her lifetime Random House published *Portraits and Prayers* (1934), *The Geographical History of America* (1936), *Three Lives* (reprint, 1936), *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937), *Ida: A Novel* (1941), *Wars I Have Seen* (1945), and *The Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein* (1946).

²⁴ Beach's memoir of course takes its title from the name of her Left Bank lending library and bookstore that served as a hub of Anglophone literary activity in Paris.

²⁵ Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), 160. Emphasis mine.

This, of course, is not to say that there weren't institutional forces at work, actively constructing the canons of modern American literature. Indeed, the modern memoirists of the early 1930s entered a climate in which there already existed at least two competing canons of modern American literature. As Craig S. Abbott demonstrates in his article "Modern American Poetry: Anthologies, Classrooms and Canons," in the late teens and early twenties popular anthologies produced a canon of modern American poetry that was being taught in the classroom. Consisting of writers such as Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Edgar Lee Masters, and Carl Sandburg, this modern American canon was celebrated for its democratic and progressive tenor.²⁶ However, as Abbott also argues, during the 1920s a second canon began to take shape through the writings of R.P. Blackmur, T.S. Eliot, William Empson, John Crowe Ransom and others, critics who began "to displace the more strictly journalistic figures such as [Louis] Untermeyer and [Marguerite] Wilkinson."²⁷ Though still nascent in the early 1930s, New Critical praxis, as Abbott, Gerald Graff, John Guillory, and others have shown, would by the end of the decade come to generate an alternate, and ultimately dominant, canon of modern literature based on a valorization of difficulty, ambiguity, and paradox, and epitomized by poets such as T.S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens.

Examining modernist memoir allows us to supplement simple narratives of journalistic and New Critical canonization. As stated at the outset of this chapter, though their methodologies and interests may have differed, both periodical reviewers and New Critics used the text(s) of a given author (e.g. W. B. Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium")—or the pretext these texts afforded— as the basis for making judgments about that author. That is, their evaluations were principally (though not exclusively) text-based. Alternately, memoirists generally sought to influence the processes of literary consolidation through materials (anecdotes, character sketches) that pertained more to the 'life' than the texts of a given author. Though these memoirs do contain moments of overt literary criticism wherein the memoirist addresses specific texts or stylistic matters, their recourse to biographical

²⁶ Craig S. Abbott, "Modern American Poetry: Anthologies, Classrooms, and Canons," *College Literature* 17, no. 2/3 (1990): 209, 210.

²⁷ *Ibid.*: 219.

details opens up a discourse that supplements, reinforces, reframes, and even at times contradicts textual assessments.

Modernist memoir accordingly suggests that biography and the figure of the artist played a much more complex role in modernist aesthetics than the rival poles of modernist impersonality (as espoused by T.S. Eliot) and the individual artist's consciousness (whether in the manner of Eugene Jolas or Freudian psychoanalysis) suggest. The artist-centered theory of aesthetics that Margaret Anderson develops in her memoir, *My Thirty Years' War*, for example, points to just one manner in which the "personal element" influenced modernist aesthetic judgments and practice. In recalling an argument with some anarchist friends about the nature of art, Anderson provides an explanation of the *Little Review's* editorial policy: "But I have always accepted or rejected manuscripts on one basis: art as the person. An artist is an exceptional person. Such a person has something exceptional to say. Exceptional matter makes an exceptional manner. This is 'style.' In an old but expressive phrase, style is the man."²⁸ It is this blurring of the boundary between artist and artwork, personality and style, that leads Anderson to regret that she had not insisted that details about James Joyce, the individual, be introduced during the *Ulysses* obscenity trial. In recounting how her lawyer, John Quinn, had missed a particular opportunity to redirect the proceedings to consider Joyce's character, Anderson writes, "I nearly rose from my seat to cry out that the only issue under consideration was the kind of person James Joyce was, that the determining factor in aesthetic and moral judgment was always the personal element, that obscenity *per se* doesn't exist."²⁹ To Anderson, personal details about the artist are not extraneous but rather central to how one approaches a given text. Certainly not all of the memoirists I discuss would agree with this aspect of Anderson's literary vision, but it does suggest how memoir's emphasis on character sketch and anecdote might entail a more complex engagement with modernist aesthetics than at first apparent.

²⁸ Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War: An Autobiography by Margaret Anderson* (New York: Covici, Friede Publishers, 1930), 134.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 220.

Though my discussion of Anderson's interest in the artist (and artwork) as person points to one dimension of memoir's investment in biographical materials, the genre's mobilization of the character sketch also draws upon the more voyeuristic impulses of the scandal sheet. The inclusion of anecdotes whose principal (or at least partial) purpose seems to be to titillate the reader and feed a desire for literary gossip (Ezra Pound nearly stabbed by drug-crazed surrealist! Drunken James Joyce locks himself in the bathroom and sulks like a little child! F. Scott Fitzgerald fears he is poorly endowed!) exposes modernist memoir's complex relation to the popular discourses of modern celebrity. The recourse to this genre in narrating the histories of aesthetic communities (an admittedly longstanding technique whose past luminaries include Boswell) collides with these memoirs' often explicit critiques of those literary figures who, either in their public self-presentation or in the marketing of their texts, attended too closely to public opinion and fame. Indeed memoir both reflects and exemplifies the late modernist crisis of identity provoked by the mainstreaming of a movement whose rallying cry was precisely its rebellion against the main currents of modern culture. It is this uneasy relation to mass culture that I will treat in the final section of this chapter.

Implicit in my discussion thus far is a simple point, but one that is now worth stating explicitly: modernist memoir importantly represents modernism as a communal practice and experience. That is, taken together these diverse texts implicitly argue that both the individual figures and aesthetic paradigms associated with modernism must be understood within a social and communal context. However, modernist memoir's contemplation of aesthetic community does not result in the largely convivial depiction critic Julie F. Codell finds in late Victorian artists' autobiographies.³⁰ Modern memoirists are just as likely to deride their peers as praise them, and their narratives are shot through with tales of wars between writers.³¹ Indeed, an important tension

³⁰ Codell asserts, "Although self-promoting, most artists' autobiographies represented an art world as sociable, jovial, and conversational. Only [William] Frith among these presents his own criticism of the art world." Codell then proceeds to discuss William Holman Hunt as another important exception to the trend of conviviality in these artists' depiction of aesthetic community. Julie F. Codell, *The Victorian Artist: Artists' Lifewritings in Britain, ca. 1870-1910* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 138.

³¹ Both Sylvia Beach and Gertrude Stein note the prevalence of literary squabbles. After narrating her falling out with Robert McAlmon, Stein dismisses the quarrel remarking, "But that is Paris." Beach

underlying these texts is the often vexed relation of the individual to the collective, a tension heightened by the fact that one of their bases for communal revolt was a valuation of individualism. Of course, these memoirs' points of contestation are just as revealing as, if not more than, their moments of consensus. However in order to understand the dynamics and trajectories of these debates it is important that we, as critics, study individual memoirs within the context of and in relation to other texts within this fluid genre. Though certain memoirs, such as Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, have received a significant amount of critical attention, few scholars have chosen to examine the larger discursive field in which each memoir is but one articulation.³² What follows is an attempt to read across this fascinating field.

II. (The Problem with) Being Geniuses Together

If all classical roads led to Rome, modernist memoir suggests that the vast majority of aesthetic roads during the 1920s led to Paris. It is a commonplace of modernist memoir to remark that such a condition and milieu as that which arose in Montparnasse in the 1920s would not be equaled for a long time. In *This Must Be the Place*, for example, Jimmie Charters and Morrill Cody, reproduce a letter from Marcel Duchamp which asserts,

Montparnasse was the first really international colony of artists we ever had. Because of its internationalism it was superior to Montmartre, Greenwich Village, or Chelsea. Heretofore the essence of the art colonies had always been students, as in the Latin Quarter, but

similarly admits the frequency of disagreements, but like Stein, does not seem particularly disturbed by it: "Wars between writers blaze up frequently, but I have observed that they settle down eventually into smudges." Despite Beach's claim, the content of various memoirs suggest that these quarrels were often quite enduring. McAlmon and Stein clearly had not reconciled by the time that he wrote his memoir. Hemingway's ability to hold a literary grudge is evidenced in *A Moveable Feast* by his unforgiving portraits of Stein, Ford Madox Ford, Wyndham Lewis, Ernest Walsh, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, all of whom were dead by the time he started working on the memoir in July 1957. Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933; New York: Vintage Books; reprint, 1990), 200. Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 33.

³² Two exceptions to this critical lacuna are Marc Dolan's study *Modern Lives* (1996) and William Boelhower's chapter "Avant-Garde Autobiography: Deconstructing the Modernist Habitat." Dolan's book examines the treatment of the "Lost Generation" in the autobiographical writings of Hemingway, Cowley, Fitzgerald and others; Boelhower's chapter examines avant-garde autobiography's representation of a series of spatial displacements from the metropolis to the polis. Dolan, *Modern Lives: A Cultural Re-reading of "The Lost Generation"*; William Boelhower, "Avant-garde Autobiography: Deconstructing the Modernist Habitat.," in *Literary Anthropology: A New Interdisciplinary Approach to People, Signs and Literature.*, ed. Fernando Poyatos (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1988).

Montparnasse was a more mature expression. Montparnasse is dead, of course, and it may take twenty, fifty, or a hundred years to develop a new Montparnasse, and even then it is bound to take an entirely different form.³³

As memoirists including Samuel Putnam, Malcolm Cowley, and Kay Boyle suggest, the nostalgia and sentimentality that at times inflects these accounts was present during and even prior to the time one spent on the Left Bank. It grew out of the idealized and almost mythic status that Paris held in the American imaginary.

The Parisian colony's draw was that it promised (and to a certain extent provided) cosmopolitanism, an escape from the strictures of American "provincial" morality, and an assemblage of people interested in the arts. As Sylvia Beach explains, "prohibition and [literary] suppressions were not entirely to blame for the flight of these wild birds from America. The presence in Paris of Joyce and Pound and Picasso and Stravinsky and Everybody—not quite, since T.S. Eliot was in London—had a great deal to do with it."³⁴ Charters and Cody go so far as to figure the community as one which transcended the barriers of class, nationality, and profession. In explaining the picaresque and contiguous structure of their text, Charters and Cody write,

If this book seems disjointed in spots and jumps from a great poet to a visiting drunk from Wichita, it is because the life of the quarter was just that mixture. People did not separate into class or intellectual groups. A typical bar full would be a coming painter, a prostitute, a well-known writer, a society woman, an habitual dope addict, a wealthy business man, a model, and so on, all talking together, all friends without class consciousness, all learning from each other, all professing an interest in Art with a big A.³⁵

In such utopic re-castings, the Montparnasse colony is presented as united by art, existing, if not completely outside of, at least at a remove from the conditions of modern industrial nation-based capitalist society.³⁶ And though this exemplifies one idealized extreme on the continuum of

³³ Quoted in Jimmie Charters and Morrill Cody, *This Must Be the Place: Memoirs of Jimmie The Barman* (1934; New York: Lee Furman, Inc., 1937), 155.

³⁴ Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 23-24.

³⁵ Charters and Cody, *This Must Be the Place: Memoirs of Jimmie The Barman*, 28-29.

³⁶ Of course, as a number of the more politically-minded memoirists wisely argue, capitalist society was at the root of and influenced the dynamics of these Left Bank communities. In *Exile's Return* Malcolm Cowley suggests that the American expatriation to Paris, and more generally to Europe, was enabled by the strength of the American dollar in relation to European currencies following the First World War. This positive exchange rate prompted Americans to move to France where, Cowley notes, "one could live for next to nothing." Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return; A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s*, ed. Donald W. Faulkner (1934, 1951; New York: Penguin Books; reprint, 1994), 79. In the "Valuta" section of his

memoir's representations of expatriate community, the genre abounds with tales of communal generosity, in which artists offered financial support, food, and housing to their peers, despite their own often meager purses.

However, if memoirists at times tout the colony's utopian potential, they also lament its failings. With surprising consistency, at a certain point in their accounts most memoirists enumerate the tragedies of the community (suicides, starvation, addiction, violent ends).³⁷ Julie Codell notes that Victorian artists' lifewritings often employed such tales as illustrative juxtapositions to the primary narrative. Because Victorian artists were "[p]ainfully aware of the rise and fall of reputations," Codell observes, they "sprinkled their texts with stories of failed or mad artists or those who died young, counterpointing stories of success to expose the capricious social and market forces that dominated their careers."³⁸ In modernist memoir, however, such stories take on greater symbolic weight, calling into question the dynamics and viability of the community in general. In her decidedly pessimistic Afterword to the 1984 reprint of *Being Geniuses Together*, Kay Boyle observes, "It is not easy for a language to begin again, for literary revolutions, like social revolutions, are not accomplished by proclamation or decree. They occur when the spirit of the time demands a change,

"Traveller's Cheque" chapter, Cowley also goes on to describe the parasitic practices of a new class of tourist who chased the dollar from country to country, hunting down the most favorable exchange rates [read devalued currency] at any given moment, taking advantage of the rapidly fluctuating rates of European currencies destabilized by the First World War. Samuel Putnam describes those expatriates who arrived in Paris in the second half of the 1920s by noting that unlike the earlier group that had arrived shortly after WWI, they "had no great disillusionment to drown, they were not rebels, and often they were not genuine writers or artists and scarcely pretended to be." For these, Putnam remarks, "Paris at twenty-five francs to the dollar had become a "cheapie," a far more exciting place to live than Greenwich Village with its bathtub gin and prohibition prices." Putnam also sees market forces at work in the bourgeois capitalist enterprise that sprung up around the expatriate colonies. In addition to what Putnam discusses as the long-established exploitative practice of buying a poor artist's (usually a painter's) work and then reselling it at a high price once the artist's reputation has been secured, Putnam remarks that by the mid-twenties the Montparnasse scene "had begun to assume the appearance of a Bohemia made to order, with a suave proprietor in the background, rubbing his hands in unctuous satisfaction and keeping a watchful eye on 'la caisse.'" Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 69, 69-70, 67.

³⁷ See for example Robert McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1938), 300-304.; the chapter "Strange Suicides" in *This Must Be The Place*; and Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 238-240.

³⁸ Codell, *The Victorian Artist: Artists' Lifewritings in Britain, ca. 1870-1910*, 117.

whatever the cost of that change may be. The cost in Paris in the Twenties was tragically high.”³⁹

Modernist memoir accordingly develops two principal trajectories of failure—one spectacular and the other mundane. The first of these is exemplified by—and it is indeed the memoirists who claim its emblematic status—the suicide of poet and publisher Harry Crosby. In *Exile's Return*, Malcolm Cowley famously takes Crosby as one endpoint of the “religion of art” ethos that he argues was shared by many expatriates. Drawing on ideas Edmund Wilson set forth in *Axel's Castle* (1931), Cowley proposes that this ethos rapidly bred a way of life that was “essentially anti-human.”⁴⁰ As Cowley describes it, the religion of art demands that everything outside of art be rejected. Consequently it leads to a flight from society and a cultivation of individuality that, taken to one of its extremes, ends in self-annihilation and suicide. In his 1951 revision of *Exile's Return*, Cowley supplements his case study of Crosby by adding the related tale of the decline and suicide of his friend Hart Crane.⁴¹ Thirteen years after the publication of *Exile's Return*, Samuel Putnam would again take up the case of Harry Crosby as emblematic of the demise of Montparnasse.⁴² According to Putnam, Harry Crosby’s suicide in New York on October 23 of 1929, along with that of surrealist Jacques Rigaut, threw a “gloom over those terraces [of Montparnasse] from which they were never fully to recover.”⁴³ Although Crosby wasn’t a particularly good poet, and many of the exiles hadn’t known him personally, Putnam observes, he had written for and was published in *transition*, had run a press, and had entertained writers, artists, and other bohemians at his house outside Paris. Putnam concludes, “His death, accordingly, and the manner of it were something that belong to Montparnasse. It was symbolic, all too symbolic, a little too close to home.”⁴⁴ Such discussions of Crosby, Rigaut, and the other suicides exemplify the strain of modernist memoir’s meditation on

³⁹ Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930* (1968; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; reprint, 1997), 336.

⁴⁰ Cowley, *Exile's Return; A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s*, (1994), 1142.

⁴¹ This expansion occurs principally through the addition of a chapter on Crane titled, “The Roaring Boy.” Cowley states in his 1951 prologue, “I had written at length about the life of Harry Crosby, whom I scarcely knew, in order to avoid discussing the more recent death of Hart Crane, whom I knew so well that I still couldn’t bear to write about him.” *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴² Putnam’s text presents itself as an extension of the limited story Cowley offers in *Exile's Return*; however, despite such claims, *Paris Was Our Mistress* is at times shockingly derivative of it Cowley’s text.

⁴³ Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 238-239.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 239.

failure that borrows from the Romantic tradition of the artist whose aesthetic sensitivity is proven by his or her inability to live in the world. This strain entails spectacular failures whose public dimension allows them to be used by critics to a variety of symbolic ends. However, modernist memoir also offers a second, less sensational trajectory of failure; it is this strain that emerges in relation to writer and publisher Robert McAlmon.

For if memoirists use the figure of Harry Crosby to raise questions about modernism's nihilism, they turn to Robert McAlmon in order to critique its communal dynamics. Within the discursive space of modernist memoir, McAlmon's story offers not the dramatic downfalls of Crosby, Hart Crane, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, but a second more pedestrian type of failure endemic to the Left Bank, one that—in Eliot's phrase—is punctuated not with a bang but a whimper. Though once touted as one of the most promising writers of his generation, McAlmon ended his years abroad not dead or mad, but simply forgotten.⁴⁵ As such, he affords memoirists the opportunity to reflect on the disjunction between intra-communal and public literary-historical significance. For some, like Kay Boyle, McAlmon's case serves as an indictment of the dynamics of modernist community, wherein both the paradigm of "the genius" and the egocentric focus of modern promotion efface the indispensable contributions of community-builders—those who worked to create and sustain the (lived and textual) communities that brought modernist "masterpieces" into being. For others, like Sylvia Beach, McAlmon's case illustrates a danger inherent in aesthetic collectives—that an investment in social and collaborative ventures can result in the deferment and ultimate squandering of one's own creative energy.

⁴⁵ Another case of the promising-writer-gone-to-pot discussed by a number of memoirists is that of Harold Stearns, the writer and critic who had helped lead the mass exodus from the U.S. to France with his symposium *Civilization in the United States*. Samuel Putnam, for example, uses Stearns's case to help frame some of the questions he plans to address in his memoir:

Nevertheless, the question still remains: why did Harold Stearns, who fled America to find a more spiritual existence and a nobler culture, become a Peter Pickum [Stearns wrote a column covering horse races for the Paris *Tribune*]? Why were there so many Peter Pickums among the expatriates? Was Stein right about the Lost Generation? Why lost, in what manner and how far? [...] *Ibid.*, 31.

The invisibility of those whose work sustained modernist communities has served as a site of inquiry for modernist scholarship ranging from Benstock's classic *Women of the Left Bank* (1986) to Jayne Marek's more recent *Women Editing Modernism: "Little Magazines" and Literary History* (1995), with critics often approaching the topic through the lens of gender. What is notable for my discussion, however, is that modernist memoir anticipates such critical trends and, during the period in which certain modernist canons were becoming more and more entrenched, lays bare for the reading public the processes by which a plurality of artists is distilled into a relatively short list of remembered names. As both a biographical subject and a memoirist, Robert McAlmon brings into focus memoir's important debates about Left Bank sociability and individual productivity, about the types of "work" ultimately valued in modernist economies, and about the relation of the modernist "genius" to modernist community. In so doing, to adapt a phrase that Reinhold Wagnleitner has used in a different context, modernist memoir embodies and feeds off of the dialectical tension of the Parisian colony as both utopia *and* dystopia.⁴⁶ As memoirists try to pinpoint what is gained and lost through collectives, their debates insert a question mark at the end of McAlmon's title and inquire into the viability of being geniuses together.

Anxieties concerning the balance of work and socializing appear both in the writings of the 1920s and in the memoirs that followed. Was Paris's endless talk a stimulus to work or a distraction from it? Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, a novel that many would later cast as a central text of the expatriate colony, broaches the issue both implicitly (through plot and characterization) and explicitly. At one point the novel's narrator Jake is ribbed for his expatriate lifestyle by his friend Bill, an American writer on a brief sojourn in Europe. Bill in jest rehearses the stereotypes about and criticisms of the American writer in Paris: "You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You

⁴⁶ In his study *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War*, Reinhold Wagnleitner observes that "The dialectical tension of America as utopia *and* dystopia runs through all literary discussions about America [i.e. discussions of America in literature] and was accompanied by parallel developments in material culture." Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, trans. Diana M. Wolf (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 17.

become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafés.”⁴⁷ Though the mock self-righteousness of Bill’s accusation sends up the would-be accusers as much as it does the expatriate accused, the remainder of Hemingway’s novel does little to dispel the stereotype of the debauched, unproductive exile. While Hemingway’s posthumously published memoir, *A Moveable Feast* (1964), takes great pains to record the young Hemingway’s industrious efforts to hone his craft, *The Sun Also Rises* focuses instead on the excesses and social intrigues of a “lost generation.” Indeed, in *Being Geniuses Together* Robert McAlmon cites *The Sun Also Rises* as contributing to the perception of the expatriates as idle and dissolute: “It appeared to please them in New York to think this book a depiction of life as led in Paris, and that was not Hemingway’s fault. There were a quantity of working, producing, alert and competent people about, but he did not find them interesting to use as characters [...]”⁴⁸ As both of these passages suggest, the issue of ‘work’ was a vexed one for many inhabitants of the Left Bank. In leaving the United States, they were in part rebelling against the country’s provincial and restrictive moral standards, but many expatriates—whether “productive” or not—remained haunted by its ‘protestant work ethic.’⁴⁹

There is a telling rhetorical gesture that appears, in one form or another, in almost every modernist memoir. Invariably at a certain point in the text, often following anecdotes detailing the dissipations of those in the Left Bank, the narrator will interject with a defense of the work done in the Quarter. It is almost never a simple assertion, but rather is positioned as a rhetorical other side of the coin—a ‘but’ or a ‘however.’ The prevalence of this gesture points to the anxiety that the tension between sociability and productivity provoked both in the Left Bank communities and in their late modernist retellings. In discussing the second wave of ‘expatriates’ who flocked to Montparnasse in the late twenties, Putnam declares that unlike their predecessors, “often they were not genuine

⁴⁷ Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; reprint, 1954), 115.

⁴⁸ McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 230.

⁴⁹ A number of memoirs suggest that many expatriates were intentionally trying to shed the strictures of American morality but that the showiness with which they did so often confirmed the hold such strictures maintained over them.

writers or artists and scarcely pretended to be.”⁵⁰ Having made this assertion, Putnam immediately relents and qualifies it:

It would, *however*, be slanderous if one were to convey the impression that all Americans in the Paris of the later ‘twenties were of this sort. What I have been trying to say all along is that the scene was a decidedly mixed one; and it was this very fact that lent it its garish colors and its peculiar fascination. *There were many hard workers in the American colony, on both banks of the river.*⁵¹

To further illustrate this statement, Putnam proceeds to cite the productivity of groups surrounding Ford Madox Ford’s *Transatlantic Review* and Jolas and Paul’s *transition*, as well as Paris’s “other magazines, schools of art, and literary-artistic manifestations of various sorts.” “The little box of a Dingo might be packing the tourists in nightly, tighter than the proverbial sardine,” Putnam concludes, “*but* some of us did manage to get some work done even after our friend Jimmy the Barman had forsaken Lou Wilson to open a place (or places, one right after another) of his own.”⁵² Such qualifying conjunctions stand as the grammatical markers of ongoing anxieties about the status of work and play, and about how these two elements of expatriate life would inflect the legacies of modernism.

For all his scathing depictions of Left Bank circles, Robert McAlmon peppers 1938’s *Being Geniuses Together* with similar defenses. McAlmon’s interjections tend to be less qualifications of his own depictions than indignant responses to the criticisms of others. In acknowledging his own current inability to work in Paris, McAlmon rebukes those outsiders who would condemn the colony:

In London and America for some reason, perhaps envy, various newspaper people liked to comment upon the Paris exiles as non-producers. It is well-nigh impossible for me to work there nowadays, but in the past I have written and revised three books, and proof-read the works of many other authors which Contact Editions published.⁵³

Here, McAlmon’s defense invokes not only his individual creative endeavors as a writer, but also his collaborative work as a publisher and editor. Indeed, he follows his remark that “There need be no apology for talking about the work which other people did in Paris” not by pointing to Left Bank

⁵⁰ Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 69.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 70. Emphasis mine.

⁵² *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.

⁵³ McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 167.

masterpieces but to the exertions of Mina Loy—as lamp-designer as well as poet—and the efforts of “hard-working” journalist and publisher William Bird.⁵⁴

Other memoirists voice their defenses with varying degrees of sincerity.⁵⁵ Though this gesture seems in some cases a half-hearted and almost automatic defense, its omnipresence suggests the pervasiveness of anxieties regarding the clash of sociability and productivity in the Left Bank colony, both as a historical condition and as a subject of representation. For as much as Paris offered a stimulating assortment of artists and ideas, its sociability often proved a stumbling block when it came to individual production. Many memoirists record their difficulty working amidst the crowds of Paris. Samuel Putnam, for example, explains a 1928 trip to Geneva as a self-imposed sabbatical from the stimulus of Paris: “However much I liked Paris, just because I did like it so much, I never found it a good place to work, any more than I do New York City; and as I had a job to finish within a certain time, [Richard] Aldington had suggested that the Calvinistic metropolis might provide just the environment I needed. It did. During the months that I stayed there, my typewriter was to prove my only refuge from the surrounding horrors.”⁵⁶

Similarly, several of the vignettes in Hemingway’s *A Moveable Feast* thematize the challenges to productivity posed by the Left Bank’s constant talk. Hemingway’s memoir repeatedly depicts interruptions to the scene of writing. In “Ford Madox Ford and the Devil’s Disciple,” Hemingway’s

⁵⁴ Ibid., 167, 168.

⁵⁵ In the epilogue to the 1951 edition of *Exile’s Return*, Cowley reflects back on the narrative of exile and return that he has generated in order to make sense of the 1920s wanderings of a lost generation. In so doing he offers a half-hearted mea culpa: “It was a better age for writers than I have made it seem—more serious, harder working, more soulful in its dissipations, and above all more fruitful” (309). However he quickly follows this concession with a closing analogy that suggests the smothering effect of the era’s oft-discussed sociability: “yet on coming out of it [the 1920s] one felt a sense of relief, as on coming out of a room too full of talk and people into the sunlight of winter streets” (1951 309). This comment appears in both the 1934 and the 1951 editions of Cowley’s text, with only one minor change: the qualification “for writers” does not appear in the 1934 edition. The presence of this paragraph in both editions is noteworthy considering the significant changes that Cowley’s epilogue underwent in the 1951 edition. Indeed, this paragraph receives added emphasis in the 1951 epilogue since rather than appearing toward the middle of the epilogue, as it did in the 1934 edition, it stands as the final paragraph.

Even Jimmie Charters, whose *métier* (to borrow Stein’s term) was the plying of alcohol, and not writing, offers a defense of Montparnasse’s productivity: “Of course by now you have come to the conclusion that Montparnasse was nothing more than a band of drunks. But though the drinking was excessive—I couldn’t deny it—there were always many serious workers among us. The renown of Montparnasse came, not from its drinking, but from its success as an artists’ colony” (120).

⁵⁶ Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 59.

daily writing in a café is disrupted by the arrival of Ford. Oblivious to Hemingway's consternation at the interruption of his work, Ford discourses at length. Not only does the dialogue ascribed to Ford paint him as pompous and absurd, but Hemingway pairs this with a number of cruel remarks about Ford's appearance. In addition to its more obvious commentary on Paris's distractions, the vignette also offers a second and unintended disclosure about work. This scene effects that which we see depicted in other memoirs: the effacement of communal work in an economy that principally values the discrete aesthetic object, tied as it is to the name of one author. Nowhere in this vignette does Hemingway acknowledge his indebtedness to Ford, who as the publisher of the *Transatlantic Review*, helped to launch Hemingway's career. Rather, Ford appears only as another in a succession of undesired interruptions of Hemingway's work. Though such elisions of communal work are not unique to modernist community and have arguably informed literary dynamics since the seventeenth century, what is particular to modernist memoir (Hemingway aside) is the manner in which it thematizes and debates such elisions. On the one hand, Hemingway's scene raises questions about the utility of an artist's colony whose sociability and constant stimulation in fact serve as an obstruction rather than an inducement to individual literary production. On the other hand, if, as many memoirs suggest, much of the success of the Parisian community lay in its collaborative ventures—Beach's Shakespeare and Company, little magazines such as the *Little Review*, *The New English Review*, and *transition* as well as small presses like McAlmon's Contact Editions—is it not another form of communal failure that such work has been omitted from the narratives of those figures who achieved popular success and from the academic discourse of New Critical canonization? It is questions such as this that Kay Boyle puts forward in her expanded version of *Being Geniuses Together*.

Writing of *Being Geniuses Together*, Malcolm Cowley observed that McAlmon passed “so many harsh judgments on famous men, and offered so many reports of their disgraceful behavior, that one

is tempted to regard the book as McAlmon's revenge on almost all the writers he had known."⁵⁷ In spite of McAlmon's satiric stance toward the Montparnasse communities in his memoir, he often appears in other memoirs as a figure who put communal endeavors ahead of his individual writing. In so doing, the memoirists suggest, he sacrificed his place within the canons of modernism. Indeed, in the introduction to the 1968 *Being Geniuses Together*, Kay Boyle explains that her motivation for reworking and reissuing the long out-of-print-memoir was to reinsert her deceased friend into the canons of modernism, to "help accord to Robert McAlmon his rightful and outstanding place in the history of the literary revolution of the early nineteen-twenties."⁵⁸ Of course *Being Geniuses Together* was in part McAlmon's own attempt to negotiate his literary-historical position in relation to his peers. John "Buffy" Glassco, a young writer from Québec who befriended McAlmon while in Paris in the late 1920s, observed of him, that "although unable to write books [successfully], he had a genius for titles."⁵⁹ McAlmon's title, *Being Geniuses Together*, in fact serves as a near-perfect condensation of the complex intersection of irony and earnestness, nonchalance and bravado, disparagement and defensiveness that characterizes his portrait of the expatriate communities of the

⁵⁷ Malcolm Cowley, "Those Paris Years," *New York Times*, Jun 9 1968, BR1. As Craig Monk has noted, Boyle's 1968 version of *Being Geniuses Together* often softens McAlmon's original narrative. Not only are her chapters less critical of her expatriate peers than his, but she also edits out some of McAlmon's original bite. Monk, "Textual Authority and Modern American Autobiography: Robert McAlmon, Kay Boyle, and the Writing of a Lost Generation."

⁵⁸ McAlmon and Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930*, xiii.

⁵⁹ John Glassco, *Memoirs of Montparnasse* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970), 80. As his memoir recounts, Glassco and his friend Graeme Taylor, expatriated from Montreal to Paris in 1928. The pair appear briefly in a number of Montparnasse memoirs of the period, often in connection with McAlmon. They appear by name in McAlmon's and Boyle's memoirs, as well as that of Morley Callaghan. Though Glassco's memoir was not published until 1970, Glassco claims that its first three chapters were completed in Paris in 1928 and put aside so that he could focus on living. He completed a draft of the memoir while in a Montreal hospital during the winter of 1932-33. He then put it the memoir aside again until 1969 when he made some final revisions. Indeed, in the 1938 version of *Being Geniuses Together* McAlmon records that Glassco was writing his memoirs when the three men spent time in Nice. Glassco's memoir is largely dismissive of McAlmon's talent as a writer. Glassco, like many of McAlmon's other detractors, charges him with laziness, an accusation that a number of memoirists—McAlmon included—often use to indict Stein. Glassco is no more generous when writing of McAlmon's intellect in general:

He was at the center of everything; everyone asked his advice, his intercession, his opinion, and his absolution. He talked interminably, but to no effect or purpose for his ideas were not only negative and confused but expressed with such petulant incoherence they could hardly be taken seriously. There were occasional flashes of observation and understanding, even moments of grace; but the style and syntax revealed the genuine illiterate. I was soon to discover that Bob had in fact read absolutely nothing for over twenty years; he formed his critical opinions of books from reviews and personal contacts and his blanket condemnation of almost everything was mainly due to laziness and pique. (80).

1920s. It also encapsulates the (intra and intertextual) tensions animating his memoir's discussion of modernist economies of valuation and their concomitant appraisals of communal endeavors and individual achievement.

One of the ways in which McAlmon attempts to revise such economies is by reframing the discourse surrounding genius in order better to acknowledge the diverse types of work sustaining the community. Writing in 1934 in the wake of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, McAlmon rejects the exclusivity of Stein's imagining of genius. His title—*Being Geniuses Together*—constitutes in part a pointed rebuttal of one of Stein's driving assertions in the *Autobiography*: “that in english literature in her time she is the only one.”⁶⁰ Stein establishes this exceptionalism early in her text when the narrating persona of “Toklas” famously declares that she has known only three geniuses in her life, Stein, Pablo Picasso, and Alfred Whitehead, each presiding, it is implied, over their respective fields of literature, painting, and philosophy/mathematics.⁶¹ McAlmon's dispute with Stein is not simply that he rejects her specific claim to genius (though he does), but that he balks at the concept of “the genius,”—a singular idol—and the hierarchical structure it entails. His own memoir works to deflate and de-fetishize the Steinian vision of genius.⁶² Where he does concede genius, it appears as the linguistic variation “a genius for” rather than a holistic or permanent state of being. Though McAlmon denies Stein's, Ford's, and Ingres's claims to genius over the course of his text, James Joyce provides one of the few instances in which he grants the presence of genius. However even in this case McAlmon's assertion is intentionally modest: “Far from having said all about life, Joyce's genius was a provincial and limited one intellectually, as well as regarding the types and phases of

⁶⁰ Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 77.

⁶¹ Stein reasserts the exclusivity of genius in 1937's *Everybody's Autobiography*, noting that “no matter what happens, how many more or how many less can read and write [...] the number that is the lack of geniuses always remains about the same, there are very few of them. No matter what happens there are very few of them generally speaking only one and sometimes and very often not even one.” Interestingly, Stein, who had recently undergone bouts of writer's block, begins to question whether genius is an essential or permanent state: “And if you stop writing if you are a genius and you stop writing are you still one if you have stopped writing. I do wonder about that thing.” Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 87.

⁶² For a discussion of the concept of genius in relation to Pound, Joyce, Stein, and Zukofsky, see Bob Perelman, *The Trouble with Genius: Reading Pound, Joyce, Stein, and Zukofsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

life.”⁶³ When not completely dismissed out of hand, each time that genius appears in McAlmon’s text it is beset by qualifications that diminish its potency.

Yet in spite of his skeptical stance towards genius, McAlmon remains subject to its discursive pull. Indeed, the importance of the concept of genius to McAlmon’s vision of literary community reveals itself in its persistent reappearance, however ironized, throughout his memoir. It is not merely that McAlmon protests too much, but that for all of his affected nonchalance, he repeatedly attempts to situate himself in relation to modernist economies of genius. As McAlmon juxtaposes his social accomplishments with his textual ones, we feel the tension between the gregarious life of expatriates and the discourse of genius. Early in his memoir, McAlmon approaches the topic through a burlesque of one of the pivotal moments in Stein’s memoir. In describing a party in Venice, McAlmon recalls that the guests began attempting handsprings. He notes that his were the best, and with that launches into a crude parody of Stein. Where Stein’s “Toklas” narrates, “The young often when they have learnt all they can learn accuse [Stein] of an inordinate pride. She says yes of course. She realises that in english literature in her time she is the only one. She has always known it and now she says it,” McAlmon answers with:

In the end quite a few of the guests, men and women, French, American, English, and Italians, were trying to turn handsprings; but *I was the one and only, and said so*, and turned more handsprings. Perfect, clean-cut, straight, hands down, and a quick neat turnover, and then landing whole on my feet. Will Gertrude Stein try that and then say that she is the one and only one of her generation, lost or wandering?⁶⁴

The absurdity of McAlmon’s assertion provides a heavy-handed critique of Stein’s infamous claim that she is the “only one” in English literature. Though this might easily be dismissed as a poorly executed joke on McAlmon’s part, his choice of juxtaposition is revealing, evoking as it does the recurring tension between socializing and productivity. McAlmon counters Stein’s claim to genius as a writer with a satiric boast about his social success as life of the party, and the passage’s parting question aligns his behavior with the aimlessness of the lost generation. Indeed in alluding to the

⁶³ McAlmon and Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930*, 284.

⁶⁴ Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 77; McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 146.

“lost generation” McAlmon associates himself and his fellow revelers with the “non-producers” Hemingway depicts in *The Sun Also Rises*, for the phrase itself is pulled from the epigraph of Hemingway’s novel, which reads, “You are all a lost generation. –Gertrude Stein *in conversation*.” While McAlmon’s target is clearly Stein’s egotism, his parody reflects the clash between the two elements that brought the expatriate communities fame, their artistic endeavors and their wild revelry.

Were this McAlmon’s only allusion to such matters, it might be overlooked. However, this passage dovetails with another in which he contemplates his own relation to the discourse of genius. Following shortly after one of his discussions of Joyce’s genius, McAlmon recalls an observation made by William Carlos Williams:

Williams has said that I have a ‘genius for life,’ while bemoaning his New England soul and his not having ventured far or long from the town of his birth. He may be right about me; if despair, a capacity for indifference, long and heavy spells of ennui which takes [sic] bottles of strong drink to cure, and a gregarious but not altogether loving nature, is a ‘genius for life,’ I have it.⁶⁵

Here, McAlmon’s seeming dismissal of Williams’s remark chafes against his decision to include it. The word “genius” bears too much rhetorical and thematic weight in McAlmon’s text for the reader to pass it by without pause. As off-hand as it may appear, it is an invocation that should be read in conjunction with the memoir’s other discussions of genius. Williams’s remark situates McAlmon in relation to a different cadre of genius—one whose “masterwork” does not solidify into a tangible text or painting, but exists as a mode of being, a nexus of associations, an affinity for conversation. Indeed McAlmon’s memoir, with its menagerie of personal anecdotes covering the wide spectrum of writers in Paris, implicitly argues for its author’s eminent and pivotal position within the expatriate community. However this type of social genius confounds the forces of valuation that govern modernist canonization, which traffics only in literary objects. The memoir’s deflation of genius thus cuts two ways. On the one hand, McAlmon sends up genius as a discourse of egotism, leading to a heavily ironic reading of his title, “Being Geniuses Together.” On the other hand, his chipping away

⁶⁵ McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 184.

at genius opens up a space for his own less tangible contributions—not only his efforts on behalf of other writers, but also his status as a central participant in the famed talk of the Quarter. Replacing the figure of “*the* genius” with the more modest “a genius for” installs a more democratic and more social paradigm. Viewed in this manner, McAlmon’s title drops its mantle of irony and signals instead a discourse of genius that is predicated on the cumulative effect of individual talents that makes the community, not the individual, the key element.

However McAlmon stops short of such an articulation and his overtures in that direction are almost always refracted through mordant humor or ironic distance. Indeed the combination of his text’s often scathing critical judgments and its general misanthropy prohibits an entirely earnest reading of the title.⁶⁶ What results is a tonal instability that is rooted in and reflects the text’s persistent anxieties about how the social dimensions of the expatriate community have (and will continue to) modulate its artistic output’s evaluative standings.

So central are such concerns to McAlmon’s text that he chooses to frame his memoir by contrasting the view that Paris’s communal life functions as a stimulus to artistic productivity with the view that it proves an obstruction. McAlmon sets up this debate by discussing a letter that he received from T.S. Eliot upon his initial arrival in Paris, a letter that convinces McAlmon that he and Eliot would never agree on “what makes literature or life.”⁶⁷ The point of contention, as his paraphrase of Eliot’s letter reveals, is the extent to which McAlmon should immerse himself in the Left Bank scene and the consequences that any such immersion might have for his work: “He [T.S.E.] said of Paris that the right way to take it is as a place and a tradition, rather than as a congeries of people, who are mostly futile and time-wasting, except when you want to pass an evening agreeably in a café.”⁶⁸ McAlmon refers to this as Eliot’s “snob-governess” attitude and he

⁶⁶ Though McAlmon can be cruel at times, his analyses of his peers follow the old adage about the month of March—in like a lion, out like a lamb. Though he often begins his discussions with unforgiving remarks, he closes them much more gently, often praising where at first he raged.

⁶⁷ McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Eliot’s warning that the social may have a deleterious effect on one’s productivity as an artist is even more marked in Boyle’s edition of the text, for Boyle reproduces Eliot’s letter in full in a footnote. Here, the warning is even more explicit: “The chief danger about Paris is that it is such a strong stimulus,

quickly dismisses it, just as he does Eliot's intellect and writing in the following paragraph. "Is Eliot afraid of the interchange of relationships, with their attractions and antagonisms and experiences?" he asks. "Derain, Brancusi, Proust, Picasso, Satie, and quantities of others of various races were in Paris at this period, and many of them spent much time in cafés and bistros, drinking considerably upon occasion."⁶⁹ Yet in spite of (or perhaps because of) such seemingly decisive and indignant defenses, the tension between work and the social resurfaces throughout *Being Geniuses Together*.

In one of McAlmon's most cogent defenses of the Left Bank, he cites Paris's offer of community as what makes it valuable to the industrious and the dissipated alike.

[...] One wonders what fixed idea American newspapers had, and what persisted in the writers who returned to America, which caused them to find it necessary to throw off on Paris, a city which gave them material and stimulus, and which helped them to grow up mentally, if they did.

It has been said that Paris is the parasite's haven because it is easier to go to hell there more comfortably than anywhere else. On the other hand, if somebody stands its racket for a long period and emerges purposeful and a producing person it means talent and strength, and it means that he had dissipated a quantity of sappy ideas and has a sounder chance of being an artist in a respectable sense, intellectually. For the rest, any art quarter is tolerant of weaknesses, and the hangers-on might as well go to hell in Paris as become equally spineless, futile, and distressing specimens in their home villages. A Parisian drunk is not nearly so sad to watch as the small town down-and-outer. He isn't alone or lonely.⁷⁰

Such moments of communal endorsement, however, are fleeting in McAlmon's text. In the years following the publication of his memoir, McAlmon's rapid fall from the literary landscape would tend to suggest that he ended closer to the side of the down-and-outer than the battle-tested writer. Indeed, McAlmon died in Desert Hot Springs, California on February 2, 1956, largely passed over by literary history and not having published another book since *Being Geniuses Together*. It is this strain of failure that the second wave of memoirists—those writing in the 1950s and beyond—confront when they take up the figure of Robert McAlmon.

These later memoirists assert McAlmon's centrality to Paris's expatriate communities. In

and like most stimulants incites to rushing about and produces a pleasant illusion of great mental activity rather than the solid results of hard work. When I was living there three years ago I had only the genuine stimulus of the place, and not the artificial stimulus of the people [...]" McAlmon and Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930*, 9.

⁶⁹ McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 11.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

Shakespeare and Company (1956), Sylvia Beach presents him as “certainly the most popular member of ‘the Crowd,’ as he called it.”⁷¹ Indeed, she suggests the force of his influence by adopting his coinage, “the crowd,” in her various discussions of expatriate circles. A pivot of Anglophone Paris in her own right, Beach figures McAlmon as the social nucleus of the Left Bank: “Somehow, he dominated whatever group he was in. Whatever café or bar McAlmon patronized at the moment was the one where you saw everybody.”⁷² Canadian fiction writer Morley Callaghan paints McAlmon as inhabiting the role of an acerbic but nonetheless generous ambassador.⁷³ He recalls that he had corresponded with McAlmon for years prior to his arrival in Paris and that it was McAlmon who had not only gotten his stories published, but had also published them himself. When Callaghan and his wife arrive in Paris, McAlmon is the first person he calls, and though the American was leaving shortly for Nice, McAlmon arranges an introduction to two other Canadian aspiring writers then in Paris. Similarly, after Callaghan makes several failed attempts to convince Hemingway to introduce him to Joyce, it is McAlmon who, happening across the Callaghans on the boulevard, extends an invitation to dine with the Joyces at Trianon that evening. It is in part this discrepancy between McAlmon’s former and ultimate standing that leads Callaghan to remark, “Of all the Americans who had been in Paris—those who appear in memoirs and movies—McAlmon is the overlooked man.”⁷⁴ Of course, it is Kay Boyle who intervenes most vocally on behalf of McAlmon. In addition to reissuing McAlmon’s memoir and championing him in the chapters that she adds to it, she cites various famous figures who acknowledged McAlmon’s skill as a writer, including Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and William Rose Benét, often quoting them at length. Boyle does not beatify McAlmon—her narrative offers plenty of evidence of his bad behavior and his cutting tongue—but the memoir bears out a remark that she attributes to Bill Bird, that “McAlmon was the

⁷¹ Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 25.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Beach also depicts McAlmon as inhabiting an ambassadorial role. She notes, for example, that “[o]ften newcomers to Shakespeare and Company were escorted by Robert McAlmon” (25).

⁷⁴ Morley Callaghan, *That Summer in Paris: Memories of Tangled Friendships with Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Some Others* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1963), 81.

third corner in every triangle.”⁷⁵ McAlmon becomes a social (if not literary) impresario on par with Ezra Pound.

Though Beach, Callaghan, and Boyle may differ in their appraisal of McAlmon’s writing—with Boyle vindicating it and proclaiming its value, and with Beach and Callaghan more willing to admit its inadequacies—all three present a cautionary tale in which work done on behalf of the community or too deep an investment in the interchange between artists comes at the expense of one’s individual writing. In Callaghan’s assessment, McAlmon’s memory is abused because his innovative work was in service of the community rather than his individual literary production:

Not only did his Contact Press publish Hemingway, but it published Gertrude Stein’s *The Making of Americans*. And, as I found out, he had the friendship of Joyce and Pound as well as William Carlos Williams. He was willing to help any writer of talent. And what did he get for it? Sneers and open hostility? Suppose he did write sloppy prose himself. It was his awareness of what was fresh and new and good in other writers that made him enormously superior to his detractors—the aesthetes.⁷⁶

Here, Callaghan calls for a mode of valuation that would consider not simply the textual object, but the work that contributes to the advancement of a particular literary cause.

Beach’s appraisal pushes the matter a step further by drawing a causal relationship between McAlmon’s service to his peers and his failure to excel as a writer. She explains, “Bob was so busy sharing his interesting ideas with his friends or listening attentively with sympathy to their stories of frustration that he neglected his own craft, which was supposed to be writing.” She then notes that McAlmon would leave the crowds of Paris for the south of France in order to work, but “Soon somebody would mention seeing Bob down there. ‘His room is above the bistrot [sic] and they all meet at this bistrot.’”⁷⁷ In Beach’s assessment, McAlmon’s literary failings derive from his social and generous nature. The failure of community it signals, if we can speak of it as such, is that the Parisian community offers a stimulus that is discursive and intellectual rather than materially productive; it is a stimulus that detracts from rather than contributes to McAlmon’s honing of his craft.

⁷⁵ McAlmon and Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930*, 351.

⁷⁶ Callaghan, *That Summer in Paris*, 81.

⁷⁷ Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 25.

For Callaghan and Boyle, however, McAlmon's case also occasions a more sinister vision of the Left Bank's communal dynamics. In the closing chapter of the 1968 edition, Boyle voices some of the memoir's most damning accusations via the figure of William Bird. Filtered through several distinct acts of remembering, Boyle records Bird's lament:

‘that McAlmon had been exploited, betrayed, neglected, deceived, and imitated beyond recognition, but anyway preyed on by the vultures of the writing world [...] Mention the name of almost any American writer of the twenties, and some English writers too, and I'll tell you the exact story of how everyone of them did him in. Stein driving out to the printer's in a taxi and absconding with what amounted to the better part of the whole edition of [*The Making of Americans*, and Hem[ingway] making Bob the goat of that trip we took to Spain. All the bills were paid by Bob, of course [...]'⁷⁸

Through this ventriloquizing of Bird, Boyle proposes that it was not only that McAlmon's efforts on behalf of others impeded his own writing, but that, as Callaghan suggests less explicitly, these efforts on behalf of the community were rewarded with a series of betrayals. Where the truth lies in these assessments of McAlmon is less important than the manner in which he becomes a vehicle through which memoirists struggle to develop a practice of and lexicon for *publicly* registering non-textual contributions to literary culture. Indeed, it is in Boyle's description of journalist and publisher William Bird that the symbolic weight of her argument on behalf of McAlmon expands outward to include all of those other figures whose communal exertions are lost to literary history. In a parenthetical remark she directs her reader literally to examine Bird (Figure 1.4): “(Look at his photograph: the necktie askew, the eyes forthright and shy, the high brow dedicated to depths of sacrifice and understanding that few men or women have any vision of. If he could efface his own likeness from the page, he would do so, for he existed to serve, to commemorate, with the same modesty and simplicity that Bill Williams did.)”⁷⁹ How many readers will actually turn to the photograph of Bird, which appears in a series of photographs between pages 128 and 129 of her

⁷⁸ McAlmon and Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930*, 351.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 350. Boyle's remarks regarding William Bird also recall her earlier comparison of McAlmon to writer and editor of *This Quarter*, Ernest Walsh. Boyle praises the two men for their “commitment, as selfless as a woman's, to the work of other men” (192). Boyle's relationship with Walsh was romantic as well as literary. Walsh died of tuberculosis in 1926 while Boyle was pregnant with their daughter, Sharon. For a skeptical estimation of Walsh, see Ernest Hemingway's chapter “The Man Who Was Marked for Death” in *A Moveable Feast*.

memoir, is beyond Boyle's control, but her plea serves to highlight the contributions of those sustainers of aesthetic culture whose contributions have been long since forgotten (if they were ever known) by the larger public.

As Craig Monk, Aaron Jaffe and other critics have also noted, many modernist memoirs were written by figures—such as Margaret Anderson, editor of the *Little Review*; Harold Loeb, editor of *Broom*; Samuel Putnam, editor of the *New English Review*; and Sylvia Beach, owner of Shakespeare and Company and publisher of *Ulysses*—whose contributions to modernist community and modernist writing, were principally as editors, publishers, and facilitators rather than as writers.⁸⁰ Though the figures around “extraordinary individuals”—“great” writers, artists, politicians, and athletes—have often been the ones to furnish public accounts of their more famous comrades' lives, what distinguishes modernist memoir is that it spends an equal amount of time self-reflexively analyzing the processes by which some (and not others) emerge as these “extraordinary” individuals. Memoir thus offers an intertextual communal ethnography that tracks failure as well as success, pathologizing the dynamics of the very communities that it would seem to celebrate. Accordingly, though the formal features of individual accounts may vary, these memoirs constitute a characteristically modernist genre in that they self-reflexively lay bare for the reader the mechanisms by which their social body functions (and malfunctions). If Robert McAlmon becomes a site of ethnographic discourse regarding failure, then Ernest Hemingway becomes one for equally fraught communal debates regarding success.

III. Starring Roles at the Moveable Feast: Modernist Memoir and the Discourse of Celebrity

Donald W. Faulkner begins his introduction to the 1994 Penguin edition of Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return* by attempting to differentiate Cowley's text from the mass of other literary memoirs of the period:

⁸⁰ Monk, "Textual Authority and Modern American Autobiography: Robert McAlmon, Kay Boyle, and the Writing of a Lost Generation," 495; Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 97.

Among the chronicles, memoirs, and remembrances of the making of American literature in the 1920s, Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return* stands alone. Far from the "we put on boxing gloves and Ernest Hemingway broke my nose" recollections of that shaping period of national literature, Cowley's work is "a narrative of ideas," as he subtitled the original edition of his book, published in 1934. Save for a handful of anecdotes, this book is not an accumulation of silvered memories, but a meditative exploration of the design and goals of literary culture.⁸¹

Faulkner's flippant characterization of the larger group of memoirs as "we put on boxing gloves and Ernest Hemingway broke my nose" recollections" is both comic and revealing. On one level, it suggests that the anecdotal approach of these memoirs is predicated on a discourse of celebrity in which the memoirist presents not literary and cultural analysis, but amusing stories that achieve their interest by showcasing the author's personal interactions with the "greats" of modern literature, catering to the reader's curiosity about what these figures 'were really like.' On another, Faulkner's remark also registers Hemingway's particular ubiquity within these memoirs. His shorthand points to Hemingway's position as the genre's matinee idol, a thousand anecdotal flashbulbs capturing his every move as he saunters down the streets of Paris and throws back fine-à-l'eau at the Dingo.

While Faulkner's treatment here is pronouncedly dismissive, I would like to take in earnest the two corollaries I have drawn from his characterization of this body of texts. Instead of using them as reasons to discount memoir as a site of modernist epistemological inquiry, I argue instead that such anecdotal approaches also constitute an important exploration of the designs and goals of literary culture, though not merely those of the 1920s, but also those of the following decades during which these memoirs circulated among the public. The numerous depictions of Hemingway in modernist memoir are not simply unthinking accounts of "brushes with greatness" or titillating tales of a famous man. Rather, "Hemingway" serves as an important discursive object through which memoirists express their opinions on and debate the demands of the market and the place of celebrity in modernist aesthetics. Moreover, these discussions interestingly reveal the extent to which memoirists level their critiques *from within* the discursive parameters of the culture of celebrity.

Accordingly, modernist memoir stands as both *an analysis* and *an example* of late modernist

⁸¹ Donald W. Faulkner, Introduction, in *Exile's Return; A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s*, ed. Donald W. Faulkner (New York: Penguin Books; reprint, 1994), ix.

community's complex relation to mass culture. Its participation in and treatment of the discourse of celebrity exposes the conflicting imperatives animating modernism's transition from a countercultural movement to a mainstream phenomenon.

If, as I have argued at the outset of this chapter, Hemingway's attack on Stein in his introduction to Jimmie Charter's *This Must Be the Place* recognizes the manner in which memoir constitutes a communal economy with the capacity to influence the comparative standings of artists within popular (and literary) discourse, it also registers the incursion of modern celebrity into the world of modernist aesthetics, or more accurately, the overlap between the worlds of modernist community and modern celebrity. The salability of a memoir depends to a certain extent on its ability to conjure up figures and events that the reading public considers worth remembering. Thus there follows Hemingway's cutting caveat about a salon woman's memoirs: "If you go to the salon you will be in the memoirs; that is, you will be *if your name ever becomes known enough so that its use, or abuse, will help the sale of the woman's book.*"⁸² By the 1930s, the once recondite communities of modernist literature had achieved enough attention among the general reading public that the overlap between so-called "private" and "public" life began to assert itself in new forms.

When Hemingway's introduction finally turns away from Stein to address Charter's text, it is to register mock horror at the fact that Charter has now thrust the private world of the bar into the public spotlight of a memoir. One must expect to appear in a memoir if you attend a salon, Hemingway argues, but a bar is different:

You should expect to be able to go into a saloon or bar and pay for your drinks without appearing in the bartenders' memoirs and I was shocked and grieved to hear that Jimmy Charter was writing his. It is only a step from abolishing the right of sanctuary in the Republic of San Marino to permitting bartenders to write their memoirs and surely Jimmy

⁸² Hemingway, ix. Introduction. Emphasis mine. Indeed, the presence of notable artists and literary figures in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was one of its most-touted features among reviewers. The subtitle to Edward M. Kingsbury's September 3, 1933 review of the book for the *New York Times* was "Her Autobiography, Written Simply, Is Thronged with Contemporary Figures in Literature and Art" and the body of the article, like that of Theodore Hall's October 8, 1933 review for the *Washington Post*, spends a significant amount of space enumerating some of the noteworthy figures that appear therein. Edward M. Kingsbury, "Gertrude Stein Articulates at Last," *New York Times*, Sep. 3 1933; Theodore Hall, "Miss Stein Looks Homeward," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 8 1933.

served more and better drinks than any legendary woman ever did in her salon, certainly Jimmy gave less and better advice.⁸³

Hemingway's serio-comic lament that the "private" no longer exists, that Left Bank bohemians must now (and retrospectively) walk under the watchful public eye, smacks of the disingenuousness of the Hollywood starlet who holds a press conference to decry being hounded by the media. For indeed Hemingway, more than most, recognized that writers must participate actively in determining their role in collective memory, be it the collective memory of fellow Left Bank artists or the larger collective memory of the American and British reading publics. The introduction he penned for Charters's memoir discloses not only his tacit endorsement of Charters's book, but (despite his show of begrudgingness) his active participation in memoir's peddling of personality.⁸⁴ Though he feigns horror that you now can't get a drink without appearing in someone's memoir, Hemingway's willingness to introduce Charters's text stems not just from his friendship with the barman but also undoubtedly from a desire to lend credence to a text that would in part serve as a corrective to Stein's unbecoming portrait of him. Indeed, his lengthy attack on Stein in his introduction confirms his willingness to mete out literary reputation on personal, as opposed to aesthetic, grounds.

However, this rhetorical gesture of feigned dismay is also an exemplary case of modernism's conflicted (and complicated) attitude toward promotional techniques of modern celebrity. There is an emerging body of criticism, including Lawrence Rainey's *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (1998), Kevin Dettmar and Stephen Watt's collection *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, Rereading* (1999), and most recently Aaron Jaffe's *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (2005), that records the ways in which modernists carefully engaged in promotional activities. These studies illustrate how writers drew upon tactics common to the field of advertising while

⁸³ Hemingway, xi. Introduction.

⁸⁴ Hemingway had previously written an introduction to the memoirs of the Left Bank performer and artist's model Kiki (née Alice Prin.), who is best remembered for her work with Man Ray. Kiki's memoir was first published as *Les Souvenirs de Kiki* in Paris in 1929 by H[enri]. Broca. In 1930, it was translated into English by Samuel Putnam with an introduction by Hemingway and published by Edward W. Titus as *Kiki's Memoirs*. (Putnam would publish his own Parisian memoir, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, in 1947). Hemingway's memoir of his early years in Paris, *A Moveable Feast*, was published posthumously in 1964. It contains an extended portrait of Gertrude Stein that offers his version of their break.

simultaneously denouncing the popular marketplace as an arena in which art is treated like any other consumer product and is, in the words of Pound's "Canto XLV," "made to sell and sell quickly." Indeed modernists often proclaimed their value by asserting their independence from such cultural economies (think, for example, of the *Little Review's* motto "Making No Compromise with the Public Taste"). It is this ambivalent attitude that is on display as Hemingway laments the loss of privacy and yet uses his introduction to mold his public reputation by repudiating Stein. After all, as many scholars have recognized, Hemingway achieved his renown not exclusively through his literary achievements, but also through a careful attention to how biographical details and anecdotes—that seeming realm of the 'personal'—circulated in the press.⁸⁵

Before turning to the case study that Hemingway provides, it is important to flesh out memoir's relation to the mechanisms of publicity and celebrity. In *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity*, Aaron Jaffe posits the development of the "imprimatur" as an important mode of modernist promotion. In detailing his conception of the imprimatur, Jaffe turns to the notion that "the modernist literary object bears the stylistic stamp of its producer prominently." Building on Fredric Jameson's statement that modernism entailed the invention of a personal style as distinctive as a fingerprint, Jaffe argues,

At once as a distinctive mark and a sanctioning impression, the imprimatur, as I define it, turns the author into a formal artifact, fusing it to the text as a reified signature of value. The imprimatur, then, represents a moment of clarity to all takers against the apparent obscurity of modernist meaning and the phenomenal disappearance of the author's body.⁸⁶

If, as Jaffe suggests, the emergence and circulation of the modernist imprimatur functions as a substitute for the vanished corporeality of the modernist author, then modernist memoir

⁸⁵ Critical scholarship analyzing Hemingway with reference to publicity and celebrity includes John Raeburn, *Fame Became of Him: Hemingway as Public Writer* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984); Leonard J. Leff, *Hemingway and His Conspirators; Hollywood, Scribners, and The Making of American Celebrity Culture* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997).; and the chapter "Being Ernest" in Loren Glass, *Authors Inc.; Literary Celebrity in the Modern United States, 1880-1980* (New York: New York University Press, 2004). Matthew J. Bruccoli's *Hemingway and the Mechanisms of Fame* is a collection of Hemingway's statements, public letters, introductions, blurbs, reviews and other writings through which he developed his public persona. Matthew J. with Judith S. Baughman. Bruccoli, ed., *Hemingway and the Mechanism of Fame: Statements, Public Letters, Introductions, Forewords, Prefaces, Blurbs, Reviews, and Endorsements* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

⁸⁶ Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity*, 20.

rematerializes the authorial body, and indeed parades its corporeality. James Joyce, the disembodied imprimatur, is replaced by a shockingly embodied Joyce: the Joyce incapable of holding his liquor and needing to be carried up to his apartment by his friends, or the Joyce of the deteriorating eyesight, wracked with pain, seeking out successive eye operations in an attempt to marshal his failing body.⁸⁷ Ezra Pound is emphatically situated in his own body through anecdotes detailing an incident in which a knife-wielding, drug-crazed surrealist threatened to separate him from it.⁸⁸ The demands of Kay Boyle's body—first in the physical manifestations of her battles with poverty upon arriving in France and then later in her account of an illness that coincided with her mental collapse—become one of the important features of her own self-representation in her edition of *Being Geniuses Together*. Likewise, memoirists often discuss Hemingway's physique in order to comment upon his legendary machismo and his reputation as a sportsman. Stein's authoritative demeanor is linked to her girth and her "face like Caesar's."

In representing writers as human and embodied, memoir renders them culturally legible in a fashion that their "difficult" texts often resist. These memoirs' many portraits—both textual and photographic—offer a mode of "reading" modernism that has more in common with the gossip column and the celebrity biography than with the text-based formalist methodology of a nascent New Criticism, the lens through which modernism was beginning to make its way into the academy. Memoirists mobilize accounts of an author's disposition and physique to modulate his or her reception by a range of reading publics, whether academic, coterie, or popular. Given this, it is now worth revising one of the assertions I made at the outset of this chapter: not only does modernist memoir constitute an alternate canonizing discourse, but perhaps more pointedly, it offers a lexicon

⁸⁷ For an account of Joyce's eye problems, see Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 66-69, 198. For an account of Joyce's drunken antics, see McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 280-282.

⁸⁸ For accounts of this incident, see Jimmie Charters and Morrill Cody, *This Must Be The Place: Memoirs of Montparnasse*, ed. Hugh Ford (1934; New York: Collier Books, 1989), 59; McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 334-336.;(this incident is part of the material omitted in Boyle's reworking of McAlmon's text), Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 89-90.

of valuation alternate to (academic) canonization.⁸⁹

In its representation of both individual and community, modernist memoir weds the portrait- and anecdote-driven style of celebrity journalism to a longstanding tool of modernist promotion, the anthology. Writing of contemporary poetry anthologies from Ezra Pound's and Amy Lowell's early Imagist anthologies to Edith Sitwell's *Wheels*, Aaron Jaffe observes that these collections "[p]romis[ed] unheard-of exposure" and thus "quickly became one of the preferred vehicles for publicity among modernist poets and their contemporaries" (137). Beginning in the late 1930s, these writer-edited anthologies were supplemented by New Critical ones, such as Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's 1938 *Understanding Poetry*, which Craig S. Abbott usefully terms an "anthological textbook."⁹⁰ If first modernist and then later New Critical anthologies played an important role in establishing, perpetuating, and recontextualizing the reputations of many writers, memoir offered an analogous, though perhaps more sensational, way of circulating their names. The picaresque form that governs (sometimes sections, sometimes the entirety of) modernist memoirs, with its successions of portraits of and anecdotes about literary figures, shares generic traits with the anthology. Indeed, one might aptly label such sections of memoirs as portrait or anecdotal anthologies; and like anthologies, they procure publicity for the community as well as the individual writers depicted.

We see this anthological form, for example, in Samuel Putnam's *Paris Was Our Mistress*, whose middle chapters consist of a series of Anglo-American and Continental portraits. Putnam's chapter "From a Latin Quarter Sketchbook" is divided into four biographical studies whose titles are in fact portraits in miniature: "The 'Dean of English Novelists' (Ford Madox Ford)"; "Hard-Boiled Young Man Going Places (Ernest Hemingway)"; "The Woman with the Face Like Caesar's (Gertrude Stein)"; "Cracker-Barrel Philosopher (Ezra Pound)." Similarly his "Continental Vignettes" chapter is divided into seven additional portraits: "Child in a Dark Room (Jean Cocteau)"; "Rebel

⁸⁹ By this I do not mean to suggest that its assessments are always in opposition to those of academic canonization, this is certainly not the case, but rather that the features of discourse itself—its rhetorical gestures, its material, its institutions, its constitution of audience—are different.

⁹⁰ Abbott, "Modern American Poetry: Anthologies, Classrooms, and Canons," 218.

Son (Louis Aragon)”; “Giant in a Blinded Castle, and One Who Was Not So Big (Pablo Picasso and André Derain)”; “Peasant with the Laughing Beard (Constantin Brancusi)”; “Masterpiece for Baba (Marc Chagall)”; “Fascist in a Derby Hat (Filippo Tommaso Marinetti)”; “The Lonely Whirligig (Luigi Pirandello).”⁹¹ Sylvia Beach’s *Shakespeare and Company* offers less overtly codified but similarly picaresque entries tied together with the implicit connective “and...” of the anthology. In a section titled “The Crowd,” for example, she presents a rapid succession of short (single to several paragraph) portraits of Djuna Barnes, Marsden Hartley, Mary Butts, Mina Loy, Ken Sato, and Natalie Barney. Still other sections of her memoir are titled according to the figures they depict, such as “Mr. and Mrs. Pound” and “Sherwood Anderson.”⁹² If memoirists sometimes treated their texts like anthologies, so too did readers. Early reviews of Gertrude Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* often enumerated the figures depicted therein as one might enumerate the names of writers represented in an anthology.⁹³ However, memoir, of course, differs from the anthology in that the

⁹¹ The chapter “Did You Ever Slap a Corpse?”, which divides these two sections, analyzes and provides portraits of the French surrealists.

⁹² Nearly half of the section titles in Beach’s memoir bear the names of literary figures (e.g. “Darantiere of Dijon,” “Valery Larbaud,” “Joyce and George Moore,” “Saint Harriet,” “Bryher,” “Fitzgerald, Chamson, and Prévost,” and “A. MacLeish” etc.) or allude to them (e.g. “Two Customers from the Rue de Fleurus” [Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas] and “My Best Customer” [Ernest Hemingway]). The remaining section titles refer to texts, publications, and presses (e.g. “First Copies of *Ulysses*,” “Contact and Three Mountains”) or, less commonly, events and anecdotes (“Shakespeare and Company Vanishes,” “Garlic in a Sponge”).

⁹³ Edward M. Kingsbury’s September 3, 1933 review of the book for the *New York Times*, for example, highlights the variety and number of figures Stein depicts:

Behold Roger Fry with Wyndham Lewis, whose “feet were very French, or at least his shoes.” Room for the Infanta Eulalia; for Lady Otoline Morrell—who the deuce was she?—looking like a female Disraeli; for John Lane, Clive Bell, Mabel Dodge, Muriel and Paul Draper, Carl van Vechten, who might have been a Dutchman, a Scandinavian or an American and whose soft-pleated impressive evening shirt Gertrude Stein still fondly remembers; for Houseman, the Shropshire Lad, whom Gertrude Stein sits next to at dinner amid talk of fishes, and David Starr Jordan. Room for Dr. Whitehead, the great mathematician, and for Bertrand Russell. This “slim elegant youth” is Jean Cocteau. T.S. Eliot and Gertrude Stein have a solemn conversation, mostly about split infinitives and other grammatical solecisms and why Gertrude Stein used them. Why isn’t that conversation reported? It would be worth a hundred Ebury Streets. Ezra Pound talks about Japanese prints and T.S. Eliot. In his energy he falls out of Gertrude Stein’s favorite little chair. “Gertrude Stein did not want to see Ezra again.” Ernest Hemingway is here a good deal. [...].Kingsbury, "Gertrude Stein Articulates at Last," BR2.

Theodore Hall’s October 8, 1933 review for the *Washington Post* also points to the text’s many portraits: Above all, [Stein] had a great capacity for friendship. The book relates numberless anecdotes people who were close to her: Sherwood Anderson, the Sitwells, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ford Madox Ford, Margaret Aldrich, Mabel Dodge, Louis Bromfield, the Misses Etta and Claribel Cone, of Baltimore; Georgiana King of Bryn Mawr; Juan Gris, Bracque, Picabia, as well as those already

associative web it weaves consists of the memoirists' representations of each writer (often appearing far from "authorial") in place of the writer's own texts that would represent them in a traditional anthology. This substitution suggests one manner in which memoir intersects with the culture of celebrity, for indeed its collection of anecdotes and character sketches cater to the reading public's thirst for insight into the private lives of public figures. As Charles Ponce de Leon has shown, this biographical appetite was cultivated by and reflected in the emergence of celebrity journalism in the mass circulation press, a phenomenon which had begun in the second half of the 19th century and was ubiquitous by the 1920s.⁹⁴

The assortment of figures these memoirs depict further exposes their complex relationship to publicity and celebrity. On the one hand, the inclusivity of the texts—the large collections of names and personages they record—offers a corrective to the distilled list of "famous artists" whose names were well-known by the public. In this fashion, these memoirs call attention to the social and collaborative web that sustained the expatriate communities in Paris and that helped produce the "masterpieces" for which it was known. That is, the profusion of names provides a position from which to resist the "subordina[ti]on of] collaborative work to single authorship" that Aaron Jaffe suggests constitutes "one of the crucial framing narratives in [the] history [of modernism], enabling a few of the so-called 'High' Modernists (James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf) to position themselves as singular literary paradigms."⁹⁵ On the other hand, the portraits of 'minor'

mentioned. There are also anecdotes of people whom she does not find amusing—T.S. Eliot, because he discussed split infinitives in her work, and Ezra Pound, because he broke her favorite chair. It is a full and sparkling gallery of the literary and artistic figures about Miss Stein in Paris from 1903 to the present. Hall, "Miss Stein Looks Homeward," SM 10.

⁹⁴ Charles L. Ponce de Leon, *Self Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 44, 65.

⁹⁵ Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity*, 96. Jaffe argues that despite the fact that memoirs record tales of collaborative work, the anecdotes themselves ultimately reinscribe the myth and celebrity of the solitary author:

Not surprisingly, the anecdotes themselves, which supply many of modernism's framing narratives of sacrifice, service and subordination, rehearse stories about weakening the authority of modernist collaboration and casting the would-be literary collaborator in what is at best an apocryphal role. And, moving from memoir to biography to monograph to book-jacket blurb as if passing through porous media, these anecdotes unceremoniously lose their purchase of their original narrative contexts and become rooted in the lore of single authorship. Prototypical accounts of modernist collaborative work tend to be subordinated among the more substantial

figures often depend on and constellate around the gravitational force of modernism's big names.⁹⁶ Thus, like the combination of figures in an anthology, the anecdotes and portraits of memoir introduce less well-known names at the same time as they reify the celebrity of the better-known figures represented therein. Indeed the importance of individual names to these texts is suggested by the fact that many memoirs, especially the later ones, include indexes. By indexing writers' names these memoirs enable the reader to perform a quick search for anecdotes relating to particular artists. The original editions of Jimmie Charters's, Harold Loeb's, Samuel Putnam's, Sylvia Beach's, and Kay Boyle's memoirs all include indexes.⁹⁷ In this fashion these texts function as a type of *Who's Who* of the artistic Left Bank, offering a minority culture iteration of the mass culture institution.

Yet despite their mobilization of celebrity and appropriation of promotional techniques, memoirists pepper their texts with the same type of pronouncements against celebrity and popular success that one finds in the critical writings of the teens and twenties. These denouncements chafe against the memoirists' own active participation in the popularization and dissemination of

modernist genres, a process which devaluates the work of collaboration a second time. Would-be collaborators of Joyce become little more than chestnuts of Joyceana. (97)

Though these memoirs might not have ultimately succeeded in altering the discursive terrain, they nonetheless reflect a desire to communicate Paris's social and collaborative apparatus.

⁹⁶ Approaching the matter from a slightly different angle, Craig Monk observes, "more marginal American figures abroad during this period, expatriates like Bravig Imbs, Harold Loeb, and Samuel Putnam, [...] were forced to rely upon autobiography to tie themselves to the privileged geography of modernism, each careful to use Paris itself as the underlying strategy for their inclusion in the lost generation." Monk, "Textual Authority and Modern American Autobiography: Robert McAlmon, Kay Boyle, and the Writing of a Lost Generation," 495. I would expand upon Monk's claim by suggesting that such figures also rely on their associations with the privileged names of modernism to argue for their own inclusion in the literary history of the era.

⁹⁷ These indexes predominantly contain the names of figures depicted, though some also include the names of texts and places (clubs, cafés etc.) discussed. Boyle's and Loeb's texts contain the most involved indexes. Theirs also include additional subject indexes under the name entries for certain of the most discussed figures. Though Robert McAlmon's 1938 edition of *Being Geniuses Together* does not have an index, each recto page has a running header that alludes to what is discussed in the page below. These range from descriptive phrases ["At the 'Jockey'" (59), "Berlin Night-Life" (67), "Mistaken for Smugglers" (217)] to the names of the people discussed ["Havelock Ellis" (123), "W. B. Yeats" (197), "Edwin Lanham" (265)], and often include a combination of the two ["Wyndham Lewis Fails to Arrive" (39), "Ezra's Opera" (97), "The Callaghan-Hemingway Bout" (163), "Joyce's Erudition" (287)]. Whether inserted by McAlmon himself or his publisher, these headers provide a useful signposting that enables the reader to flip or return to a section of interest; the prevalence of names in these headers, moreover, suggests that accessing anecdotes about specific literary figures is one of the main attractions of the book.

modernism in its late modernist incarnation as an increasingly mainstream literary movement.⁹⁸ As the memoirs frame it, for many writers a genuine commitment to “the new” and avant-garde meant delaying or even foregoing popular success. In the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein and Toklas’s discussion of Picasso provides a schema by which we are to understand Stein’s (then) lack of public reception. “[A]s Pablo [Picasso] once remarked,” she writes, “when you make a thing, it is so complicated making it that it is bound to be ugly, but those that do it after you don’t have to worry about making it and they can make it pretty, so everybody can like it when others make it.”⁹⁹ The true innovator, she suggests in a half-lament, half-boast, will not be taken up by the public (or at least not immediately), but will be passed over for those who follow and refine their innovation. In his memoir, Robert McAlmon recognizes the prevalence of this view among his peers: “One had only to remember too forcibly that Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Joyce, Pound, etc., have all often bemoaned the fact that those who are derived get attention before those who create and originate. Those who are derived manage to stay traditional, conventional, academic, and contrive not to startle anybody with clarity or the harsh brutality of observation.”¹⁰⁰ For both Stein and McAlmon, the desire for recognition is tempered by the compensatory notion that popular recognition (note Stein’s “everybody” and McAlmon’s “anybody”) is a laurel bestowed upon the derivative and second-rate.

In particular, these memoirists are suspicious of the type of popular reception that celebrity entails—its focus on the personality and personas of famous figures rather than their artistic oeuvres (a focus, as I have already noted, that is ironically shared by modernist memoir). John Dos Passos, for example, though not hostile to the notion of a popular audience, records his distrust of celebrity in his 1966 memoir, *The Best of Times*. Writing of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald at the beginning of

⁹⁸One example of this phenomenon is James Joyce’s appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine on January 29, 1934. A decidedly mainstream publication, *Time*, printed a 2659 word cover story titled “Ulysses Lands,” that discussed both Joyce and his novel in the wake of the first legal American edition of *Ulysses* after years of censorship. Five years later, James Joyce received a second cover of *Time* upon the publication of *Finnegans Wake*. Despite the fact that *Wake* is easily Joyce’s least accessible work, *Time* ran a 2740 word cover story titled “Night Thoughts,” that not only reviewed the novel but also offered an accounting of Joyce’s life and literary career. These cover stories are significant because, as Joe Moran remarks in his study, *Star Authors*, Henry Luce’s publications *Time* (1923 -) and *Life* (1936 -) were “the most important purveyors of literary celebrity” in their heyday during the 1930s to the 1960s (24).

⁹⁹ Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 23.

¹⁰⁰ McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 339-340.

their “Great Neck” period, Dos Passos reflects, “They were celebrities in the Sunday supplement sense of the word. They were celebrities and they loved it. It wasn’t that I was not as ambitious as the next man; but the idea of being that kind of celebrity set my teeth on edge.”¹⁰¹ Dos Passos later explains this distaste by referring to the fundamental disconnect between aesthetic innovation and popular success that so many writers assert:

Literary invention could never be made really reputable. A writer who took his trade seriously would be sure to get more kicks than ha’pence. He would be lucky if he stayed out of jail. In my revulsion against wartime stupidities, as a priest takes a vow of celibacy, I had taken a private vow of allegiance to an imaginary humanist republic which to me represented the struggle for life against the backdrag of death and stagnation. Figures like Giordano Bruno, Erasmus, Rabelais, Montaigne presided over my republic of letters. Among its latterday saints I classed Shelley, Stendhal, Flaubert, possibly Walt Whitman and Rimbaud. This isn’t the sort of thing one talks about, even to intimate friends, but it is these private dedications that mold men’s lives. In this context the number of copies of a book sold was neither here nor there. The celebrity racket made no sense at all.¹⁰²

To pursue actively high book sales or celebrity, Dos Passos suggests, is irrelevant to or—worse— a distraction from the more soulful dedications of the genuine artist. Though Stein’s and Dos Passos’s remarks reflect different trajectories, they both exhibit the opposition between aesthetic and market concerns. What is significant here is not the veracity or spuriousness of this opposition, but rather its status as a foundational paradigm underpinning the communal narratives proffered by modernist memoir. It is at work, for example, in memoirists’ numerous criticisms of Fitzgerald, Stein, and (as I shall soon discuss in further detail) Hemingway for what is seen as an unseemly courting of commercial success, publicity, and/or celebrity.¹⁰³ Though throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s popular audiences increasingly recognized (if not always read) modernist literature, this oppositional dynamic remained central to the legends-of-self that these memoirs collectively perpetuated.

¹⁰¹ John Dos Passos, *The Best Times: An Informal Memoir* (New York: The New American Library, 1966), 130.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁰³ For a sample of criticisms of Fitzgerald in relation to publicity, commercial success, and/or celebrity see Anderson’s *My Thirty Years’ War*, 43-44; Putnam’s *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 22; Hemingway’s *A Moveable Feast*, 155-6, 176, 179; Dos Passos’ *The Best Times*, 130-137; Callaghan’s *That Summer in Paris*, 182, 185-186. For a sample of these criticisms in relation to Stein see Charters’s *This Must Be the Place*, 71-72; McAlmon’s 1938 chapter titled “Genius All to Simple,” 133-142; Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (1964; New York: Touchstone, 1996), 15-16.

However, it would be inaccurate to cast the discourse of celebrity as something either external to the expatriate communities or simply imposed after-the-fact by the promotional medium of memoir. Rather, elements of celebrity culture were woven into the communal fabric of the Left Bank colony as it existed in the 1920s. Writing of the café scene in the early twenties, Hemingway recalls, “In those days many people went to the cafés at the corner of the Boulevard Montparnasse and the Boulevard Raspail to be seen publicly and in a way such places anticipated the columnists as the daily substitutes for immortality.”¹⁰⁴ Hemingway’s description dovetails with the view of café culture Jürgen Habermas delineates in another context. Where Habermas discusses 18th century coffee houses and salons as an early public sphere for the world of letters that served as a bridge between “the remains of a collapsing form of publicity (the courtly one) and the precursor of a new one: the bourgeois public sphere,” Hemingway suggests that Montparnasse’s cafés offered a form of publicity and celebrity for the Quarter’s inhabitants that anticipated their later incorporation into the mass culture publicity-yielding medium of newspaper (gossip) columns.¹⁰⁵ Though Hemingway strategically distances himself from this courting of local celebrity by noting that he avoided such places in order to work in the relative peace and isolation of the Closerie de Lilas, he, like other memoirists, concedes the centrality of café and bar culture to the Montparnasse communities.^{106 107}

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 81.

¹⁰⁵ Jürgen Habermas, “From The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.,” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 1748.

¹⁰⁶ One of the principle themes of *A Moveable Feast* is a valuation of hard work as contrasted with an attention to celebrity and market forces. Hemingway romanticizes and valorizes his early years of poverty and anonymity in Paris spent with his first wife Hadley before the onset of his literary success with 1926’s *The Sun Also Rises*. In the memoir, he aligns his seduction by “the rich” (with their valuation of market success and celebrity) with the dissolution of his first marriage, which together result in a type expulsion from the Edenic days when innocent love, hard work, and a commitment to his art governed his life.

¹⁰⁷ It is worth remarking that memoirists do recognize a few notable abstainers from café/bar life, among them Stein, who is often explained as preferring the distinction of reigning over her own salon, and Sylvia Beach, of whom Jimmie Charters writes, “as far as I know, [Beach] never entered a bar in her life, though as she told me once, ‘we have always served the same clients, you, Jimmie, with drinks, and I with books.’” Charters and Cody, *This Must Be The Place: Memoirs of Montparnasse*, 48. However, Beach herself acknowledges the important role that bars and cafés played in the life of the Quarter. For example, writing of Contact Editions, she remarks: “Manuscripts for Contact Editions were submitted to [Robert] McAlmon at the Dôme Café, and he told me he discovered most of his writers at one café or another.” Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 132.

The Man Ray and Berenice Abbott portraits of writers that hung in Sylvia Beach's bookstore offer another example of the Left Bank's rituals of celebrity. One of the photographs included in Sylvia Beach's memoir *Shakespeare and Company* shows Beach standing by the fireplace in her store with a book open in her hands (Figure 1.1).¹⁰⁸ The walls behind her are filled with bookshelves, but the wall space surrounding the fireplace is covered with photographs of modernist writers, including Ezra Pound, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Bryher, Ernest Hemingway, William Carlos Williams, and H.D. This wall of portraits constitutes not only a manifestation of community, but it also invokes the mechanisms of modern celebrity in which the image serves a pivotal function.¹⁰⁹ In some respects Beach's gallery offers a modernist counterpoint to the star portraits that Hollywood film studios would assemble of their stable of actors and actresses. However, whereas studio glamour portraiture was used for promotional purposes (i.e. to procure and promote celebrity in order to ensure the success of the studio's films), the portraits hanging in *Shakespeare and Company* were a proof of (literary) celebrity, if not within the general public, then within modernist circles. Beach explains, "The artist Man Ray and his pupil Berenice Abbott, who assisted him for a while, were the official portraitists of "the Crowd." The walls of my bookshop were covered with their photographs. To be "done" by Man Ray and Berenice Abbott meant you were rated as somebody."¹¹⁰ In the typical feedback mechanism of celebrity, the communal renown that led a figure to be selected for a portrait is reinforced through the public display of that photograph, which then signals for all the sitter's renown.

Perhaps the most overt manifestation of the popular discourse of celebrity's entrenchment within the Parisian community was Wambly Bald's "La Vie de Bohème" column for the European

¹⁰⁸ On the facing page is a corresponding picture of Adrienne Monnier, Beach's partner, in her bookshop, *La Maison des Amis des Livres* (Figure 1.2); here too the space above the bookshelves is covered with portraits and a few pencil sketches of authors, though this time it is the French authors who frequented and were sold at Monnier's shop.

¹⁰⁹ For a foundational (and highly disapproving) discussion of the image in relation to the rise of celebrity, see Daniel J. Boorstin, "From Hero to Celebrity: The Human Pseudo-Event," in *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1971). For a discussion of the evolving role of photography in celebrity journalism, see Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure*, 62-64.

¹¹⁰ Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 111-112.

Edition of the *Chicago Tribune*. Unlike the Paris Edition of the *New York Herald*, which “catered to the ‘lobster palace Americans’ on the Right Bank of the Seine”, The Paris *Tribune*, as it was commonly known, focused on and was read by the more bohemian audiences of the Left Bank.¹¹¹ In addition to its general reporting, the newspaper would include articles on the cultural happenings in Montparnasse, covering its art openings, book releases, concerts, little magazines, awarding of prizes, and even the comings and goings of various Left Bank figures.¹¹² Hugh Ford cites Eugene Jolas’s “Rambles through Literary Paris” column (1924-1925) as the “first serious effort to provide news of the Montparnasse literati.”¹¹³ It was followed by Paul Shinkman’s more overtly gossipy, “Latin Quarter Notes” and a variety of other similar columns, sometimes signed with the pseudonym “Montparno.”¹¹⁴

Such columns however reached their pinnacle in Wambly Bald’s “La Vie de Bohème.” Bald’s column anticipates the episodic and anecdotal style of the memoirs that would soon follow. Reporting on bohemian and artists’ doings in Montparnasse between 1929 and 1933, Bald’s column served as both a source of literary and artistic announcements and a communal tabloid. In his memoir *Paris Was Our Mistress*, Samuel Putnam asserts,

The Left Bank would not have been all it was, there would have been something lacking, and gossip, for one thing, would never have traveled so fast, we should not have been so *au courant*, if it had not been for Wambly Bald and his “*Vie de Bohème*” column in the Paris edition of the *Chicago Tribune*. Probably no columnist was ever more avidly read than he.¹¹⁵

In Bald’s column, the inhabitants of the Left Bank were constituted and written about as celebrities. As Ponce de Leon explains in *Self Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940*, gossip columns--“fixtures of the ante-bellum penny press”—were one of the

¹¹¹ Hugh Ford, ed., *The Left Bank Revisited: Selections from the Paris Tribune 1917-1934* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), 1.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹⁴ 1925 also saw the beginning of a “Who’s Who” column that featured profiles, often interview-based, of notable figures. As Hugh Ford notes, though many of writers selected for these profiles (like Sherwood Anderson and F. Scott Fitzgerald) were only passing through Paris, some were long-term Left Bank residents. *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹⁵ Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 106.

earliest forms of American celebrity journalism.¹¹⁶ Bald's column intersects with the "new breed of gossip column" that Ponce de Leon argues emerged in the 1920s, one which covered "public figures from an even wider array of fields, especially those who patronized elegant and often exclusive restaurants and nightclubs in New York, Los Angeles, and resort areas like Santa Barbara, Miami, and Palm Beach—the denizens of what came to be known as 'café society.'"¹¹⁷ Of course, as Bald's title indicates, the Left Bank 'café society' that "La Vie de Bohème" chronicled was more bohemian than elegant.

Some of the items in Bald's column genuinely served to keep his readers "*au courant*" of the latest literary and aesthetic happenings. For example, in his column for Tuesday, 28 July 1931, he discusses the publication of Bob [William Slater] Brown's latest volume of poetry, *Demoniacs*.¹¹⁸ Other items offered character sketches of and informal interviews with Left Bank figures or reported Left Bank news using the colloquialisms of tabloid journalism—"Ezra Pound comes to town next Thursday. The strong man of Rapallo will go into a huddle with Samuel Putnam, editor of *The New Review*. The next number will be out in eight days. Feathers will fly."¹¹⁹ Still other items, such as an October 14, 1930 report on Louise Bryant's black eye, cannot be qualified as anything other than gossip.¹²⁰ Indeed, Bald would also offer tidbits that only Left Bank initiates would be able to decode,

¹¹⁶ Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure*, 52.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹¹⁸ Wambly Bald, *On The Left Bank 1929-1933*, ed. Benjamin Franklin V (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), 70.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 57. [Tuesday, 7 April 1931]

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 35. Similarly, Bald also reports on various incidents of interest that he or his sources have witnessed in the quarter, such as a comic encounter between Michael Arlen and a woman only identified as "the Countess" in the bar, the Falstaff (Tuesday, 19 August 1930 23-24). Another example of celebrity gossip from his column of Tuesday, 9 September 1930 is the following tidbit:

Wedding bells in Montparnasse unless it's all a joke. Friday night, Ford Madox Ford told a group at Lipp's that he had just married the young Polish girl with whom he had often been seen. The word flashed around the Quarter and congratulations began to pour in on the novelist who is getting on in years but still loves to dance. On the other hand, there are many in the Quarter who insist that Ford was only joking. When we got around to his apartment Saturday morning for confirmation, the concierge told us that Ford has just left for New York and wouldn't return for a month. And so the Quarter must hold its breath for a whole month, but everyone seems to believe that the venerable Ford will have managed to spill the beans long before that time (Bald 27).

As Benjamin Franklin V, the editor of Bald's selected columns observes economically in a footnote, "Ford Madox Ford did not marry the woman" (28).

referring ambiguously to figures by only their first or last names.¹²¹ The gossipy and sometimes sensationalist nature of Bald's column however did not dissuade more serious-minded artists and writers from attending to it. On at least two occasions Bald published excerpts from letters that Ezra Pound had sent to him in response to previous columns.¹²² In certain respects, Bald's column functioned as a communal newsletter published in a public forum, offering up tales of local celebrities and artists in what we have seen Hemingway referred to as "daily substitutes for immortality."¹²³

These various practices and rituals suggest that the trappings of modern celebrity culture were far from alien to the communities of the Left Bank; rather modernists adopted elements of celebrity culture to mediate interactions amongst themselves. The discourse of celebrity, however, proved a source of anxiety when it was extended beyond their aesthetic communities into a more popular setting. It was an honor to have one's portrait hang in Sylvia Beach's bookstore, but to strive for celebrity in the "Sunday supplement" sense was treated as treason. Unlike Victorian artists' (auto)biographies in which, Julie Coddell suggests, the attainment of popular success and celebrity was something to be proud of and which signaled "that the British public taste had improved and that the artists were thoroughly socialized, not alienated and suffering in garrets," popular success occupies a vexed place in modernist memoirs.¹²⁴ Despite the fact that the memoirists themselves sought to bring their narratives of modernism to a wider audience, the courting of popular reception in others remained a cause for denunciation within memoir. This was in no small part because the narrative that they aimed to circulate was of modernism's valuation of the "shock of the new," its turn away from dominant culture, and its concomitant social and aesthetic rebellion. In this sense

¹²¹ See for example the following entry from Monday, 17 February 1930. "**Bulletin:** Two friends, walking along the Boulevard, entertained each other and the rest of the promenaders with an endurance kiss. It started near the Falstaff and held until they came in front of the Coupole bar, where they were greeted by the little flower girl. Broca bought a flower, pinned it, and he and Kiki went inside." This passage refers to the budding love affair between performer and artist's model, Kiki, regarded by many as the unofficial "Queen of Montparnasse" and Henri Broca, a French editor and publisher. *Ibid.*, 14.

¹²² See the columns for Monday, 18 November, 1929 and Monday, 17 February 1930. *Ibid.*, 7, 14.

¹²³ Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*, 81.

¹²⁴ Codell, *The Victorian Artist: Artists' Lifewritings in Britain, ca. 1870-1910*, 2.

modernist memoir registers the ambivalence of a community about its contiguity to mainstream culture at the very time (the 1930s-1960s) during which it was ascending to hegemonic status in the (national and international) literary landscape.

Though Stein and Fitzgerald run a close second, Hemingway is perhaps the most common discursive object through which memoirs negotiate the figure of the celebrity. Hemingway achieved his fame relatively early in his career. His second novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), became a best-seller, a distinction that would be repeated a few years later with *A Farewell To Arms* (1929).¹²⁵ In 1932, Paramount made this latter novel into a successful film starring Helen Hayes and Gary Cooper and further enlarged Hemingway's fame.¹²⁶ Indeed Hemingway soon began to receive as much attention as his books. He developed a distinctive athletic, hard-boiled literary persona that circulated within the mainstream press. Hemingway's association with celebrity was particularly felt on the Left Bank of Paris since his treatment of expatriate life in *The Sun Also Rises*, had, in Samuel Putnam's words "succeeded in conferring, also, a dubious fame upon the American expatriate colony of Montparnasse."¹²⁷ Given Hemingway's renown, it is not surprising that he should become a lightning rod for modernist meditations on celebrity, popular success, and persona. What is perhaps more surprising is that, despite memoirists' skeptical attitudes towards celebrity, these meditations, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic towards Hemingway, engage celebrity on its own terms. That is, they conform to celebrity journalism's discursive lexicon by falling back on the language of authenticity. As Ponce de Leon asserts in *Self-Exposure*,

Celebrity journalism was designed to provide readers with authentic inside dope, material that was genuine and spontaneous, that illuminated the subject's 'real self.' Its business was exposure, and it derived its cachet from the assumption that only through intimate, probing

¹²⁵ *A Farewell To Arms* had the distinction of selling over 100,000 copies during its first eleven weeks in print, a feat that not too long before would be achieved by only one or two books in the course of an entire year. Fanny Butcher, "Best Sellers of Year Reported by Publishers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec 21 1929, 14.

¹²⁶ Leff, *Hemingway and His Conspirators; Hollywood, Scribners, and The Making of American Celebrity Culture*, xvii-xviii. Leff's study contains a detailed discussion of early cinematic adaptations of Hemingway's novels, Hemingway's relationship with Hollywood, and his ascendancy to the status of celebrity.

¹²⁷ Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress*, 127.

access could the subject really be known.¹²⁸

Memoirists perform a similar service when they promise readers a glimpse of the “real” Hemingway, the man behind the legend.¹²⁹ In this sense, modernist memoir’s critique of the culture of celebrity reveals the extent to which it is already hopelessly embedded within celebrity’s discursive and conceptual terrain.

Though differing in how complicit they make Hemingway in the circulation of his public persona, both Margaret Anderson in *My Thirty Years’ War* (1930) and Robert McAlmon in *Being Geniuses Together* (1938) invoke this rhetoric of authenticity in their discussions of the ever-growing Hemingway legend. Anderson’s treatment of Hemingway serves not only to establish her own critical acumen and prescience (as one of his earliest publishers), but also to signal her status as an insider, privy to the “real” Hemingway.¹³⁰ “Hemingway—or Hem as he is called by his friends, so that no one knows who is meant by ‘Ernest’—” she explains,

is so different from his legend that there may be no use trying to show him as he is. People prefer to believe what they heard the first time. [...] Hemingway is so soft-hearted that it must be as much as he can bear to beat a punching-bag; and is so afraid of falling often in love that he doesn’t go about as blithely as he used to.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure*, 104. Ponce de Leon goes on to note that because celebrity journalism was a medium of publicity developed by “celebrities, their press agents, and friendly reporters,” it was “inherently unstable and paradoxical [...] The more that was revealed about them [celebrities], the less sure one could be that the reported facts were true—since facts that had been promoted as true were habitually revealed to be spurious” (104).

¹²⁹ The rhetoric of authenticity was (and continues to be) prominent in the discourse of Hollywood biographies. For example, Rudolph Valentino’s manager S. George Ullman begins his 1926 posthumous memoir, *Valentino as I Knew Him*, by invoking the rhetoric of the private individual behind the public figure:

With the death of Rudolph Valentino, at the very height of his career, came a demand from the public for an intimate story of his life.

In attempting to construct such a story, I am confronted by the problem of sifting chaff from wheat, of separating those colourful stories in newspapers and magazines from the real Valentino, who was known only to his intimates. [...]

In writing these memoirs, I can only hope that, in my desire to place a true image of my beloved friend before the public, I have not too intimately delved into the recesses of his private life, or bared secrets of his soul which he, naturally reticent, would have resented.

S. George Ullman, *Valentino as I Knew Him*, trans. (introduction by) O. O. McIntyre (1926; New York: A. L. Burt Company, 1927), 13-14.

¹³⁰ Anderson recalls that the *Little Review* was the first magazine to publish fiction by Hemingway. While dining at the Hemingways, the aspiring writer read her one of his stories and she “took it immediately for the *Little Review*.” She further notes that “[a] few months after his first appearance in the *Little Review* we printed the second story of his to be accepted anywhere—Mr. and Mrs. Eliot—a gem of a story.” Anderson, *My Thirty Years’ War: An Autobiography by Margaret Anderson*, 258.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Debunking the image of Hemingway as a hard-boiled heart-breaker, Anderson suggests the responsibility for this inaccurate characterization lies in the perversity of celebrity gossip: “There is even a legend that Hemingway is stingy. This springs no doubt from his native generosity.”¹³² Though Anderson’s depiction of Hemingway undermines his public image by attributing to him a type of naïveté that he might have found less-than-complimentary, she at least exonerates him of that which McAlmon charges him with: publicity-seeking calculation.¹³³

For McAlmon, whose Contact Editions published Hemingway’s first book, *Three Stories & Ten Poems* (1923), Hemingway was no naïf. Rather, as McAlmon remarks in *Being Geniuses Together*, he is a writer carefully attuned to self-presentation, to the nuances of the literary marketplace, and to the circulation of literary persona. According to McAlmon, both Hemingway’s hard-boiledness and naïveté are poses:

Hemingway was a type not easy to size up. At times he was deliberately hard-boiled and case-hardened; again he appeared deliberately innocent, sentimental, the hurt, soft, but fairly sensitive boy trying to conceal hurt, wanting to be brave, not bitter or cynical but being somewhat both, and somehow on the defensive, suspicions lurking in his peering analytic glances at a person with whom he was talking.¹³⁴

Hemingway’s calculation, McAlmon further suggests, applies not only to his persona, but also to his writing. Commenting on the success of *The Sun Also Rises* and the discrepancies between the “original Lady Brett” [left-bank figure Lady Duff Twysden] and Hemingway’s character, McAlmon

¹³² Ibid., 259.

¹³³ Like Stein, Anderson suggests that Hemingway is a naïf, lacking sophistication in the ways of the world. She notes that if she had to pick a single adjective to describe Hemingway it would be “simple.” And though Anderson praises *A Farewell to Arms* as “the best novel that has come out of America for a long time,” she also uses the novel to illustrate another instance of Hemingway’s naïveté:

[*A Farewell to Arms*] would be an altogether remarkable book if, instead of dealing with a purely instinctive love, it dealt with something a little higher in the scale—say a love experience with some quality of awareness in it. But Hemingway doesn’t follow you when you tell him this.

I don’t get you. Those two people really loved each other. Gee, he was crazy about her. Though, as McAlmon suggests, Hemingway would at times adopt a naïve persona, the naïveté Anderson ascribes to him perhaps extends beyond that which Hemingway might have sanctioned.

Anderson also subtly undermines Hemingway’s renowned masculinity and virility (as Stein more famously would in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*). She declares that her partner and co-editor Jane Heap has found the perfect animal prototype for Hemingway: “Hemingway is a rabbit—white and pink face, soft brown eyes that look at you without blinking. As for his love of boxing and bull-fighting—all that is thrashing up the ground with his hind legs” Ibid., 259, 260.

¹³⁴ McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together: An Autobiography*, 155.

writes, “Was she glamorous, or is the book glamorous, or was not the bravely-despairing, sensitive, hard-boiled tone not calculated to appeal to the worldly adolescents of its time?” (230).¹³⁵ In McAlmon’s exposé, the “real” Hemingway is neither the hard-boiled young man nor the sensitive naïf, but rather “a very good business man, a publicist, who looks ahead and calculates, and uses rather than wonders about people.”¹³⁶ ¹³⁷ Both McAlmon’s and Anderson’s depictions turn on the distance between the public Hemingway legend and Hemingway as they purport to have known him, and it is this disjunction between the two Hemingways that serves as grounds for either critique or exoneration (or sometimes both). And yet each intervention, each correction reifies Hemingway’s status as celebrity and object of speculative chatter. Ultimately, what is significant for modernist memoir’s engagement with celebrity culture is not whether Hemingway was hard-boiled or a softie, a naïf or a businessman or something in between, but that each memoirist feels compelled to remark upon and respond to his circulated persona. As much as memoirists may reject various elements of the culture of celebrity in order to claim a certain aesthetic integrity, they nevertheless find themselves subsumed in and perpetuating its rhetoric of ‘the truth behind the façade.’ And yet, as Ponce de Leon has observed of celebrity journalism, in so doing they undermine such truth claims since they inevitably become yet another among the many sources promising the reader the “real” Hemingway.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 230. McAlmon refrains from using Lady Duff Twysden’s name, but rather refers to her as “the original Lady Brett of Hemingway’s book” (230).

¹³⁶ Ibid., 216. Interestingly—despite their varying opinions on Hemingway—Anderson, McAlmon, Stein, and Beach all draw correspondences between their version of the “true” Hemingway and Hemingway’s writing. As discussed above, for Anderson, both Hemingway and his writing are good but naïve. For McAlmon, both are artificial and calculating. Having accompanied Hemingway on a fishing trip that he claims helped inform Hemingway’s story “Big Two-Hearted River” (which McAlmon mistakenly refers to as “*Great Two-Hearted River*”) McAlmon observes:

He was so intent on thinking about what it was that a man who was fishing would be thinking about, and what [William] Bird and I would be thinking about, that he didn’t catch many trout, but jotted down notes for the story. Some declare it great. I find it a stunt and artificial, and do not believe his mind works that way at all. (216)

In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein depicts both Hemingway and his writing as derivative and unoriginal, whereas in Beach, both Hemingway and his writing are lionized as original and self-made.

¹³⁷ The derisive manner in which McAlmon notes Hemingway’s aptitude for business and publicity provides yet another instance of modernism’s official party line on publicity. However, as we have seen, in spite of statements such as this, modernists regularly engaged in a variety of promotional and publicity-seeking activities.

The details of Stein's representation of Hemingway in the *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and Stein's own involved relationship with celebrity culture have been an oft-treated subject of scholarly inquiry.¹³⁸ As such, I will touch on them only briefly in order to frame Sylvia Beach's response to Stein in *Shakespeare and Company*. In the *Autobiography*, Stein seeks to deny Hemingway the status that she in turn wants to claim for herself—that of an avant-garde genius. The enormous success of Stein's memoir made her deflating depiction of her one-time friend a threat to his widely circulated public persona. In turn, it spurred overwrought retorts by Hemingway in his introduction to Jimmie Charters's memoir, then again in *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935), and ultimately in his own Parisian memoir, *A Moveable Feast*.¹³⁹ The *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* casts Hemingway as an ersatz modernist, a poseur whose literary persona and writing are cobbled together from the interests and work of others. In a famous formulation, Stein remarks that Hemingway “looks like a modern and he smells of museums.”¹⁴⁰

By filtering some of her more pointed criticisms through the narrative mouthpiece of a more openly disapproving “Toklas”, the book's “Stein” is able to reference Hemingway's failings from the more respectable position of bemused indulgence.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, Stein's portrait of Hemingway was an attack on his celebrated public persona as a hard-boiled, vigorous, sporting hero—a persona (or series of personas) that had emerged through readers' autobiographical interpretations of his

¹³⁸ See for example Linda Wagner's, “The Hemingway-Stein Story” in *Wagner's Ernest Hemingway: Seven Decades of Criticism*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1998. 389-401. Stein herself meditates at length on celebrity in 1937's *Everybody's Autobiography*.

¹³⁹ In both his introduction for Charters and in *The Green Hills of Africa*, Hemingway chooses not to identify Stein by name in his attacks. In each case, however, it is readily apparent that Stein is the subject alluded to in his remarks (see for example pages 25 and 65-66 in *The Green Hills of Africa*). In *A Moveable Feast*, published after both his death and Stein's, Hemingway's extended portrait of Stein identifies her by name.

¹⁴⁰ Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 216.

¹⁴¹ For example, “Toklas” notes that despite Stein's break with Hemingway, Stein has always been fond of him for getting *The Making of Americans* printed. However, “Toklas” undermines “Stein's” commendation by noting that she's skeptical about Hemingway's actual role in the matter: “I myself have not so much confidence that Hemingway did do this. I have never known what the story is but I have always been certain that there was some other story behind it all. That is the way I feel about it.” *Ibid.*, 215-216.

fiction, Hemingway's self-presentation, and mainstream press articles.¹⁴² To this end, Stein's "Toklas" asserts that Hemingway's infamous enthusiasms, so much a part of his public persona, are not even his own: "He was also a shadow-boxer, thanks to Sherwood [Anderson], and he heard about bull-fighting from me [Toklas]."¹⁴³ "Toklas" also undermines his reputed strength, ruggedness, and virility by noting, among other things, that Hemingway "used to get quite worn out walking from his house to ours."¹⁴⁴ Moreover the *Autobiography* claims that it is Stein and Sherwood Anderson who are responsible for Hemingway as author: "Hemingway had been formed by the two of them and they were both a little proud and a little ashamed of the work of their minds."¹⁴⁵ With this sentence Stein both infantilizes Hemingway and strips him of his individual aesthetic initiative; he becomes at once the eager but slightly dim pupil of two masters and a type of Frankenstein's

¹⁴² Depictions of Hemingway, in *Time Magazine* for example, reinforced such personas. The first sentence of *Time's* review of *The Sun Also Rises* refers to him as "burly young Author Hemingway." "Sad Young Man," *Time Magazine* (Nov 1, 1926), www.time.com. The reviewer of *In Our Time* presents Hemingway's short stories as reportage of his lived experience: "He knows how trout-fishing in Michigan feels; how Yankee jockeys, straight and crooked, ride on European tracks; how half-breed squaws bear their children back of the logging camps; how bulls and toreros slaughter one another in Spain. He knows what it is like to pot German soldiers scaling a garden wall; to ski in the Tyrol; to bum on Canadian freight trains; to be in love, just at first and then really." "Writer [Review of *In Our Time*]," *Time Magazine* (January 18, 1926), www.time.com. When *Time* appends a brief portrait of Hemingway to its review of *Men Without Women*, it emphasizes his ruggedness, virility, and adventurous life:

Author Hemingway was a football star and a boxer at school. In the War he was severely wounded, serving with the Italian Arditi, of whom he was almost the youngest member. Since the Armistice he has lived, like many another American, several of whom he is reported to have described in *The Sun Also Rises*, in Paris. Every spring he goes down to Pamplona to watch the bullfights; on an occasion when he entered the arena himself, several of his ribs got broken by a bull. [...] "Men Without Women," *Time Magazine* (Oct. 24, 1927), www.time.com.

¹⁴³ Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 217.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 218. It is worth quoting this short passage at length to demonstrate the rapid volley of shots that Stein launches against Hemingway's circulated persona—first at his prowess as a boxer, next at his stamina, and finally at his virility, physical soundness, and, indirectly, his masculinity:

In these days Hemingway was teaching some young chap how to box. The boy did not know how, but by accident he knocked Hemingway out. I believe sometimes this happens. At any rate in those days Hemingway although a sportsman was easily tired. He used to get quite worn out walking from his house to ours. But then he had been worn out by the war. Even now he is, as Hélène [Stein and Toklas's servant] says all men are, fragile. Recently a robust friend of his said to Gertrude Stein, Ernest is very fragile, whenever he does anything sporting something breaks, his arm, his leg, or his head. (218)

The qualifications and distancing phrases that run throughout the passage (such as "I believe this sometimes happens", "as Hélène says all men are," and "a robust friend of his said") do little to soften the critique itself and instead serve only to displace the criticisms onto others and/or provide the narrator with a pretense of good-humouredness and sympathy.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 216.

monster.¹⁴⁶ Most importantly, perhaps, he is decidedly not the genuine article, but a carefully (or rather, crudely) cultivated amalgam of stylistic and personal attributes. Stein highlights this as she ostensibly notes his potential: “What a book, they [Stein and Anderson] both agreed, would be the real story of Hemingway, not those he writes but the confessions of the real Ernest Hemingway. It would be for another audience than the audience Hemingway now has but it would be very wonderful.”¹⁴⁷ Without directly addressing the topic of celebrity, Stein draws the reader’s attention to disjunction between Hemingway’s public persona and—adopting that hallmark of the discourse of celebrity—“the *real* Ernest Hemingway” (emphasis mine). Similarly, her allusion to audience implies that Hemingway is guilty of that cardinal crime of modernism—tailoring one’s writing to appeal to the marketplace, forgoing “wonderful” writing for the sake of success.

The irony, of which Stein herself is certainly aware, is that her vehicle for such criticisms is a text whose purpose, she concedes, was to bring her writing to a more popular audience, a text that stands as one of twentieth-century literature’s most formidable and successful acts of self-promotion. It would be simple-minded and unfair, however, to attribute this merely to hypocrisy on Stein’s part. Rather, it betrays the multiple and at times conflicting imperatives that modernists operated under as they attempted to influence the processes of literary consolidation.

Published over twenty years after Stein’s *Autobiography*, Sylvia Beach’s *Shakespeare and Company* attests to the discursive longevity of modernist memoir’s debates. Taking Hemingway as its eponymous subject, Beach’s chapter “My Best Customer” constitutes an implicit, though almost point by point, refutation of Stein’s accusations. Though Beach’s stakes in discussing Hemingway differ greatly from Stein’s, her return to the scene of Stein’s remarks exposes the confluence between celebrity culture’s self-perpetuating rhetoric of the “real” story and memoir’s persistent intertextual revisions of literary history. In her account, Beach positions Hemingway as an instructor rather than a pupil, by detailing how he attempted to tutor her and Adrienne Monnier on the topic of sports.

¹⁴⁶ This insult is compounded when Stein and Anderson note that they “have a weakness for Hemingway because he is such a good pupil.” When Toklas objects that he is a terrible pupil, Stein and Anderson disagree, stating that “it is so flattering to have a pupil who does it without understanding it.” *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography*, 216.

Referring to Hemingway throughout this passage as “Professor,” Beach reinforces his reputation as a sports enthusiast by recounting how he took her and Monnier to boxing matches and cycling races. In broaching issues of literary originality and influence, Beach argues insistently for Hemingway’s status as an innovator. Beach recalls that after Hemingway read some of his early stories to her, she and Monnier were “impressed by his originality, his very personal style, his skillful workmanship, his power to create,” Monnier even noting that he possessed the “‘the true writer’s temperament’ (‘le temperament authentique d’écrivain’).”¹⁴⁸ Beach goes on to argue that what distinguishes Hemingway is not the influence of others on his work, but his influence on the work of others: “You can’t open a novel or a short story in France, or in England or Germany or Italy or anywhere else, without noticing that Hemingway has passed that way.” In an assertion that unmistakably answers Stein’s famous claim that she taught Hemingway to write, Beach presents Hemingway as a self-made man:

Though the question of who has influenced such and such a writer has never bothered me, and the adult writer doesn’t stay awake at night to wonder who has influenced him, I do think Hemingway readers should know who taught him how to write: It was Ernest Hemingway. And, like all authentic writers, he knows that to make it “good,” as he called it, you had to work..¹⁴⁹

Interestingly, though Beach disputes Stein’s undermining of Hemingway’s literary persona, she does not dispute its constructed status. Rather, in Beach’s treatment, Hemingway’s crafting of a persona is in keeping with his *sui generis* aesthetic. That is, she posits him as a truly a self-made man, in the best possible sense. Though like her fellow memoirists Beach registers her status as an insider by mobilizing celebrity discourse’s trope of the man behind the myth, her treatment lacks some of the anxiety, either accusatory or defensive, found in other discussions of Hemingway’s celebrity. Indeed, save for her relatively earnest repudiation of Stein’s claims, her treatment of Hemingway’s by then mythic persona is characterized by the indeterminate play associated with postmodernism.

Early in her discussion of Hemingway she self-consciously intervenes in his careful public self-presentation as hard-boiled, but does so in a manner that is more playful than policing:

¹⁴⁸ Beach, *Shakespeare and Company*, 81.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

I am going to say this whether Hemingway shoots me or not—I have always felt that he was a deeply religious man. Hemingway was a great pal of Joyce's, and Joyce remarked to me one day that he thought it was a mistake, Hemingway's thinking himself such a tough fellow and [Robert] McAlmon trying to pass himself off as the sensitive type. It was the other way around, he thought. So Joyce found you out, Hemingway!¹⁵⁰

Through a semantic twist, Beach's word choice wittily reinscribes the "tough guy" persona that her comment affectionately debunks. Beach's qualifier, "whether Hemingway shoots me or not," registers Hemingway's potential annoyance at her revelation while simultaneously evoking one of Hemingway's macho personas, the big-game hunter. It would not take too much exertion on the reader's part to imagine Hemingway, rifle in hand, proudly squatting next to Beach, his quarry, a pose made familiar by the many photographs of Hemingway, the successful hunter. Whereas, in Stein's text, Hemingway's development of his literary persona signals his derivativeness and inauthenticity, in Beach it becomes a part of his modernist originality—his self-fashioning is as much a creative act as his self-taught writing.

Given this initial attention to Hemingway's public persona, it is significant then that throughout the rest of the text Beach's hyperbolic presentation of him approaches a caricature of his public persona. He becomes first a mythic deity and then a Hollywood hero, each representation near parodic in its exaggeration. However this hyperbole is not overtly satiric in its treatment of either Hemingway or celebrity. In discussing the difficulties surrounding her publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Beach quips that Ulysses's champion, Minerva, adopts various disguises and that at the time of the publication of Joyce's novel, she adopted the "very male form of Ernest Hemingway."¹⁵¹ In this fashion, Beach's "Minerva-Hemingway" chapter stages her friend as a presiding god of modernism, engaging in superhuman feats on behalf of that most-lauded of interwar texts. Removed from Beach's framing narration, Hemingway's actions on behalf of *Ulysses* appear considerably less than godly. He arranges for a friend who was moving to Toronto to smuggle copies of *Ulysses* across the U.S. border by ferry, hiding first one, then two at a time under his clothing. For this service, Beach agrees to pay the rent for this friend's studio in Toronto.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 78.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 86.

Despite Hemingway's relatively minimal effort, Beach's narration posits him as the chapter's eponymous demi-god: "I set my problem [of conveying the banned *Ulysses* to her American subscribers] before Minerva-Hemingway. He said, 'Give me twenty-four hours,' and the next day he came back with a plan."¹⁵² Beach concludes the vignette by remarking, "the *Ulysses* subscribers in America who received their copies should know that they have Hemingway and Hemingway's obliging friend to thank for that large parcel the American Express delivered at their door one day."¹⁵³ In mobilizing this fittingly Joycean epic conceit, Beach moves away from an initial concern with the "real" Hemingway to play with the heroic status fame has conferred upon him. In so doing she escapes the characteristic modernist anxieties about promotion and artistic integrity and gestures towards the surrealism of modern celebrity.¹⁵⁴

In *Shakespeare and Company*'s final vignette, "Hemingway Liberates the Rue de l'Odéon," Hemingway is transformed, with similarly comic—though again not necessarily satiric—undercurrents into the conquering war hero, a depiction that Beach's narration steepens in imagery borrowed from popular culture. Set in the final days of the Nazi occupation of Paris, the memoir's closing vignette is worth quoting in its entirety:

There was still a lot of shooting going on in the rue de l'Odéon, and we were getting tired of it, when one day a string of jeeps came up the street and stopped in front of my house. I heard a deep voice calling: "Sylvia!" And everybody in the street took up the cry of "Sylvia!"

"It's Hemingway! It's Hemingway!" cried Adrienne. I flew downstairs; we met with a crash; he picked me up and swung me around and kissed me while people on the street and in the windows cheered.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁵⁴ In fact, even during that section in which she seemingly defends Hemingway against some of the charges Stein raises in the *Autobiography*, Beach also plays with the notion of persona. Beach notes that Hemingway told her that his father had died under tragic circumstances while he was still in high school and that he had had to leave school to make a living, earning his first money in a boxing match. *Ibid.*, 78-79. This would seem to counter Stein's claim that he learned about boxing from Anderson. However, what Beach does not note, but which she surely must have known, is that Hemingway's father did not kill himself until 1928, years after he would have told her that story. Moreover, many of her readers would have known this since the suicide received press coverage as Hemingway had already achieved some fame with the publication of 1926's *The Sun Also Rises*. This discrepancy exposes Hemingway as lying in order to constructing a public persona, but since Beach doesn't seem to find fault with this and, as I have argued, she sees Hemingway's self-fashioning as part of his creativity, it does not elicit the criticism that it would in either McAlmon or Stein.

We went up to Adrienne's apartment and sat Hemingway down. He was in battle dress, grimy and bloody. A machine gun clanked on the floor. He asked Adrienne for a piece of soap, and she gave him her last cake.

He wanted to know if there was anything he could do for us. We asked him if he could do something about the Nazi snipers on the roof tops in our street, particularly on Adrienne's roof top. He got his company out of the jeeps and took them up to the roof. We heard firing for the last time in the rue de l'Odéon. Hemingway and his men came down again and rode off in their jeeps—"to liberate," according to Hemingway, "the [wine] cellar at the Ritz."¹⁵⁵

The triumphant heroism of this scene is rendered all the more dramatic coming as it does after Beach's account of being fired upon by retreating German forces in the Boulevard St. Michel. This concluding vignette answers the horror of the previous scene—its vision of "blood on the pavements and Red Cross stretchers picking up the casualties"—with a happy ending that offers a pastiche of Hollywood and mass culture imagery.¹⁵⁶ It is part war epic, part Western (Hemingway "riding up" so to speak, and expelling the posse of Germans tormenting the townspeople and then "riding" off into the sunset), and part re-enactment of Alfred Eisenstadt's iconic photograph of a sailor embracing a nurse on V-J day.¹⁵⁷ The passage is also laden with melodramatic details, from the blood and grime on Hemingway's uniform to Monnier's sacrifice of her last cake of soap. Over the course of these four short paragraphs Beach has Hemingway inhabit some of his most famous public personas: the gritty, hard-boiled adventurer, the military hero, the romantic lead, and the devil-may-care drinker.

What makes this passage particularly interesting is that Beach's narrative choices, though stopping shy of presenting factual inaccuracies, encourage the reader to make several dubious assumptions. For example, as the readers of *Colliers Magazine* would have known, Hemingway was not the leader of a company, or even a soldier during WWII, as one might infer from his orchestration of the rooftop mission, but rather a war correspondent. Though in later years scholars

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 219-220.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹⁵⁷ This untitled photograph by Alfred Eisenstadt, taken in Times Square on August 14, 1945 and published in *Life* magazine, became arguably the most iconic American photograph of the end of World War II. As a photojournalist for *Life*, Alfred Eisenstadt also photographed Hemingway in Cuba for a cover story appearing in the magazine September 1, 1952 for *Life Magazine*. This fact, which Beach surely would have known, suggests just how firmly Hemingway had become imbedded in the economies of popular celebrity.

have ascertained that Hemingway had perhaps, in contradiction to the Geneva convention's guidelines, led some French irregulars during the late stages of the war in Europe, such details would not have been common knowledge at the time of Beach's memoir. Similarly, Beach's casting of Hemingway as the leading man in what resembles a classic scene of Hollywood romance (the conquering war hero, the woman in need of saving, the passionate reunion embrace, the cheering onlookers) also misses the mark. Indeed the scene is queered for those readers—whether literati or the merely in-the-know—who recognize that this romantic pairing is not what it appears. Not only is Beach twelve years Hemingway's senior, but it is Adrienne Monnier, seemingly cast in the role of the mother or friend, who is actual the object of Beach's affection. For a large portion of Beach's audience, such narrative suggestions would almost certainly prove disorienting since they conflict with prior stores of knowledge, an effect that adds to the scene's surrealism.

In closing her text with a Hollywood-style happy ending, Beach chooses to omit the more tragic endings that she might have had take its place, such as the closing of Shakespeare and Company during the German occupation of Paris or Beach's subsequent internment in a war camp or Adrienne Monnier's suicide in 1955. On the surface, it would appear that such a move cuts against the modernist grain, for Beach is concluding the memoir of her involvement in the literary revolutions of expatriate Paris with a scene that would be at home in the type of sentimental popular writings that the modernists rebelled against. But it is precisely the uneasiness of this fit—of modernist subject matter and Hollywood-style narration—that offers one of memoir's most interesting responses to modernism's gradual integration into popular culture. The sense of hyperbole that Beach evokes with her imposition of a more-Hollywood-than-Hollywood ending suggests the pastiche, the hyper-reality, and the knowing wink that are the trademarks of postmodernism. Beach has forgone the modernist anxiety regarding celebrity and its connections to popular culture. Rather than holding forth on the topic, as many memoirists do, she instead confronts the issue by adopting a playful insouciance. Indeed it is as if Beach is taking a page from Joyce's *Ulysses* playbook and is running the events through the filter of "Hollywood ending" or, in

perhaps an even more apt analogy, adopting the type of formal and narrative play that animates Raymond Queneau's 1947 *Exercices de Style*.¹⁵⁸ In donning a Hollywood drag, Beach is not acknowledging the victory of celebrity culture over modernist iconoclasm and individuality, but rather she is choosing to step outside of the discursive frame that pits artistic integrity and innovation against popular culture. Indeed, this narrative play gestures toward and effects the convergence of "high art" and popular culture that is argued to characterize the postmodern age, an age in which the notion of "authenticity" seems antiquated.¹⁵⁹

For Kay Boyle, however, the culture of celebrity is not so easily made a subject of play, at least as it pertains to Robert McAlmon. In penning a new afterword for the 1984 reissue of *Being Geniuses Together*, she suggests that the collapse of many modern writers was not only due to publishers' demands for constant success, but was also brought about by "the terrible hunger of those who do not write to *know* the writer, to encroach upon his privacy in order to maneuver the secret from him, to violate the territory of his private life."¹⁶⁰ Frustrated at having failed to resuscitate McAlmon's literary reputation, Boyle takes aim at a literary culture that demands the

¹⁵⁸ In *Exercices de Style*, published by Gallimard in Paris in 1947 and then translated into English by Barbara Wright for London's Gaherbochus Press in 1958, Raymond Queneau rewrites the same short vignette ninety-nine times using a variety of narrative and formal styles. These filters range from "Litotes" to "Cockney" to "Comedy" to "Permutations by Groups of 2, 3, 4, and 5 Letters" to "Haiku" to "Medical" to "Awkward" to "Blurb." Beach knew Queneau (1903-1976) from his involvement with Surrealism during the late 1920s and early 1930s and there exists correspondence between the two in the archive of Beach's papers at Princeton University. Raymond Queneau, *Exercices de Style*, Nouv. éd., ed. (1947; [Paris]: Gallimard; reprint, 1964).

¹⁵⁹ Here I invoke Jameson's description of one "fundamental feature" of the postmodernisms he has been discussing in the first chapter of his *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*: namely, the effacement in them of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with forms, categories, and contents that very culture industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern, from Leavis and the American New Criticism all the way to Adorno and the Frankfurt School. The postmodernisms have, in fact, been fascinated precisely by this whole "degraded" landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and *Reader's Digest* culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature, with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery, and the science fiction or fantasy novel: materials they no longer simply "quote," as a Joyce or a Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance. (2-3)

¹⁶⁰ McAlmon and Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930*, 334. (1997)

writer provide a public persona to accompany his or her writing.¹⁶¹ “It was the bitter recognition of the public demands made on the private self that outraged McAlmon,” Boyle insists.¹⁶² In her final paragraph, she quotes from William Carlos Williams and Robert Knoll in order to suggest that McAlmon’s neglect stems from his unwillingness to “lie” (that is, to play the game of celebrity and self-promotion), as others did, in order to make his reputation.¹⁶³

As Kay Boyle’s comments reveal, not only does modernist memoir function as a communal economy, but it also serves as a forum in which memoirists self-reflexively examine the processes by which literary legacies are established. Though these texts take the 1920s as their subject matter, their concerns are those of a late modernism ambivalent about the emerging establishment birthed by its increasingly successful revolution. Underlying memoir’s amusing anecdotes is a biographic and ethnographic discourse that attempts to reconcile the widely divergent fates of figures, like Ernest Hemingway and Robert McAlmon, whose careers appeared to hold the same promise during the early years of interwar Paris. In so doing, modernist memoir becomes the quintessential modernist self-consuming artifact, pathologizing those communities that it ostensibly seeks to commemorate, adopting the promotional methodologies of a popular culture that it seeks to denounce, and offering a late modernist variation on the Left Bank’s endless talk.

¹⁶¹ Boyle’s and McAlmon’s own personal disclosures about the private lives of their peers are permissible, one presumes, because they *are* fellow writers, and because, in at least Boyle’s case, many of the figures she discusses are already dead and no longer capable of being harmed.

¹⁶² McAlmon and Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930*, 335. (1997)

¹⁶³ Robert Knoll was the editor of *McAlmon and the Lost Generation*. He published this collection of excerpts from McAlmon’s stories and his autobiographical writings six years after McAlmon’s death in 1962. Like Boyle, Knoll hoped to revive interest in the forgotten writer. Robert McAlmon and Robert E. Knoll, *McAlmon and the Lost Generation: A Self Portrait* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962).



Figure 1.1 Sylvia Beach in Shakespeare and Company. The walls are adorned with the portraits of various modernists. Beach included this photograph among those reproduced in her memoir, *Shakespeare and Company* (1956).



Figure 1.2 Adrienne Monnier in her bookshop, La Maison des Amis des Livres. In Beach's memoir, *Shakespeare and Company*, this photograph faces a similar one of Beach in her bookshop (Figure 1.1).



Figure 1.3 The man in the shadow and the man in the sun: Robert McAlmon (left) and Ernest Hemingway in a Spanish bullring, 1923.



Figure 1.4 Journalist and publisher William Bird. Kay Boyle implores the readers of *Being Geniuses Together* (1968) to examine the picture she includes of this generous and forgotten member of the Left Bank community.

Chapter 2.
**Letting the Colors Run: William Carlos Williams and the Negotiation of Local and
Literary Community**

In a speech delivered to the citizens of Rutherford, New Jersey gathered to see him named “Citizen of the Year” for 1954, William Carlos Williams described the reciprocal relationship between art and the local communities from which it springs:

All that remains of communities and civilizations, all that remains of their worth and dignity exists in the art they leave. That is my excuse for existence. [...] All Art must arise from a locality, it must come from the people in a locality. The artist’s puffing himself out so that he has an existence away from his locality I cannot understand. [...] Your lives, your problems, are the things that make the artist go.¹

In the relationship Williams imagines, the inhabitants and the particularities of the local serve as the artist’s principal muse and material, and, in turn, the artist ensures that those particularities are not lost to history but commemorated in art. The artist figure that Williams speaks of was, of course, himself—he knew all too well that many of his better known contemporaries—T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, for example—did not place the same aesthetic value on a localist and distinctively American poetics, and instead chose to draw on European forms, traditions, and history. Alternately, nor were Williams’s Rutherford neighbors always cognizant (let alone appreciative) of Williams’s attempts to make art out of their experiences. As David Frail reminds us, Rutherford was not honoring Williams for his writing, but rather in order “to give a beloved doctor and decent man a ‘vote of confidence’ in his ‘American-ness,’” since his patriotism had been questioned publicly in the controversy surrounding his recent nomination for the post of Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress.²

¹ William A. Caldwell, “William Carlos Williams: The Doctor,” *Journal of the Medical Society of New Jersey* 80, no. 9 (1983): 96. Caldwell, a reporter, had attended the ceremony and taken notes. In this article he quotes from Williams’s speech using the notes he took that evening.

² David Frail, *The Early Politics and Poetics of William Carlos Williams* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1987), 25. Critics on the right had protested Williams’s nomination, arguing that he had ties to un-American groups. Among the suspicious contacts critics queried in the McCarthy era climate were *New Masses* and *The Partisan Review*, both of which had been affiliated with the Communist Party when Williams had published in them in the 1930s. For a detailed discussion of the controversy

Williams's statement—"All that remains of communities and civilizations, all that remains of their worth and dignity exists in the art they leave"—now serves as motto and epigraph for Rutherford's William Carlos Williams Center for the Performing Arts.³ Indeed, the community that features so prominently in Williams's writing has gradually come to celebrate him as a poet. Rutherford now offers a number of arts initiatives under the banner of his name. In addition to the Williams Center, which serves as the heart of Rutherford's cultural life, the town boasts a William Carlos Williams room at the Rutherford Public Library, an annual William Carlos Williams Poetry Symposium, a monthly poetry reading series held at the Williams Center, and a weekly "Red Wheelbarrow" writing workshop at the public library.⁴ In 2005, in conjunction with its first annual William Carlos Williams Poetry Symposium, Rutherford was declared a literary landmark in recognition of its status as the poet's life-long home.⁵ For much of Williams's life in Rutherford,

surrounding Williams's selection for the consultancy at the Library of Congress, see Paul Mariani, *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 651-659, 666-669. It is of course a great irony that Williams, a poet who had devoted his creative life to developing a distinctively American poetics, should have his patriotism questioned.

³ Williams's phrase is featured prominently on the website for the William Carlos Williams Center for the Performing Arts (www.williamscenter.org) and is often cited in association with the Center. Center President, Dr. Joseph DeFazio, for example, quoted the phrase in a recent interview with local Bergen County newspaper, *The Leader*. Dana Rapiscardi, "Stage Set for Williams Center Gala," *The Leader*, October 11, 2007, <http://www.leadernewspapers.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=5468>.

⁴ When the town's historic Rivoli Theater was greatly damaged by a fire in 1977, it was reborn as the William Carlos Williams Center for the Performing Arts. The Williams Center, located at 1 Williams Plaza re-opened in 1982 and today houses three film cinemas, two live performance theatres, and an open air meeting gallery. In 2005, Rutherford hosted its first annual William Carlos Williams Poetry Symposium. The day long symposium drew together scholars and admirers of the poet from around the country as well as citizens from the surrounding areas for a variety of events, readings, and panel presentations, which culminated in a production of Williams's play *A Dream of Love* at the Williams Center. Tellingly, this was the first full performance of one of Williams's plays in his hometown. The Symposium is now held each year around September 17th, Williams's birthday. The 2008 celebration will take place on September 20 and 21 and will commemorate the 125th anniversary of Williams's birth. The success of the 2005 WCW Poetry Symposium inspired the founding of the WCW Poetry Collaborative of Southern Bergen County, which invites poets to give readings at the Williams's center on the second Wednesday of every month. One of the most recent additions to the Williams-inspired cultural activities is Red Wheelbarrow Poets writing workshop, which is overseen by poet Jim Klein and meets Wednesdays at the Rutherford Public Library except for the week in which the monthly WCW Poetry Collaborative reading is held at the Williams Center. More information regarding all of these activities can be found at *William Carlos Williams Symposium, Rutherford, NJ* (February 11, 2008 [cited June 17, 2008]); available from <http://rutherfordlibrary.typepad.com/williamcarloswilliams/>.

⁵ The designation of Rutherford as a literary landmark was made by the Friends of Libraries, USA and the plaque acknowledging the landmark can be found at the Rutherford Public Library. For a discussion of how modernists themselves responded to the growing literary heritage industry, see Andrea Zemplýs,

however, the poet struggled to negotiate his investments in local community and his participation in the aesthetic communities of international modernism. This negotiation was for Williams fraught in part because he so often experienced his local and literary communities as separate domains unwilling or incapable of engaging each other in conversation.

Taking inspiration from *Paterson's* Man-City premise, this chapter approaches issues of late modernist community through the lens of a single figure, William Carlos Williams (1883-1963). Focusing on his later writings—particularly his long poem *Paterson* (1946-1958) and *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (1951)—I explore how, in the closing years of his career and life, the poet attempted to reconcile the aesthetic legacies of Anglo-American modernist community with his commitment to a poetics of locality. Issues of community have been central to both Williams's writing and the scholarship that treats it.⁶ My project contributes to existing criticism by reframing his queries into community in relation to the processes of late modernist literary consolidation. To this end, I begin by examining the conflicted nature of Williams's interactions with his local and literary communities. Rather than taking the local as simply a philosophical and epistemological

Modernism and the Locations of Literary Heritage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2008).

⁶ The scholarship treating William Carlos Williams's investments in the local range from early studies like James E. Breslin, *William Carlos Williams: An American Artist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), to Paul Mariani's compendious 874-page biography, *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1981), to the more recent study by John Beck, *Writing the Radical Center: William Carlos Williams, John Dewey, and American Cultural Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). Important sustained readings of *Paterson* include Joel Conarroe, *William Carlos Williams's Paterson: Language and Landscape* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970); Joseph N. Riddel, *The Inverted Bell* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1974). Kevin R. McNamara's chapter "Expanding the City's Limits: The Opened Form of William Carlos Williams's *Paterson*" explores Williams's form in relation to his attempt to construct a urban epic. Kevin R. McNamara, *Urban Verbs: Arts and Discourses of American Cities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). Brian Bremen examines *Paterson* in the context of his interest in Williams's diagnostics of culture, which he reads as a convergence of William's roles as a practicing doctor and as a poet. Bremen's discussion of *Paterson* explores both Williams's methodological empiricism in *Paterson* and how the poet's politics and poetics coincide in "an attempt to restructure epistemological conventions at the level of what Pierre Bourdieu calls the 'habitus.'" Brian Bremen, *William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8. My readings of *Paterson* hold the most in common with the ideas that John Beck expresses in his *Writing the Radical Center*, which explores the confluence of Williams's and John Dewey's visions of American culture. Both Beck and I see Williams as attempting to engage in what Beck terms the "community-building practice of conversation." However, unlike Beck, who mentions Williams's *Autobiography* only once in his study, I argue that Williams's staging of a conversation between the aesthetic and the local in *Paterson* is tied to Williams's performance of his negotiation of his ties to literary and local communities in his *Autobiography*. Beck, *Writing the Radical Center*, 76.

paradigm, I instead ground my investigation in specific biographical details pertaining to Williams's interactions with his neighbors in Rutherford and with fellow artists. Next I turn to his performative negotiation of community in *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* to suggest how this understudied text's formal and thematic juxtapositions enact a projective dialogism between Williams's literary and local communities and a manifestation of the difficulty that such a dialog entails. Similarly, *Paterson* becomes a forum in which Williams stages and restages conversations between these communities so as to engender a rapprochement that at once actualizes a poetics of locality and attempts to intervene in modernist literary consolidation. Tracing these two texts' formal and thematic confluences clarifies the stakes that the two projects share. Both texts offer Williams's own corrective to what he saw as the misplaced communal emphases of cosmopolitan modernism. Williams's quarrel here is that rather than offering a truly international assemblage of literatures, each imbued with its own attention to local particularities, the cosmopolitan aesthetic (as practiced in varying capacities by Pound and Eliot) becomes a simulacra of certain limited trends in European literature which are divorced from any living contact with the world around them and which in fact efface individual particularities. Accordingly, both *Paterson* and *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* become texts that attempt to revise and redirect the aesthetic and social 'values' associated with modernism so as to bring his literary and local communities into conversation.

I. 9 Ridge Road: Williams and his Local Community

In the Foreword to *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*, Williams sums up his living situation by writing, "as both writer and physician I have served sixty-eight years of a more or less uneventful existence, not more than half a mile from where I happen to have been born."⁷ Though one would hardly agree with Williams's calculatedly modest characterization of his days as "uneventful"—and indeed, the autobiography that follows illustrates the disingenuousness of such a claim—it is true that he lived in what most might call a relatively uneventful place—Rutherford, N.J.

⁷ William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1951; reprint, 1967), ii. Hereafter cited as *Autobiography*.

It was to Rutherford that, after their Brooklyn marriage in November of 1882, Williams's parents moved prior to his September 17, 1883 birth. Save for a year of schooling in Europe, his years at the University of Pennsylvania, his internships at the French Hospital and Nursery and Child's in Manhattan, and several extended trips abroad or across the country, the suburb of Rutherford, approximately 13 miles from Manhattan, was where Williams made his home. Shortly after his marriage to Florence Herman, Williams and his wife set up house at 9 Ridge Road in December of 1912.⁸ This address would be the primary office of Williams's medical practice for the rest of his career and his home until his death in 1963.⁹

Rutherford lies at the bottom end of Bergen county, between its more industrial neighbor East Rutherford, NJ on one side and the Passaic River on the other. *Bergen County Panorama*, a guide produced in 1941 by the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of New Jersey (and for which Williams served as a consultant on the Cultural Activities chapter), describes the county by acknowledging the English and Dutch farmers who first settled the area, but notes that it is "a new resident—now a hurried commuter—[who] fixes the pattern of Bergen's conservative life."¹⁰ The guide describes Rutherford itself as a "Chiefly a home community [...] noted for the absence of taverns, for its compact social life and for the number of its civic and social organizations." The borough of Rutherford was incorporated in 1887 and in 1941 boasted, among other things, a police department of 20 men, a library with 27,000 volumes, a movie theater, a total area of 2.6 square miles, and a population of 15, 466.¹¹ Its two industries were dyeing and photo supply, though a quarter of its population commuted daily to New York City, Newark, and Jersey City. By contrast, Williams would recall that the Rutherford of his earliest years lacked sewers,

⁸ Initially, the newlyweds moved into two rooms in the home of the Ackers, a couple who lived next-door to Williams's parents' home at 131 West Passaic Avenue in Rutherford. The couple moved to 9 Ridge Road once Flossie once became pregnant in the fall of 1913. *Ibid.*, 130-131.

⁹ In the mid-1920s Williams opened up a second office that he shared with some medical friends in nearby Passaic, NJ. Shortly thereafter he also joined the medical staff at Passaic General Hospital (*Autobiography* 238, Mariani, *New World Naked*, 259, 287).

¹⁰ Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in the State of New Jersey, *Bergen County Panorama* (Hackensack, N.J.: Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders, 1941), 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 293, 321.

electricity, and running water. Its sidewalks were wooden, “crosspieces nailed to two-by-fours laid on the ground.”¹² Given these descriptions of Rutherford, it is not difficult to see why, when choosing a location as the basis for his long poem, Williams passed over the town in favor of Paterson.

Critics have long acknowledged the vexed nature of Williams’s relation to the neighbors and patients that comprised his local community. John Beck, for example, notes how, Williams, while “extolling the virtues of the Jeffersonian ideal of the small self-governing communities based on shared values and customs, could simultaneously rail against the small-mindedness and claustrophobia that often accompanied small town life.”¹³ Though Williams’s return to Rutherford in 1910 was occasioned by his resignation of his post at Nursery and Child’s hospital, Williams suggests in his autobiography that a stable work and home life was something he had decided upon during his college years¹⁴:

My furious wish was to be normal, undrunk, balanced in everything. I would marry (but not yet!) have children and still write, in fact, therefore to write. I would not court disease, live in the slums for the sake of art, give lice a holiday. I would not “die for art,” but live for it, grimly! And work, work, work (like Pop), beat the game and be free (like Mom, poor soul!) to write, write as I alone should write, for the sheer drunkenness of it [...].¹⁵

If Williams’s existence in Rutherford offered him a refuge from many of the pitfalls (financial and otherwise) of the bohemian artist’s life, it also meant he would spend the vast majority of his time amidst his patients and fellow suburbanites rather than his literary peers.

In his later years, Williams would, over the course of an alternately light-hearted and despairing September 1958 visit with Gael Turnbull, summarize his relationship with his Rutherford

¹² Williams, *Autobiography*, 279.

¹³ Beck, *Writing the Radical Center*, 162.

¹⁴ Williams resigned from his post at Nursery and Child’s hospital in 1909 after refusing to sign off on financial figures that he could not confirm. The hospital was required to send reports to Albany, as it was partially supported by the State of New York, but the corrupt hospital administration would not allow him to confirm the numbers by checking them against its “blue cards,” which catalogued hospital admissions and discharges. After standing up to pressure to sign from various doctors and administrators, Williams received a two week suspension for insubordination, but upon his return he was informed that Albany required his signature for the forms to be accepted. Being informed of collusion between the woman in the financial office and the President of the Hospital’s Board, Williams chose to resign rather than compromise his integrity. Williams, *Autobiography*, 102-105; Mariani, *New World Naked*, 74-75.

¹⁵ Williams, *Autobiography*, 51.

community as a total loss. "I never had any contact with anyone here," Turnbull reports Williams as saying, "I couldn't live their life. I used to hate it. A poet shouldn't have to live!"¹⁶ Here Williams posits his writing not as a celebration of the beauty and potential inherent in one's local conditions, but as an escape from those very conditions. "I've always felt so lost here, this town, I wanted to get out," he explains, "I couldn't stick it, so I had to write, you see, there wasn't anything else I suppose. And now my life is gone."¹⁷ Falling between the deep depression that beset Williams after his second major stroke in August 1952 and the depressive state that would return, according to biographer Paul Mariani, following his third stroke in October 1958, the meeting with Williams, if Turnbull's account is to be trusted, constitutes a particularly low moment in Williams's estimation of his local community. However, his despairing assessment is not so much an accurate characterization of his communal interactions, but rather one pole of Williams's inconsistent representations of his relationship to his local community.

Indeed, the life Williams lived in Rutherford was far from that of a literary hermit disgusted with his surroundings. Rather, his history in Rutherford suggests a consistent engagement with both his patients and fellow townspeople. Williams was active in a variety of local initiatives. In 1916 he was appointed to the Bergen County Mosquito Extermination Committee, and he became a medical inspector of schools in 1920.¹⁸ In 1921, as a member of the school board, Williams successfully campaigned to have a new high school built, writing to Kenneth Burke that he had had to "address two large and excited audiences of 900 souls to this effect."¹⁹ In the early 1930s Williams became involved in local politics, championing democratic candidates in Rutherford's traditionally

¹⁶ William Carlos Williams, *Interviews with William Carlos Williams: "Speaking Straight Ahead"*, ed. Linda Wagner (New York: New Directions, 1976), 93.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁸ Mike Weaver, *William Carlos Williams: The American Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 36.

¹⁹ William Carlos Williams and Kenneth Burke, *The Humane Particulars: The Collected Letters of William Carlos Williams and Kenneth Burke*, ed. James H. East (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 15. Though Williams explains to Burke that it was "queer and delightful to be standing there quite collectedly and steering my words into those ears just as I would drive a car through the street" and that it was a "valuable experience," he nonetheless found himself "feeling through all the time: Ah, if this energy were only going to art! If this excitement had some literary matter for its concern" (15).

Republican community.²⁰ In 1942 Williams was elected President of the Cooperative Consumers' Society of Bergen County Inc., an organization whose local emphasis was conceived as a corrective to the domination of corporate business interests.²¹ Ironically, this localist initiative caused several of his townspeople to look at him askance. "My, what a horrible thing that was to most people," Williams explained in a 1950 interview, "They almost wanted to shoot us. They tried to close the store, forgetting that Boston Common was *commonly* held by the people of Boston, and that was a co-op!"²² Though some of Williams activities got him labeled as a radical, they nonetheless reflect his investment in the life of his town. Local engagements were a part of his daily existence, as a November 8, 1942 letter to his son William (Bill) Eric Williams suggests. In addition to relating all of the local news about various neighbors and patients, Williams also informs his son of his and Flossie's attendance at a demonstration of incendiary bombing countermeasures held in the town ballfield and of the medical examinations of local draft recruits that he had begun performing.²³ In his medical practice, Williams's devotion to his patients meant that he often undercharged his poorer one and kept long hours at his primary office in Rutherford, at a second office in Passaic, and at Passaic General Hospital. In fact, Williams's commitment meant that he missed the deaths of both of his parents, having been called away from their respective deathbeds to attend to pressing medical calls.²⁴

Williams's interaction with his local community was not however limited to civic or medical concerns. Despite the compartmentalization of local and literary life that Williams depicts in the Foreword to his autobiography, he was not content to divorce the concept of intellectual community from his local community. Throughout his career, he would vociferously lament the lack of intellectual and artistic life in Rutherford. Shortly after having begun his medical practice there in 1910, he wrote to Viola Baxter, "My blood is freezing here. Nothing but the intellectually unborn

²⁰ Mariani, *New World Naked*, 320.

²¹ Weaver, *William Carlos Williams: The American Background*, 108.

²² Williams, *Interviews with William Carlos Williams: "Speaking Straight Ahead"*, 20.

²³ William Carlos Williams, *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams*, ed. John C. Thirwall (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1957), 204-207.

²⁴ Williams, *Autobiography*, 167, 305.

from before breakfast till after supper.”²⁵ Eleven years later, Williams would complain to Kenneth Burke that in Rutherford “the world of art is non-existent.”²⁶ However, in other moments, Williams would assess his situation more positively and, being the committed localist that he was, argue for the value of the art and beauty which could be found in Rutherford or any other small town.

In “Effie Deans,” an essay composed circa 1937 but unpublished until after his death, Williams holds forth on the surprising beauty of various art objects that he has encountered while making medical housecalls—“delightful *objets d'art* inauspiciously lighting the days and years of some obscure household in almost any suburban town.”²⁷ As the essay continues, Williams imagines his community holding an exhibit of its best artworks—ranging from well-crafted household objects to his own collection of paintings by his avant-garde friends—and “charging a quarter for the whole thing.”²⁸ As he mentally arranges the exhibit, he continues to think of more and more items, “Didn't Stockton write 'The Lady and the Tiger' in Rutherford? Couldn't we have pictures of the Kipp house, the old stone house of the Kingslands, really delightful houses of the early Dutch and English settlers?”²⁹ In this fashion, the essay becomes both a testament to and a catalogue of all of the works of beauty that exist in a (or any) small town. As Williams wrote in a draft version of his 1938 *New Republic* essay on Walker Evans, “One of my pet aversions is the belief that you have to go to special places to find excellence in the arts on the principle that you don't find whales in a mill pond. You don't. Neither do you find brains by drinking cheap wine in a bistro, or knowledge merely by eating tripe from a dish stamped with the coat of arms of Christ College.”³⁰ In “Effie Deans,”

²⁵ Quoted in Mariani, *New World Naked*, 92.

²⁶ Williams and Burke, *The Humane Particulars: The Collected Letters of William Carlos Williams and Kenneth Burke*, 15.

²⁷ William Carlos Williams, “Effie Deans,” in *A Recognizable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists*, ed. Bram Dijkstra (New York: New Directions, 1978), 129.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

³⁰ William Carlos Williams, “Walker Evans: American Photographs,” in *A Recognizable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists*, ed. Bram Dijkstra (New York: New Directions, 1978), 137-138. The material I quote here did not appear in the version of the essay published in *The New Republic*, but comes from an earlier manuscript draft of the essay now at Yale. Dijkstra usefully includes these subsequently omitted sections in the version of the essay that he prints in *A Recognizable Image*.

Williams suggests that art and beauty reside not only in Paris or New York or in the hallowed halls of Cambridge but in our midst if only we are open to seeing them.

Upon first glance, the contradiction raised by such seemingly incompatible perspectives on the aesthetic life of Rutherford might be resolved by attributing the incongruity to a matter of private sentiment versus public and philosophical commitment. In the letters, Williams is free to voice his frustrations, while in the public forum of the essay, he must champion the aesthetic possibility of Rutherford as part of his campaign on behalf of the local as the only universal—the paraphrase of pragmatist philosopher John Dewey that recurs so often in Williams’s critical and creative writings. Though such strategic representations do arise in Williams’s writing, the matter is more complex than a mere public/private divide. Indeed, a closer look at Williams’s interactions with his local community reveals that in spite of encountering all sorts of resistance to his writing and “radical” aesthetic ideas, Williams continued to attempt to engage his local community both intellectually and creatively.

As Paul Mariani’s biography *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked* records, Williams made significant attempts to share his intellectual concerns, writing, and poetic theories with his Rutherford friends through the Polytopics club, a discussion group he was instrumental in founding. The club, whose discussions took on a variety of topics ranging from Mah-Jongg to epilepsy to George Bernard Shaw and James Whitcomb Riley, provided a forum for Williams to engage intellectually with his neighbors.³¹ He invited both Libby Burke, Kenneth Burke’s wife, and Gorham Munson, whose work with Social Credit greatly interested him, to speak to the group. For the most part these meetings were jovial, as in a 1933 meeting in which the group performed an exegesis of some of Williams’s poems using puppets for illustration.³² But Williams also experienced resistance to the integration he attempted. In 1921 a heated debate arose after Williams read selections from *Kora in Hell* and informally lectured on “What is Art and Why is Poetry.” Some of his fellow club members objected to Williams’s liberal conception of what poetry might entail. As Mariani reports,

³¹ Mariani, *New World Naked*, 138.

³² *Ibid.*, 137, 138.

Williams's wife Flossie later urged him not to read his poetry in Rutherford where it was in her view "misunderstood and parodied."³³ Nevertheless, Williams remained active in the Polytopics Club over the course of the next thirty-five years and continued to attempt to engage his local community aesthetically, even if it was with less radical or avant-garde material. In 1930 Williams penned and produced a trio of plays for a holiday party held at his home.³⁴ The actors named on the evening's playbill include Williams and his wife Flossie, Williams's brother Edgar and his wife Hulda, and three members of the Polytopics club, Louise Wagner and Madeline and Andrew Spence.³⁵ In the last of the evening's three plays, listed on the playbill as "LES AMERICAINS or What HAVE YOU? / (A Parisian Café Klotch)," Williams invited his local audience to poke fun at the expatriate scene in Paris. "I think Paris is darling," a young American woman deadpans, "I've met so many people from New York," to which the skit's older woman responds, "Yes, Paris is certainly cosmopolitan."³⁶ What here appears as Williams's comic debunking of the Parisian colony's claim to cosmopolitanism will elsewhere find more serious counterparts in his interrogation of the simulacra of cosmopolitanism that he identifies in some of his peers' writing.

As the years passed, Rutherford became a little more accepting of this radical poet in their midst though, certainly, frustrations remained.³⁷ When Kitty Hoagland adapted Williams's short story "To Fall Asleep" for Rutherford's Little Theater in the late thirties, some of the more conservative subscribers withdrew their support.³⁸ Williams later wrote three plays for the company

³³ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 790.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

³⁵ Playbill ["3 Plays and 2 InterLudeS"], n.d., William Carlos Williams Manuscripts and Letters, Poetry Collection, Lockwood Memorial Library, SUNY Buffalo. Interestingly, the playbill invokes an avant-garde aesthetic in that it uses irregularly placed capital letters throughout. Thus the evening's program is listed as "3 Plays and 2 InterLudeS." This playbill is item B94b in Meyers and Baldwin's catalogue of the William Carlos Williams Collection at SUNY Buffalo. Neil Baldwin and Steven L. Meyers, *The Manuscript and Letters of William Carlos Williams in the Poetry Collection of the Lockwood Memorial Library, State University of New York at Buffalo: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1978).

³⁶ "A Parisian Café Klotch", n.d., William Carlos Williams Manuscripts and Letters, Poetry Collection, Lockwood Memorial Library, SUNY Buffalo. (Item B94a according to Baldwin and Meyers's catalogue.)

³⁷ In 1937 Williams chose to read to the Polytopics Club from his libretto of *The First President*, and in 1940 he read a selection of his poetry at the Rutherford Methodist Church in answer to an invitation from a group called the "Quaintance Club." Mariani, *New World Naked*, 139, 436.

³⁸ Williams, *Autobiography*, 305.

at the behest of Hoagland, but, as he explains in *I Wanted to Write a Poem*, they were never staged: “The plays were too stiff for Rutherford, not that they were sexy or too modern, just hard to produce. They didn't want to play any of them and didn't.”³⁹ Nevertheless, his local community continued to warm to his art, especially once he began receiving awards and honors. Three years before his death, Williams would observe, “I'm accepted by the ordinary people I know, my friends, in my town. They have come to accept me. [...] They don't understand what the hell I'm driving at, but they accept me.”⁴⁰

In fact, during his lifetime the Rutherford Public Library began amassing one of the most complete collections of Williams's writing, along with those at Yale University and the University of Buffalo.⁴¹ Williams spoke proudly of the collection to Edith Heal in 1957:

Graciously, a group of people in my town have collected me. This is a rare and wonderful kind of thing. Under the anonymous title Friends of the Library a collection has been assembled, complete—except for a very few early books, which shall probably be found. I understand there are also shoe boxes filled with reviews, newspaper items, and many rare and elusive magazine publications of the past. There are also photographs and letters, all to be housed, I am told, in a special room which the library is planning to build, designed by my brother, Edgar Williams. Floss and I have helped with the collection but the Friends of the Library have been insistent that we keep our own complete collection intact. All they have asked from us is data on titles, and with the help of the town librarians they have done a magnificent job in tracking me down.⁴²

If perhaps Williams did not succeed in generating a literary community that would provide him with the intellectual stimulus and aesthetic challenge that a conversation with Kenneth Burke or an issue of the *Partisan Review* might, he nonetheless achieved a certain level of literary engagement. The Rutherford Public Library collection evinces at least a partial attempt at contact on the part of both Williams and his local community. The collecting of clippings in shoeboxes offers a demotic mode of literary engagement which, though it is principally personal rather than aesthetic in nature, offers a starting point for the conversations between literary and local communities that Williams had hoped to instigate. Likewise, Williams's decision to donate materials to the collection evinces, his belief in

³⁹ William Carlos Williams and Edith Heal, *I Wanted to Write a Poem*, ed. and reported to Edith Heal (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 69.

⁴⁰ Williams, *Interviews with William Carlos Williams: "Speaking Straight Ahead"*, 50.

⁴¹ Edith Heal, Introduction, in *I Wanted to Write a Poem* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), vii.

⁴² Williams and Heal, *I Wanted to Write a Poem*, 98-99.

the importance of endowing his local community with the legacy of his literary works. The Williams Room at the Rutherford Library ultimately suggests that his attempts to foster a literary community within his own local community were not entirely unsuccessful.

II. The Paper Forum: Williams and Literary Community

In the Foreword to his 1951 *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*, the Rutherford poet writes that his choice to live his life "not more than half a mile from where I happen to have been born" means that many of his medical school and literary friends "have seldom or never visited."⁴³ As a result, much of Williams's engagement with literary community transpired in his voluminous correspondence, in his contributions to modernism's many "little magazines," and in regular visits to New York City. Williams casts his physical remove from the epicenter of artistic communities as an enabling one. Exaggerating his lack of visitors in Rutherford, he writes, "There is a great virtue in such an isolation. It permits a fair interval for thought. That is, what I call thinking, which is mainly scribbling."⁴⁴ As the passage continues Williams explains how the stimulation of attending an artistic event in New York City and conversing with Alfred Stieglitz or debating with Kenneth Burke and others at Burke's barn in Andover, New Jersey, would inspire him to return to Rutherford and create: "I'd scribble for days, sometimes, after such a visit, or even years, it might be, trying to discover how my mind had readjusted itself to its contacts."⁴⁵ Having duly scribbled, Williams would send out the resulting poem to "meet its fate in the world," judging the intelligence of his peers by observing that fate.⁴⁶ The process initiated by a physical communal interaction thus finds its fulfillment in the virtual community of the page.

What Williams sought from literary community was an arena in which he and his aesthetic theories could challenge and in turn be challenged by others; that is, he craved a forum for

⁴³ Williams, *Autobiography*, ii. The New Directions edition of the *Autobiography* does not provide page numbers for Williams's foreword. For ease of reference, I have numbered the pages of the foreword using roman numerals and use this notation in my parenthetical citations.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, iii.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

contestation and personal (though not necessarily group) consolidation. In an unpublished essay circa 1915, Williams proclaims: “I affirm my existence by accepting other forces to be in juxtaposition to my own either in agreement or disagreement.”⁴⁷ Barry Ahearn cites this statement in his *William Carlos Williams and Alterity* in discussing Williams’s conflicted sentiments towards his parents and authority figures. “Throughout his life, Williams seemed to need people to constrain his freedom of action,” Ahearn argues, “[...] to chafe and rebel against—or collaborate with,” so that he might establish his identity.⁴⁸ This statement, however, proves equally enlightening when read in context of how Williams approached his literary and artistic peers.

Indeed Williams would argue that such agreements and disagreements, such opposition of forces might prove a useful model for aesthetic community. Writing to Kenneth Burke on September 6, 1924, Williams sounds a communal call to arms against the enemy of “indifferentism.” He rejects the notion of joining forces for “comfort,” instead arguing in favor of community “for training [...] bunching our candles to get more light.”⁴⁹ The metaphor that Williams uses is that of sparring. He explains to Burke that they should all,

Join to gain head. I don't mean for consolidation, no sect! No creed but clarity. Work in, in, in—by bringing all we can gather—trying, testing, scrapping together—with an eye open for an opportunity to use our stuff in the open when we can.

If we practice on each other, trying to knock each other's blocks off, we'll be ready one day to knock a few real blocks into the discard.⁵⁰

For Williams, literary community *is* debate, which performs the vital task of honing one’s aesthetic arguments and theories.

In “The Neglected Artist,” an essay composed circa 1936 but not published until after his death, Williams lays out a broader vision of a productively contentious aesthetic community. For Williams, the whole world of art:

⁴⁷ William Carlos Williams, “Vortex,” in *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams*, ed. Bram Dijkstra (New York: Random House, 1954), 57.

⁴⁸ Barry Ahearn, *William Carlos Williams and Alterity: The Early Poetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 19.

⁴⁹ Williams, *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams*, 65.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

is a battleground, not a bland Elysium, but at the same time we will realize that the battle is taking place within a world that can and does contain it. It is a battleground where differences of emotional and intellectual opinion may be engaged to the enhancement of the soul. It is a battleground where men contend to enlarge their vision and to refresh and engage their minds and emotions. From which, or by virtue of whose works, the man of affairs, if he give them the play they merit, may draw refreshment and power.⁵¹

William's is less concerned with victors and vanquished—he mentions neither—than with how the artist-warrior enriches his or her soul through the process of championing his or her opinions.

Indeed, in Williams's view, the struggle doesn't simply benefit and invigorate those who participate in it, but also "the man of affairs" and, by extension, society, should they be so inclined to turn their attention to it.

These contestatory models of aesthetic community thus provide a framework for reading the manner in which Williams stages community in his creative writings. The Prologue to *Kora in Hell* (1920) has long been notorious for the manner in which it seemingly attacks two of Williams's oldest friends in the world of art—H.D. and Ezra Pound. James Breslin has called the preface one of Williams "most spiteful and implacable" manifestoes.⁵² Particularly insidious for Breslin is Williams's tactic of publishing excerpts of personal letters from Pound, H.D, and Wallace Stevens in order to refute their private critiques of him in a public forum. Williams's use of these letters, however, is neither as petty or as underhanded as it at first may seem.⁵³ Though Williams is taking a missive not intended for public consumption and making it public, he is nonetheless allowing the criticisms leveled by Pound, H.D. and Stevens to stand in their own words. Though he has the advantage of framing these critiques and having the final word, he is nevertheless laying bare the terms of debate for the public. The letters therefore perform a rhetorical function of embodying a particular literary ethos, and this in turn allows Williams to develop his literary philosophies in contradistinction to

⁵¹ William Carlos Williams, "The Neglected Artist," in *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams*, ed. Bram Dijkstra (New York: Random House, 1954), 92.

⁵² Breslin, *William Carlos Williams: An American Artist*, 36.

⁵³ Williams does take his fair share of cheap shots—his retelling of Pound's comment that it is not necessary "to read everything in a book in order to speak intelligently of it. Don't tell everybody I said so" (quoted in *Kora* 13) is a clear attempt to debunk Pound's reputation as one of the best-read and most knowledgeable figures on the literary scene at the time—though the letters themselves do not incriminate their authors as much as they might. Indeed, depending on the perspective of the reader, one might well align oneself with H.D.'s or Stevens's stances rather than those of Williams.

those espoused by his peers. Thus when H.D. states in her letter that writing is a sacred thing and that Williams should not mock his inspiration, it gives Williams the opportunity to propound his view that “There is nothing sacred about literature”—that there is “nothing in literature but change and change is mockery.”⁵⁴ Invoking an implicit juxtaposition between his poetic investment in the living, and H.D.’s classically inspired imagism, he proclaims, “It is to the inventive imagination we look for deliverance from every other misfortune as from the desolation of a flat Hellenic perfection of style.”⁵⁵ These assertions help Williams build to the prologue’s subsequent assertion that “Nothing is good save the new,” a statement which takes aim at an American literature that does not invent a new language and form for itself but rather rests on ones borrowed from other cultures.⁵⁶

To Stevens’s epistolary critique that “incessant new beginnings lead to sterility,” Williams responds by taking aim at literary convention, asserting that he indeed hopes to “keep [his] mind free from the trammels of literature, beating down every attack of its *retiarum* with [his] *mirmillones*.”⁵⁷ Though Williams’s direct responses to the letters tend to be brief, his inclusion of these letters also helps to draw out what is different and fresh in the irregularly numbered tenets interspersed throughout the second half of the essay. By juxtaposing these letters with other commentary on the writing of his peers, Williams effectively maps out the literary landscape of the day. He attacks T.S. Eliot as simply “rehash, repetition in another way of Verlaine, Baudelaire, Maeterlinck,” and famously labels Pound as “the best enemy United States verse has” because he favors that which mimics the European over that which is “American.”⁵⁸ Though in the “Prologue” Williams can at times be flippant, there is a genuine interest in manifesting the debates of modern literature on the page and allowing the different actors to speak. It is for him an important conversation, and Williams’s piece does its best to ensure that the conversation continues. The prologue is intentionally provocative—it is a riposte that enjoins further reply rather than closing off the conversation. With

⁵⁴ William Carlos Williams, *Kora In Hell: Improvisations* (Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1920), 16.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-18. *Retiarum* and *mirmillones* refer to two different teams during Roman gladiatorial contest.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 26, 28.

its rhetorical use of letters and its staging of aesthetic debate, the prologue to *Kora in Hell* anticipates the productively contentious model community that Williams would revisit over two and a half decades later in *Paterson*.

Williams engagements with his peers in the Prologue to *Kora in Hell* also exemplify an early instance of his attempt to redirect the aesthetic priorities of modern literature. Williams's persistent return to Pound and Eliot as his chief antagonists throughout his career is a function not merely of their differing opinions about the raw materials of literature, but also of Eliot's and Pound's centrality to modernist aesthetic consolidation and modernist community. In a 1929 statement published in the *Little Review*, Williams confessed, "[...] I am impressed and sorry that Eliot, who is a splendid poet, has gone British. It may mean nothing but convenience to him. To me it is a serious and damaging loss." But, more pointedly, he also declared it "somewhat shameful in my eyes."⁵⁹ For Williams, Pound and Eliot misuse their poetic skills by abandoning an American poetics: "Pound, with his 'artificial pearl' is fastening his simulacrum of his source on the page" and "Eliot has philosophically [...] renounced America much more fully" by going "over to the past."⁶⁰ It is not the internationalism of modernism that disturbs Williams, but rather that many Americans practice a false internationalism, one that offers only a mimicry of certain limited European trends in literature which takes communal energy away from Williams's project of generating a literature that communicates with and expresses the locality from which it emerges. In both his *Autobiography* and *Paterson*, Williams would attempt to redirect the aesthetic priorities of American and modern verse through a projective enacting of conversations between his literary and local communities.

III. Conjunctions and Disjunctions: The Question of Community in *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*

As the first chapter of this dissertation has argued, by the 1950s modernist memoir offered a communal economy in which writers, publishers, and patrons sought to influence the figures and

⁵⁹ William Carlos Williams, "A Tentative Statement," *The Little Review: Literature, Drama, Music, Art* 12, no. 2 (1929): 97.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 98.

narratives by which the literary rebellions of the early twentieth century would be remembered. In penning his autobiography, Williams was at once entering into this discursive fray and questioning the communal framework on which it was premised. If Williams's representations of his literary peers evince his desire to mark his place in the communities of modernism and to partake in the genre's adjudication of literary legacies, then his near-equal attention to the 'anonymous' (i.e. non-literary) figures of his local community constitutes a polemical rejoinder to the solipsistic aesthetic and social values implicit in the limited scope of many of his fellow memoirists. The *Autobiography's* performative negotiation of literary and local community offers both a meditation on the disjunction between these domains and an attempt to bring them into a mutually signifying relationship.

Given the *Autobiography's* enactment of themes central to Williams's literary career, it is somewhat surprising that it appears so infrequently in scholarship on Williams. When it is mentioned, it is used largely to provide background information for the critic's argument. Few take it as a text worthy of study alongside Williams's other 'literary' compositions.⁶¹ Those critics who have analyzed the *Autobiography* in greater detail, most notably Sherman Paul, Ann Fisher-Wirth, and Herbert Liebowitz, have tended to read it as a work of public relations in which Williams attempts to justify the life he has led.⁶² Paul, in *The Music of Survival*, describes the *Autobiography* as a "defense of

⁶¹ For example, Steven Gould Axelrod and Helen Deese's 1995 collection *Critical Essays on William Carlos Williams*, which includes contemporary reviews and critical essays on many of Williams's works, does not contain any detailed study of his autobiography. The collection includes contemporary reviews of *Al Que Quiere!*, *Kora in Hell*, *Sour Grapes*, *In the American Grain*, *Collected Poems*, *Life Along the Passaic River*, and *Paterson I and II*. The collection's various critical essays principally focus on *Spring and All*, *The Desert Music*, *Paterson*, *In the American Grain*, the Stecher Trilogy, *Many Loves*, and *A Dream of Love*. Steven Gould Axelrod and Helen Deese, eds., *Critical Essays on William Carlos Williams* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1995).

⁶² The aspect of Williams's biography that has received the most critical attention is its performance of innocence. All three critics have been quick to point out the manner in which Williams affects a certain naïveté so as to appear, as Ann Fisher-Wirth argues —“quintessentially American, and therefore fit to serve as a model for other American writers in their own struggles to fulfill his legacy, making contact with their country, living and writing 'in the American grain.'” Ann W. Fisher-Wirth, *William Carlos Williams and Autobiography: The Woods of His Own Nature* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989), 31. While Fisher-Wirth and Paul see this innocence as both a “reality and a pose,” Liebowitz is more skeptical. Sherman Paul, *The Music of Survival* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968), 45. Noting Williams's comment in the autobiography that “innocence is hard to beat,” Herbert Liebowitz refers to innocence as a “favorite prop” in Williams's literary trunk. He further argues that Williams exploits both the side of innocence that begs approval and reward and that which shields a person from attack in order to “deceive both the reader and himself.” Herbert Liebowitz, “You Can't Beat

the poet of culture, a disingenuous essay in vindication."⁶³ Indeed both Paul and, more extensively, Fisher-Wirth compare Williams's autobiography to that of Benjamin Franklin for how it sets forth its story as exemplum.⁶⁴ Such criticism also bemoans what is lacking in the *Autobiography*. For Fisher-Wirth it is the suppression of *eros* and *thanatos* in order to highlight the "public virtues derived from sublimation;" while for Liebowitz, it is that the autobiography contains "only the most meager introspection"—attending to the surface rather than 'the depths.'⁶⁵ Though it is not an explicitly philosophical text, and though on the surface Williams does perform a certain vindictory contentment, my ensuing analysis suggests that in its treatment of Williams's negotiation of communities *Autobiography* is more complex than the above assessments permit.

That Williams suppresses some of the tensions inherent in his negotiation of his literary and local communities is not surprising given his desire to champion a poetics of locality as a corrective to modernist memoir's expatriate emphasis. By keeping one foot firmly planted in Rutherford, his narrative suggests, Williams was able to escape the pitfalls of a life lived purely for "art" in the London, New York, or Paris literary colonies. Williams's autobiographical accounts of his immersion in literary enclaves during visits to London and Paris present the experience as thrilling but "fatiguing in the extreme."⁶⁶ More pointedly, Williams conjures anecdotes that illustrate the potentially dangerous abandon that immersion in the bohemian life of artists' colonies could at times entail. In one incident, the Baroness Elsa von Freytag Loringhoven, a figure prominent in the Greenwich Village community of the late teens, informs Williams that what he needs to achieve greatness is to contract syphilis from her so that he might free his mind for serious art.⁶⁷ It is this type of excess, Williams shows, that he has avoided through his busy medical career and suburban

Innocence': The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams," *American Poetry Review* 10, no. March/April 1981 (1981): 36.

⁶³ Paul, *The Music of Survival*, 44.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 48-49; Fisher-Wirth, *William Carlos Williams and Autobiography: The Woods of His Own Nature*, 17-22.

⁶⁵ Fisher-Wirth, *William Carlos Williams and Autobiography: The Woods of His Own Nature*, 39; Liebowitz, "'You Can't Beat Innocence': The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams," 43.

⁶⁶ Williams, *Autobiography*, 117.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 165.

life. When the *Autobiography* presents its elegiac roll call at the close of “The F.B.I and Ezra Pound,” it comes as no surprise that Williams is one of the few figures among his contemporaries still alive and writing in 1951.⁶⁸

In “The Practice,” Williams asserts that his medical work and its associated community of patients nourish his writing: “I have never felt that medicine interfered with me [as a writer] but rather that it was my very food and drink, the thing which made it possible for me to write. Was I not interested in man? There the thing was, right in front of me.”⁶⁹ Though Williams concedes that he knew more often than not that such contact wasn’t giving him “anything profound,” it nonetheless provided him with something valuable—“basic terms with which I could spell out matters as profound as I cared to think of.”⁷⁰ Williams posits a symbiotic relationship between his two careers, which he explains are “two parts of a whole,” so that “one rests the man when the other

⁶⁸ This passage is worth quoting at length:

So here is Pound confined to a hospital for the insane in Washington; Bob McAlmon working for his brothers in El Paso; Hemingway a popular novelist; Joyce dead; Gertrude Stein dead; Picasso doing ceramics; Soupault married to a wealthy (?) American; Skip Cannell—who after divorcing Kitty married a French woman, *disparu!*; Nancy Cunard still alive, thin as paper as she is, Bill and Sally Bird, unable to stand the Paris weather any longer, removed to Tangier, Sylvia Beach, who had been cleaned out by the Germans, living upstairs from her famous Twelve rue de l’Odéon. Clotilde Vaile dead; Juan Gris—at one time my favorite painter—long since dead; Charles Demuth dead; Jane Heap dead; Margaret Anderson, I don’t know where; Peggy Guggenheim, active at least, in Venice keeping a gallery for modern pictures in which it is said she hardly believes; Steichen a director at the Modern Museum; Norman Douglas writing—but I think not; T.S. Eliot a successful playwright; Auden, E. E. Cummings, Wallace Stevens—alive and working; Marianne Moore translating *Les Fables* of La Fontaine. I saw here recently at a supper of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. She has done the fables over three times, each time with a different critical objective in view, twenty books of I don’t know how many different pieces in all.

She says that Ezra Pound has been of great assistance to her in the work which must be finished by June 1951.

Harold Loeb—where?—but back in Wall Street; Ford Madox Ford dead; Henry Miller married and living with his wife and children on a half-mile-high mountain near Carmel, California, from which he seldom descends. Lola Ridge dead; Djuna Barnes living in poverty somewhere, not, at least, writing; Bob Brown, having lost his money, surviving in Brazil, Carl Sandburg turned long since from the poem; Alfred Kreymborg a member of the Institute of Arts and Letters; Mina Loy, Eugene O’Neill—more or less silent.⁶⁸

It is a devastating assessment of the state of and fate of modernist literary community. Most one-time participants are dead, others—like Henry Miller, Robert, McAlmon, and Djuna Barnes—are living in uncommunicative isolation. Still others have either sold out to the man (Hemingway, Harold Loeb) or are at work on projects whose merit Williams either explicitly or implicitly questions (Marianne Moore, Norman Douglas, Peggy Guggenheim, Picasso, Eliot). Only a few (like E.E. Cummings, Wallace Stevens, and Auden) are described as still writing without incurring some glancing censure from Williams.

⁶⁹ Williams, *Autobiography*, 357.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

fatigues him.”⁷¹ In other forums, however, Williams exhibited less satisfaction with the balance he had established between his medical practice and his writing. In response to a 1929 *Little Review* questionnaire that asked, “What should you like most to do, to know, to be? (In case you are not satisfied),” Williams replied, “I’d like to be able to give up the practice of medicine and write all day and all night.”⁷² Since several scholars have already analyzed the discrepancies throughout Williams’s writing in his assessment of his negotiation of his medical and literary careers, I will not discuss the matter at greater length.⁷³ Instead, I want to highlight the ways in which Williams’s use of disjunction and interruption complicates what might otherwise be read as the *Autobiography’s* suppression of conflict in his negotiation of careers and communities. These formal devices—ones that are in fact hallmarks of modernist aesthetics—engender the participation of the reader in negotiating the relationship between Williams’s literary and local communities.

At first, Williams’s form is deceptively simple. The first two sections of the *Autobiography* move roughly chronologically through Williams’s life up until the 1930s, and then the third section revisits his youth and some pre-1930 experiences before completing his chronology. The third section also intersperses more meditative chapters such as “The Practice” and “Of Medicine and Poetry” and “Projective Verse” (in which Williams quotes extensively from Charles Olson’s essay of the same title) amongst its anecdotal ones. The formal features of the autobiography, if they are discussed at all, are often cited by critics as a function of, or at least implicitly related to, the autobiography’s rapid composition. Herbert Liebowitz, for example, describes the style of the book as “slapdash.”⁷⁴ Williams did indeed write his autobiography quickly, at a rate of nearly 30

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 359.

⁷² William Carlos Williams, “[Questionnaire Response],” *The Little Review: Literature, Drama, Music, Art* 12, no. 2 (1929): 87.

⁷³ James Breslin in *William Carlos Williams; An American Artist*, for example, looks to Williams’s short stories as a place in which Williams deals with the mixed emotions he felt regarding his medical practice that Breslin claims Williams passes over in the *Autobiography*. Brian Bremen’s *William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture* broaches the issue as it explores how one might read Williams’s writings as “extension of his medical practice—as a kind of homeopathic and allopathic “medicine” that follows from his cultural diagnostics.” Breslin, *William Carlos Williams: An American Artist*, 8. See also Mariani, *New World Naked*. Williams, *Autobiography*, iv.

⁷⁴ Liebowitz, “‘You Can’t Beat Innocence’: The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams,” 35. When discussing the Paris section of Williams’s autobiography, Liebowitz characterizes Williams as “[t]oo

handwritten pages a day according to his best-known biographer Paul Mariani, starting December 1950 in an attempt to make a March 1st, 1951 deadline stipulated in his contract with Random House.⁷⁵ However Williams had been mulling over the project for a much longer period, as evidenced by the two installments' worth of autobiographical notes that he published in *Poetry* magazine in August 1948 and May 1949.⁷⁶

Ann Fisher-Wirth sees a little more artistry in Williams's technique and is more generously inclined in reading the motivation underlying Williams's form. She recognizes that Williams engages in a "contrapuntal arrangement of chapters" which "illuminate[s] [Williams's] life's various facets and play[s them] off against one another to develop certain themes," noting the suggestive juxtaposition of a chapter in which Williams recounts the difficult labor of a gargantuan patient with the next in which Stein asks Williams what she should do with all of her unpublished writings.⁷⁷ However, Fisher-Wirth argues that the *Autobiography* violates the principle that Williams quotes from Charles Olson in his "Projective Verse" chapter, that "FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT." She asserts that Williams's form "does not grow specifically out of the workings of Williams's imagination, as an extension of content, but out of the generic conventions of public autobiography" in that it is a "largely chronological, retrospective narrative, written from a fixed and disembodied point of view, which confines itself to the relation of those aspects of private

impatient to recreate the past," resorting instead to "eavesdropping on himself [through his borrowings of journal entries from his trip] and scrawling a few comments in the margins [...]" (43). Liebowitz, also, however sees this "choppy, indefinite, spontaneous" form as performative, speculating that it might derive from Williams's fear of "being nailed as an *homme serieu*." (43,35). Liebowitz remarks that "very look of the short paragraphs on the page testifies to a breathless running style [...] that betokens a refusal and terror of being pinned down" (35-36).

⁷⁵ Mariani, *New World Naked*, 628.

⁷⁶ These two installments were titled, "Some Notes towards an Autobiography: THE CHILDISH BACKGROUND" and spanned nine and eighteen pages respectively. The first contained material that would later form the bulk of the first three chapters of the autobiography. The second installment contained material that would later appear, supplemented by other material, in chapters eight, eleven, twelve, fourteen, fifteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, and twenty-two. Interestingly, much of the text published in *Poetry* is cut and pasted verbatim into the *Autobiography*. Herbert Liebowitz mistakenly footnotes these prose pieces as appearing in *Poetry* in 1950; the earlier date, however, indicates that the autobiography had been percolating in Williams's mind for a longer time period. Liebowitz, "'You Can't Beat Innocence': The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams," 46.

⁷⁷ Fisher-Wirth, *William Carlos Williams and Autobiography: The Woods of His Own Nature*, 2.

experience which will serve to create the impression he desires, of the nature and the meaning of his life.”⁷⁸

What Fisher-Wirth overlooks is that the “contrapuntal” structure does bear an important relation to the text’s content. It functions mimetically, communicating the bifurcated nature of Williams’s life, at once constructing and deconstructing the disjunctions between communities that it entails. At the autobiography’s outset, Williams writes:

Five minutes, ten minutes, can always be found. I had a typewriter in my office desk. All I needed to do was to pull up the leaf to which it was fastened and I was ready to go. I worked at top speed. If a patient came in at the door while I was in the middle of a sentence, bang would go the machine—I was a physician. When the patient left, up would come the machine.⁷⁹

This image from Williams’s Foreword captures one of the most intriguing aspects of how he chooses to represent his negotiation between his literary community and his local community/medical community in the *Autobiography*.⁸⁰ It offers a model for the form of the autobiography, a form in which Williams often shifts from a discussion of his literary peers to one of his patients and fellow doctors, with the rapidity and the abruptness of the snap of his typewriter. This disjunctive structure hits its stride in the book’s second section. After “First Years of Practice,” a chapter whose action principally involves Williams’s neighbors and family, the next chapter, “Painters and Parties,” jumps to detailing the New York literary scene prior to the First World War, with Williams focusing on Grantwood and the community of writers and artists that developed around *Others*.⁸¹ Williams then returns to his Rutherford community in the following chapter “Our Fisherman,” which tells of the man who went door-to-door in Rutherford selling the best quality fish. Though Williams makes no

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁹ Williams, *Autobiography*, iii-iv.

⁸⁰ Williams’s Foreword was penned after the completion of the body of the *Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* itself. Mariani, *New World Naked*, 631.

⁸¹ “First Years of Practice” also includes a very brief allusion to a visit by H.D. and Pound. This vignette highlights the uneasiness that results when Williams merges the communities that he inhabits. He tells us that “Floss was not at ease with either of them, but we all got along together more or less.” At a party thrown by Williams’s in-laws, Williams records how Pound reprimanded a Rutherford friend of his for his clownish antics by informing the young man, as cake was being passed around, that “A special portion with arsenic is being prepared for you in the kitchen.” Williams, *Autobiography*, 129.

overt commentary to this effect, the juxtaposition of these two chapters underlines the mutability and relatively short-lived nature of the *Others* group with the reliability of life in Rutherford, where “For thirty years, [the fisherman] never failed to appear.”⁸² In the following chapter, “The Wasteland,” the chapter break that had once separated the worlds dissolves and Williams begins toggling back and forth between communities without formal transitions. With no more than a double paragraph break, he moves from contemplating the heterogeneous literary “we” whose work toward a poetics of locality had been disrupted by the publication of *The Waste Land*, which Williams labels the “great catastrophe to our letters,” to discussing his medical service to the local Italian community, where for a period he delivered “nearly every baby born on those streets above the old copper mines.”⁸³ Such discontinuities persist throughout the text.

On the one hand, in keeping with the compartmentalization of community that Williams lays out in the Foreword, such disjunctions reify the distinctness of these worlds. Williams’s habitual omission of transitional phrases renders all the more jarring the shifts from depictions of Williams’s medical work and medical communities to those of his literary communities and interests and vice versa, plunging us into the middle of each without explanation or excuse to lessen the disorientation. On the other hand, the fact that Williams rarely narrates these transitions simultaneously constitutes a refusal to acknowledge the distinctness of these domains; he skips from a medical or Rutherford anecdote to a literary anecdote just as he skips from a literary anecdote to another literary anecdote—as if it were all a piece of the same cloth (and in some sense it is—the cloth of his life). The lack of transitions forces us as readers to construct our own bridges between the seemingly disparate communities. By denying us his own interpretive connective tissue, Williams renders these juxtapositions all the more potent because they require the reader’s active participation for some sort of synthesis to transpire. In this sense, Williams forces his readers to make the lives of his patients

⁸² The “fisherman” himself was not actually an inhabitant of Rutherford, but very much an adopted member of that community, making his rounds daily with a basket on his shoulder filled with fish he had picked up at the Fulton Market in New York that morning. Williams states that he is unsure where the man actually lived, but that “Floss always assumed he lived in New York City.” *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 146, 149.

and neighbors signify in relation to those of his literary peers and vice versa. In fact, precisely because Williams presents these as two distinct communities, we as readers are forced to do what Williams elsewhere wants us to do: connect the conditions and lives of the ordinary inhabitants of Williams's local communities to the aesthetic ideas and experiences of his artistic communities.

However, Williams also uses formal contrivances to signal the difficulty of negotiating these two communities. Williams inserts into the text three italicized "interruptions" that appear abruptly in chapters twenty-three, thirty-six, and forty-six. The first of these is particularly jarring as it arrives with no precedent and fails to announce any explicit relation to what follows and precedes it, or even clearly signal itself as a present moment interruption. Following a paragraph in which Williams recounts sending his first book to Pound in London, the reader is confronted with an intrusion of initially unplaceable text:

[...] It had in it one poem, at least, that he liked: "The Coroner's Merry Little Children." It had in it too, "The Lady of Dusk and Wood Fastness" to Flossie.
--this house is mad with bells: telephone, back door, front door, office bell. Today I woke up at dawn, it seemed, with the sharp sound of the office bell in my ears. I half-dressed, went down and no one was there. No one had been there. It was in my head. Now the house bell has been ringing. Floss was upstairs. It rang again and again. Floss went down. Someone to recover the book, Make Light of It, which I had just autographed for the daughter of an old school mate.
Walter Arensberg and Alfred Kremborg had, together, inaugurated a small poetry magazine called *Others* [...].⁸⁴

On the one hand, the passage interestingly juxtaposes the earliest stages of Williams's literary career with his current more celebrated status wherein the daughters of old schoolmates solicit autographs. But it also mimetically calls attention to the intrusions and interruptions entailed in the lifestyle Williams has chosen. Just as Williams's writing is disrupted by the constantly ringing bells of his house, his audience's experience of reading about Williams's early literary connections is interrupted by William's italicized passage detailing these interruptions. The passage is all the more disorienting for the reader because she must provide the context for it herself. The italics suggest initially that it might be a passage taken from one of Williams's journals from the nineteen-teens, and it is only

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

when one notes the reference to *Make Light of It* (1950) that it becomes apparent that the interruption is contemporaneous to the composition of the *Autobiography*.

The disorientation is repeated with the second and third italicized passages which surprise the reader again thanks to the intervening pages.⁸⁵ These interruptions to the narrative thread of Williams's *Autobiography*, which themselves literally record the interruptions that Williams must face as he writes the text, subtly undermine the Foreword's description of his facilely writing between patients.

In this light, Williams's earlier assertion, "As a writer, I have been a physician, and as a physician a writer" takes on a new and more pessimistic significance.⁸⁶ Whereas when the line first appears in the Foreword it seemingly suggests a symbiosis between the two professions, it now becomes colored by a sense of Williams's frustration at never being able to immerse himself in either world. Thus the form of Williams's autobiography uses typically modernist devices (disjunction, interruption) to complicate the narrative's explicit assertions about the nature of the boundaries between his literary and local communities and the degree of difficulty that negotiating them entailed. However this difficulty doesn't diminish the merit of the task. As *Paterson* informs its readers at the outset, "Rigor of beauty is the quest," and it is the difficulty of bridging the divorce between the local and the literary that gives *Paterson* its epic struggle.⁸⁷ The projective signification which Williams solicits from his reader through the use of juxtaposition in the *Autobiography* is also solicited through Williams's progression by juxtaposition in *Paterson*; here however, Williams also seeks to make his

⁸⁵ The second interruption appears, mid-sentence, roughly a hundred pages after the first:

These were the lush Republican years when money flourished like skunk cabbages in the swamps in April ...

Damn it, the phone ringing again...That was Mr. Taylor who said excitedly, You never wrote a poem in your life, Doc. What you write is prose, like Shakespeare.

when Doc K. was selling weekends at two hundred dollars a shot, complete: liquor, keep and a woman guaranteed; and when stupidity had no measure. (235)

The third interruption is an italicized dialogue in which the first speaker (presumably Williams's wife Flossie) asks the second speaker if he was "*up here*" [presumably the attic in which Williams often wrote] last night, and then when he responds in the affirmative, asks what he was writing. "*The story of my life—*" is the second speaker's reply. (306, 307)

⁸⁶ Williams, *Autobiography*, ii.

⁸⁷ William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, ed. Christopher MacGowan, Revised ed. (New York: New Directions, 1946, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1958; reprint, 1992), 3.

poem the discursive site through which his overlapping but mutually disengaged communities might themselves converse.

IV. Being the Locus: *Paterson* as a Site of Conversation

In a statement included in a New Directions press release announcing the publication of Book Four of *Paterson*, Williams describes his long poem in reference to two thematic dimensions. The first was an idea that may have originated as early as 1925 regarding the “resemblance between the mind of modern man and a city.”⁸⁸ Out of his desire to express this resemblance, there then arose the second front—a search for language. “We must know [this language] as our own,” Williams explains, “we must be satisfied that it speaks for us. And yet it must remain a language like all languages, a symbol of communication.”⁸⁹ Once Williams selected Paterson, NJ as his city, the falls of the Passaic River came to embody this language for him and his search “became to struggle to interpret this language.”⁹⁰ “This,” Williams asserts, “is the substance of the poem.” This search for language, however, also becomes a self-reflexive one pertaining to poetic praxis, so that for Williams it is also “the search of the poet for his language, his own language which I, quite apart from the material theme had to use to write at all.”⁹¹ Writing to Henry Wells in 1950, Williams frames his theme in a slightly different manner: “The problem is to be both local (all art is local) and at the same time to surmount that restriction by climbing to the universal in all art.”⁹² Then, writing not just of *Paterson* but more generally, Williams articulates his vision for the poem:

The poem to me (until I go broke) is an attempt, an experiment, a failing experiment, toward an assertion with broken means but an assertion, always, of a new and total culture, the lifting of an environment to expression. Thus it is social, the poem is a social instrument—accepted or not accepted seems to be of no material importance. It embraces everything we are.⁹³

⁸⁸ William Carlos Williams, “A Statement by William Carlos Williams about the Poem *Paterson*,” in *Paterson*, ed. Christopher MacGowan (New York: New Directions, 1992), xiii.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Williams, *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams*, 286.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

While the task of embracing everything we are is one perhaps too ambitious ever to be accomplished, it is a task that nonetheless leads Williams in *Paterson* to questions of community.

My intention is not to argue that the primary theme of *Paterson* is the struggle for the rapprochement of aesthetic and local communities. It is a testament to the richness of *Paterson* that the poem resists any attempts, including Williams's own, to summarize its topos so succinctly (or even at all!). Rather, I hope instead to illustrate how *Paterson* serves as a forum in which Williams grapples with the range of tensions involved in bringing local and literary communities into conversation. In making the difficulty and contention involved in this project part of his theme, Williams not only generates a productive tension that sustains and advances the poem, but he also highlights the importance and epic stature of his pursuit of a redeeming language. In the *Autobiography* Williams writes of the dialectic clouds which inhibit communication:

A dialectic is any arbitrary system which, since all systems are mere inventions, is necessarily in each case a false system, upon which a closed system is built shutting those who confine themselves to it from the rest of the world. All men one way or another use a dialectic cloud of some sort into which they are shut, whether it be an Argentina or a Japan. So each group is maimed. Each is enclosed in a dialectic cloud, incomunicado, and for that reason we rush into wars and prides of the most superficial natures.⁹⁴

Paterson's pursuit of a redeeming language calls for and enacts communication between literary and local communities so that they do not remain each enclosed in its own dialectic cloud, shut off from one another. *Paterson* takes as its aim—a goal that is at once an aesthetic commitment and a canonizing intervention—a blurring the boundaries between dialectical clouds until they dissolve into the larger poetic fabric of the sky.

Just as *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* positions itself polemically within the discourse community of Anglo-American modernism, so too does *Paterson*. The poem enacts an intentionally American and localized response to what Williams perceived as the European poetic traditions traitorously adopted by American expatriates T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. In this respect the poem emerges under the influence of (and in response to) two communal imperatives—that of

⁹⁴ Williams, *Autobiography*, 360-361.

Williams's locality and that of literary modernism. For decades, Williams's writing had been fuelled by his belief in the importance of an aesthetic grounded in the particulars of an artist's own locality and which could in turn speak to his or her local community.

It is, of course, worth noting that Paterson is not Rutherford. Williams's choice of Paterson as the site of his epic derives, nevertheless, from his identification with its community. If my analysis at times appears to conflate Paterson with Williams's hometown, it is in part because Williams himself makes a similar conflation. When it came to choosing a site for his long poem, Williams explains that he had been forced to reject the most obvious choice, his own suburb of Rutherford, as "not distinguished or varied enough for [his] purpose." He nonetheless wanted a location that he "knew in its most intimate details."⁹⁵ Unlike New York, which Williams saw as "too big, too much a congeries of the entire world's facets," Paterson was "nearer home, something knowable" and thus Williams deliberately selected Paterson "as [his] reality."⁹⁶ As a consequence, Williams was able to "write it in a way which would be characteristic not only of the place but of me." "I always wanted to write a poem celebrating the local material," Williams explained in an interview, "[...] to use only the material that concerned the locale that I occupied, that I do occupy still, to have no connection with the European world, but to be purely American, to celebrate it as an American."⁹⁷ Williams would further infuse the city of Paterson with voices from his own more limited local community. To this end, the poem records not only the conversations Williams would overhear during his walks through Paterson, but also voices from his own local community, including excerpts of letters given to him by his friends and neighbors.⁹⁸ In this manner, though Williams did not himself live in Paterson, he populated it with voices from his hometown.

⁹⁵ Williams, "A Statement by William Carlos Williams about the Poem Paterson," xiii.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Williams, *Interviews with William Carlos Williams: "Speaking Straight Ahead"*, 71-72.

⁹⁸ For example, the gossipy letter written in African-American vernacular that appears in section II of Book Three, was a letter written to the maid of Williams's neighbor Kitty Hoagland, while the comic letter detailing the impregnation of the dog Musty that appears in the first section of Book Two was passed along to Williams by Betty Stedman, a nurse and acquaintance of Williams's. Christopher MacGowan, "Annotations and Textual Notes," in *Paterson* (New York: New Directions, 1992), 283, 270.

An important aspect of *Paterson's* constitution of community derives from its form. For Williams, *Paterson's* form was one of the most important and frustrating elements of his long poem. Williams had conceived of the premise of *Paterson* as early as 1925 or 1927, but the form to express it eluded him.⁹⁹ Throughout the 1930s Williams had been researching and gathering materials for his poem. Writing to Ezra Pound in November of 1936, Williams expresses his desire to pen the poem, but an uncertainty regarding its form: "And then there's that magnum opus I've always wanted to do: the poem PATERSON. Jeez how I'd like to get at that. I've been sounding myself out in these years working toward a form of some sort..."¹⁰⁰ During the late 1930s and early 1940s Williams experimented with and ultimately abandoned a form for the poem that consisted of a series of short lyrics.¹⁰¹ Indeed, as late as 1943 Williams still felt unsettled in his form. His dilemma was almost the same as it had been in 1936. He explained to his publisher James Laughlin: "I am burned up to do it but I don't quite know how [...]It's all shaped up in outline and intent, the body of the thinking is finished but the technique, the manner and the method are unresolvable [sic] to date."¹⁰² Indeed, as the letter continues, Williams reveals that one of his struggles is his attempt to navigate and respond to the influences (both positive and negative) of his literary peers: "I am conscious of the surrealists, of the back to home shit-house mentality, the Church of England apostasy [likely a reference to T.S. Eliot], the stepped on, dragging his dead latter half Pound mentality—with the good and the new and the empty and the false all fighting a battle in my veins: unresolved."¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Williams, "A Statement by William Carlos Williams about the Poem *Paterson*," xiii.

¹⁰⁰ Williams, *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams*, 163.

¹⁰¹ Christopher MacGowan, "Preface," in *Paterson* (New York: New Directions, 1992), xi. As McGowan notes, Williams collected some of these lyrics intended for *Paterson* in a manuscript titled "Detail & Parody for the poem *Paterson*," a version of which is held in the Williams archives at SUNY Buffalo (xi). A number of these poems as well as the fifteen-poem sequence "For the poem *Paterson*" are published in the *Collected Poems, Volume II*, which McGowan co-edited with A. Walton Litz. William Carlos Williams, *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, ed. A. Walton Litz and Christopher J. MacGowan (New York: New Directions, 1986).

¹⁰² William Carlos Williams and James Laughlin, *William Carlos Williams and James Laughlin: Selected Letters*, ed. Hugh Witemeyer (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), 95.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 96.

Finding the right form was essential to Williams since, as he would argue in a 1948 letter to Jean Starr Untermeyer, the poet's ability to express his own community depends on the invention of a form commensurate to and representative of it:

We can't have a new (or old) poem built on a no-good or worn-out framework or underbody. Everything else of the poem comes *after* a proper framework has been raised. [...] It is basic for us to know that the English prosody we imitate as a matter of course is not determined by the mere facts of the mechanical syllabic sequences but an accretion through the ages from English history and character. And that these are NOT *our* character.

We've got to know that we have to invent for ourselves as we are in the process of inventing, whether we like it or not, a new prosody based on a present-day world, and real in a present-day world in which the English prosody can never be for us or the world.¹⁰⁴

The wrong form (especially one of English rather than American origin) could prove crippling and potentially limit the poem's ability to signify. For Williams, "*All* sonnets mean the same thing because it is the configuration of the words that is the major significance. Because it is a configuration (the sonnet) whose meaning supercedes any idea that may be crammed into it."¹⁰⁵ No received form would be able to express the "new and total culture" Williams sought to create. The problem then was to conceive of a form that would facilitate the conversations between communities that such a culture would entail.

The form and language that Williams ultimately selected for his poem were open, varied, and multi-vocal. *Paterson* employs a methodology of collage. It proceeds by juxtaposing a variety of types of lyric sections with other verse, prose, and "found" materials. Though the poem's use of juxtaposition and quoted passages resembles that of Pound in the *Cantos* or Eliot's in *The Waste Land*, Williams's methodology seeks out the universal and the epic not by drawing on materials pulled from a multitude of nations, languages, and time periods, but by grounding the poem in the particulars of the local. Accordingly, the poem's found (or rather appropriated) texts are most often ones with

¹⁰⁴ Williams, *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams*, 268-269. Emphasis Williams's.

¹⁰⁵ William Carlos Williams, *The Embodiment of Knowledge*, ed. Ron Loewinsohn (New York: New Directions, 1974), 17. Similar ideas regarding form as a feature whose significance trumps that of its content will reappear in later chapters, first in James Laughlin's arguments advanced in his *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* editorials about the progressive politics enacted by the renewal of stale language through experimental form, a politics which works above the level of content. In the pages of the *VOKS Bulletin*, the publication of the "U.S.S.R. Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries," Soviet critic A.K. Vasiliev would argue that decadent bourgeois forms (i.e. modernist forms) are incapable of expressing revolutionary ideas.

direct ties to Paterson: prose accounts from local histories, letters from neighbors and literary friends, and snippets of overheard speech. Williams interweaves the voices that these texts offer with those he generates specifically for the poem, which include, among others, Dr. Paterson, a persona who serves as the poem's man/city and a complex stand-in for Williams himself, and the "characters" of Phyllis and Corydon who join Dr. P in the "idyl" that begins the poem's fourth book.¹⁰⁶ As critics have noted, Williams's appropriated fragments demonstrate the variety of language types and speech patterns that constitute the American vernacular. However, these instances of language also importantly introduce a variety of figures into the poem. In combining the language of characters such as Corydon and Klaus Ehrens with the speech and writing that Williams lifts from a variety of personal and historical sources, the text assembles a diverse "city" of figures that, though they might not necessarily converse with each other outside of the poem, are nonetheless drawn into conversation through their juxtaposition within the poem.

Williams's chosen form allows him to generate precisely what Bakhtin, with his limited conception of the poem, argued was the domain of creative prose: a text that is characterized by "a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and diversity of individual voices, artistically organized."¹⁰⁷ Whereas Bakhtin is interested in the representational or even

¹⁰⁶ The figure of Dr. Paterson constitutes one of the poem's most interesting and radical instabilities. Though as a doctor/poet, Dr. P bears a certain resemblance to Williams, at times the poem takes pains to separate the persona from the poet, holding it up for critique. At others, the poem literally deconstructs the boundaries that separate the Dr. P persona from Williams's own poetic persona. For example, the first two A.G. letters are addressed to Doctor and Doc respectively in Book Four—invoking Doctor P., the only doctor mentioned in the poem to that point. The A.G. letter that appears in Book Five and continues the conversations of the previous letters, however, is addressed to Dr. Williams. Williams criticism would be well served by a detailed analysis of Williams's use of persona both within *Paterson* and his shorter poems.

¹⁰⁷ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press; reprint, 1981), 262. Expounding upon the heteroglossia of the novel and its sociological stylistics, Bakhtin writes, "the language of the prose writer deploys itself according to degrees of greater or lesser proximity to the author and to his ultimate semantic instantiation: certain aspects of language directly and unmediatedly express (as in poetry) the semantic and expressive intentions of the author, others refract these intentions; the writer of prose does not meld completely with any of these words, but rather accents each of them in a particular way—humorously, ironically, parodically and so forth; yet another group may stand even further from the author's ultimate semantic instantiation, still more thoroughly refracting his intentions; and there are, finally, those words that are completely denied any authorial intentions: the author does not express *himself* in them (as the author of the word)—rather, he *exhibits* them as a unique speech-thing, they function for him as something completely reified." Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, 299.

documentary function that the heteroglossia of the novel entails, that is its ability to register, “with extreme subtlety the tiniest shifts and oscillations of the social atmosphere” as well as the “whole, in all of its aspects” from which it was born, Williams’s deployment of heteroglossia transcends mere representation to engage in constitutive acts.¹⁰⁸ By incorporating a variety of voices and linguistic registers, the poem engenders a dialogic relationship that not only represents a particular community or set of communities and places them in conversation, but also constitutes a new community with no exterior antecedent.

Two of the loosely assembled and at times overlapping communities that emerge from the poem’s heteroglossia are the citizens, contemporary and historical, of Paterson—that is, a community rooted in locality—and a contemporary literary community—that is, a community discursively rooted in its aesthetic concerns and status. The struggle to establish a relationship between these two communities was, as we have seen, a concern that pervades Williams’s interpersonal engagements and aesthetic philosophy. The gulf between these communities is thematized in *Paterson* as one of the poem’s various divorces that the speaker claims are “the sign of knowledge in our time.”¹⁰⁹ Though ultimately the poem is interested in the convergence of these communities, for the purposes of my analysis, it is instructive to first look at how *Paterson* constitutes each one individually.

Paterson engages the concept of literary community on two interrelated fronts. First, *Paterson* manifests a literary community of its own by including a selection of letters that ostensibly exemplify Dr. P.’s literary correspondence. Second, the poem itself stands as a contribution to the aesthetic conversations of modernism. Williams positions the poem polemically within this discourse community and proceeds throughout the poem to debate his literary peers on the values and subject matter of contemporary literature.

One of the first things that *Paterson*, as a poem, does is signal its entrance into the aesthetic debates of literary modernism. The italicized passage that follows the poem’s title page but precedes its verse preface positions the poem’s ambitions in relation to the poetic projects of other

¹⁰⁸ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, 300.

¹⁰⁹ William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, 17.

modernists. By opening with a colon, Williams suggests that the italicized list that follows the title page provides examples for or definitions of what *Paterson* is. Accordingly, we learn that *Paterson* is both “a local pride” as well as “a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands.”¹¹⁰ These phrases signpost the poem’s commitment to a localist aesthetic defined in contrast to foreign poetic traditions. As we saw in the Prologue to *Kora in Hell* (1920), Williams had been for decades publicly denouncing the allusive and overly erudite style of writers like T.S. Eliot and his college friend Ezra Pound, objecting to the manner in which their writings often fetishized the Classical, continental, and English literary canons. Nearly thirty years later, Williams was still defining himself in opposition to Eliot. In a 1948 talk at the University of Washington, Williams would sneeringly set out their different ambitions: “We are in a different phase—a new language—we are making the mass in which some later Eliot will dig.”¹¹¹ *Paterson* would establish itself as a living text engaging local particulars rather than one that traffics in another culture’s dead languages. In *Paterson*’s verse preface, the poem’s speaker implicitly casts himself as “just another dog / among a lot of dogs” with “the rest”—so many of his modernist peers—having “run out—/ after the rabbits” in Europe.¹¹² Thus at *Paterson*’s inception, Williams positions himself as the poet who stayed home and pledges allegiance to his locality and its aesthetic possibility.

Brian Bremen has observed that “Only dogs figure more frequently than Eliot in *Paterson*.”¹¹³ One might make an equally compelling argument on Pound’s behalf. *Paterson*’s opening riff on Eliot’s *Four Quartets*—“For the beginning is assuredly / the end—since we know nothing, pure / and simple, beyond / our own complexities”—and its Book Two parody of Pound’s *Usury Canto* (Canto XLV)—“Without invention nothing is well spaced”—are but two of the more explicit ways in which

¹¹⁰ William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, 2.

¹¹¹ William Carlos Williams, “The Poem as a Field of Action,” in *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams*, ed. Bram Dijkstra (New York: Random House, 1954), 285. Williams’s expounds at length in this talk distinguishing his position from Eliot’s. That Williams’s speech was given at a university highlights his attempt to influence the processes of literary consolidation and to make an argument for his poetic vision against Eliot’s (for he does posit them as opposed).

¹¹² William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, 3.

¹¹³ Bremen, *William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture*, 180.

Williams invokes modernist community in order to revise and literally re-write its values.¹¹⁴ Indeed, when *Paterson* alludes to literary works or figures, it is by and large to relatively contemporary works and authors. More and less obscure allusions to George Santayana, Marianne Moore, Antonin Artaud, Norman Douglas, Nathanael West, Gilbert Sorrentino, Gertrude Stein, e.e. cummings make their way into the poem's fabric. Though Williams does allude to Villon, Dante, and, on a number of occasions, Chaucer, it is not until the poem's fifth book, that Williams adopts a historical approach and delineates "A WORLD OF ART / THAT THROUGH THE YEARS HAS // SURVIVED?"¹¹⁵

In engaging Eliot, Williams was engaging arguably the most successful and most canonical modern(ist) poet at the time. As such, his attempts to counter Eliot's emphasis on European traditions and culture with an American and localized poetics is necessarily a gesture aimed at redirecting the processes of modernist literary consolidation. In engaging Pound, Williams is challenging a one-time impresario of modernist community. Accordingly Williams's integration of two of Pound's idiosyncratically styled letters offer both a refutation of Pound's contrasting aesthetic ideas and a symbolic reply to modernism's "village explainer."¹¹⁶

Positioned near the end of Book Three facing the substratum record of materials found in a Paterson well, the first of Pound's two didactic and blustering missives continues the contestatory spirit initiated by the earlier challenges of the letters from the poem's Cress (aspiring poet Marcia

¹¹⁴ William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, 3, 50. For a further discussion of Williams's engagement with Eliot and Pound in *Paterson*, see Bremen, *William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture*, 180-184; Louis L. Martz, "The Unicorn in *Paterson*," in *Modern Critical Views: William Carlos Williams*, ed. Harold Bloom (1960; New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986).

¹¹⁵ William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, 207. The allusions to literary figures can be found throughout *Paterson* as follows: George Santayana (94), Marianne Moore (110), Antonin Artaud (137), Norman Douglas (170), Nathanael West (187), Gilbert Sorrentino (212), Gertrude Stein (219), e.e. cummings (221-22) Villon (176), and Dante (163). Two of Williams's Chaucer allusions include one to *Troilus and Criseyde* in the signature he appends—"La votre C." (91)—to one of the Marcia Nardi letters and another to *The Canterbury Tales* (176). For a detailed discussion of Williams's Chaucer allusions, see Gale C. Schricker, "The Case of Cress: Implications of Allusion in *Paterson*," *William Carlos Williams Review* 10, no. 2 (1985): 16-27.

¹¹⁶ In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein alludes to Pound's didacticism by describing him as a "village explainer, excellent if you were a village, but if you were not, not." Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933; New York: Vintage Books; reprint, 1990), 200.

Nardi) and E.D. (writer and critic Edward Dahlberg).¹¹⁷ Pound's first letter provides the poem's Dr. P with a reading list of books, including "all the Gk tragedies in / Loeb—plus Frobenius, plus Gesell./ plus Brooks Adams" as well as Golding's Ovid in the Everyman's library edition advising that he read them "fer yr / mind's sake."¹¹⁸ As scholars have noted, Williams's juxtaposition of the letter with the substratum findings report that appears on the facing page levels an implicit critique of this pedantic approach to honing the literary mind. The report notes that the drilling of the well was abandoned, "the water being all together unfit for ordinary use."¹¹⁹ Pound's suggestions, with their invocation of foreign traditions, will not furnish Williams with the language he needs to write a poem that will communicate with and bring to expression his locality. Williams, in turn, further juxtaposes both of these items with the verse passage that follows them. It records the poet's search for fertile land in the wake of the flood that follows the third book's tornado and fire. What he finds, however, once the water recedes is a mud, a "pustular scum, a decay a choking / lifelessness—that leaves the soil clogged after it."¹²⁰ This description in turn recalls the lifeless and decaying books destroyed in the second section's library fire. Contextualized in this manner, Pound's letter represents an approach to literature, a mining of past literary works, that the poem critiques as infertile, producing no water "fit for ordinary use." As Christopher McGowan explains in his textual notes for *Paterson*, this critique was not lost on Pound, who fired back with the response (later incorporated into the poem's fourth book), "just because they ain't no water fit for drink in that spot (or you ain't found none) don't mean there ain't no fresh water to be had NOWHERE."¹²¹ Thus Pound's letter and its concomitant juxtapositions rehearse the age-old debate between the two friends regarding the relative values of an aesthetic rooted in a canon of texts as opposed to locality.

¹¹⁷ Though Williams includes no name with Pound's letters, most readers circulating in the various communities of literary modernism would recognize his idiosyncratic letter-writing style with its shorthand and its phonetic spellings, and the top of the first letter does list it as originating in S. Liz, short for St. Elizabeth's, the mental asylum outside of Washington D.C. where Pound was housed after being judged incompetent to stand trial for treason proceedings.

¹¹⁸ Williams, *Paterson*, 138.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²¹ MacGowan, "Annotations and Textual Notes," 291-292; Williams, *Paterson*, 182.

However, Pound's letter also performs an important instigatory function that I earlier argued Williams locates in literary community. It offers Williams an opposing view from which he derives energy to redouble his search for an American poetic language, propelling the poem forward. As I will discuss shortly, though the inclusion of A[llen]. G[insburg].’s letters of agreement and discipleship in Book Four and Book Five forecast the adoption by others of Williams’s poetic project and help to confirm his literary legacy, they do not offer the generative discursive challenge of Pound’s dispatches.

Before turning to those conversations, we must first revisit the other genre of community specified at the outset of this chapter’s analysis of *Paterson*—that is, communities of locality. In his astute analysis of Williams’s urban epic, Kevin McNamara argues that Williams outgrew his initial trope of the city like a man, and “moved *Paterson* toward a representation of a city as an open nexus of overlapping communities with different histories, interests, and even languages” so that William’s structural principle ultimately became that of a “decentered, open totality.”¹²² Like his contestatory vision of literary community, the communal vision of Williams’s city is not one based on identity but predicated on all benefiting from having a forum for difference.

Book Two’s “Sunday in the Park” scene stands in part as an exercise in an individualist vision of community. Williams here thematizes a not altogether displeasing tension between association and individuation. The pivot on which this tension turns is cast almost immediately as spatial. Williams describes Paterson, writing, “himself among the others, / --treads there the same stones/ on which their feet slip as they climb, / paced by their dogs!”¹²³ In noting that Paterson is among others, Williams individuates him, by differentiating him from the mass. Yet Paterson is drawn into relation with those others and joins them through their shared action of treading upon the same stones. What connects him to them, what makes him a part of the “great beast” of the populous, is the “common” ground they share, so that “from place / to place he [Dr. P] moves, / his

¹²² McNamara, *Urban Verbs: Arts and Discourses of American Cities*, 147, 170.

¹²³ Williams, *Paterson*, 44.

voice mingling with other voices.”¹²⁴ The park scene is constructed of individuals, or small groups of individuals, whose simultaneous presence—i.e. spatial proximity—in the park connects them to one another and makes of them a community. In this sense the park serves as a microcosm of the city.

Throughout the “Sunday in the Park” episode, Williams constantly highlights the fact that the collective is made of individuals. Throughout the first section especially, the narrative oscillates back and forth between recording Paterson’s vision of the people around him as a collective, as seen in the formulations “And still the picknickers come on” or “the amnesiac crowd,” and his observation of individuals or groups of individuals within that crowd.¹²⁵ Similarly Williams uses enjambment to highlight the tension between association and individuation. For example, in appropriating the label Alexander Hamilton applies to the people in one of the book’s historical passages, Williams explains that, “The ‘great beast’ come to sun himself / as he may/ . . . their dreams mingling, / aloof.”¹²⁶ By breaking the line between “mingling” and “aloof,” Williams permits the collective to be sustained in one line, only to have its separate individual constitution invoked with the following line. The figures may mix, they may ironically be subsumed in the term the “great beast” and its associated pronoun “he,” but they importantly and comfortably retain their individuality within the whole. Book Two’s Sunday spent in the park stands as an emblematic articulation of Paterson’s local community. It presents a group of people inhabiting the same space but nonetheless heterogeneous, moving individually and in groups, “walking indifferently through/ each other’s privacy.”¹²⁷

The question begged by McNamara’s characterization of Williams’s “city as an open nexus of overlapping communities”, a question that is indeed central to Williams’s own project, is what binding forces work so that there is a (albeit decentered) nexus to speak of. Reading between the

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²⁵ Some of the individuals Doctor P. observes include the semi-naked couple lying on a blanket beneath the leaves or Mary, who dances and sings, and whose voice wafts into the text of *Paterson*, reprimanding the others in her group, “What a bunch of bums! Afraid somebody see/ you?/ Blah! / *Excrementi!*”, and of course the individual who, in the poem’s second section, stands in the midst of it all, the preacher, Klaus Ehrens. *Ibid.*, 54, 60, 51, 57.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

lines of both Williams and McNamara, the answer seems to be bipartite. It is both *place* and *language* that enable contact between individuals and communities. This concept of ‘contact’ was so central to the young Williams that he made it the title of the magazine he co-edited first with Robert McAlmon in 1920 and then, in a second incarnation, with Nathanael West in 1932. But the dual nature of this reply in part replicates the rift that runs through *Paterson* with regards to its literary and local communities. Too often, Williams suggests, the language is lacking to bridge the literal and figurative distance between the poem’s various inhabitants and communities. *Paterson’s* historical passages often illustrate this, weaving a complex web of social relations that point to tragic failures of communication, of which Sam Patch and Sarah Cummings, “both silent, uncommunicative” in their fates are but two of the more obvious examples.¹²⁸ This tragedy occurs not only between individuals, but also between communities, as it does between the indigenous population and the white settlers in the devastating Kinte Kaye passage that punctuates the third book’s “The Library” episode. What *Paterson* laments is not only the lack of a viable language for the inhabitants of Paterson to communicate with each other and the world, but the lack of communication between the communities of literature and Paterson. If geography provides the contact that constructs the heterogeneous community/ies of Paterson, the city, it is that same geography that divides it from much of the literary world. In the Library section, Williams illustrates how language—which could bridge this divide—often fails to do so.

In moving from the park to the library, the poem moves to the physical site of contact between the community of the titular city and that of the literary world. The failure of communication that occurs between these two domains is one of the divorces that the poem laments. The divorce derives not so much from contestation—a force ubiquitous throughout *Paterson* and one that, as we have seen, Williams posits as generative—but rather from a failure to engage. During a passage treating of the burning of the city’s library during the Paterson fire of 1902, Williams comments on literature’s failure to speak to an audience beyond other writers and, in

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

particular, its failure to speak to the inhabitants of a locality like *Paterson*. Within the library's walls, Dr. P meditates upon (and at times despairs at) the possibility of his writing a poem that could bring into expression his locally situated "beautiful thing." For him, the "Library is desolation, it has the smell of its own of stagnation and death," filled as it is with dead authors and dead and foreign traditions.¹²⁹ It is no coincidence that Pound's letter with its reading list appears later in this same book. This is the world that Williams would see as the domain of Eliot and, to a certain extent Pound; it is certainly the world on which both figures draw in the creation of their poetry. But for the Williams of Book Three, the library does not represent a tradition amongst which he aspires to take his place and, following Eliot's model in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," alter the "*whole* existing order" through the "supervention of novelty."¹³⁰ The "pathetic" library "must go down" in the fire that ultimately engulfs it because it fails at the task of communication. It is—Williams declares with the added emphasis of all caps—"SILENT BY DEFECT OF VIRTUE IN THAT IT / CONTAINS NOTHING OF YOU."¹³¹ The books contained therein are unable to speak to or represent Williams's variably incarnated Beautiful Thing, which in a nearby passage appears as a battered woman whom the poem's Doctor P[aterson] encounters on a medical call. In this way, the books in the library fail to engage in a poetics that represents and values the particulars of the quotidian experiences of the local populace. As a consequence, for Williams and Dr. P, "That which should be/ rare, is trash; because it contains / nothing of you."¹³²

Though Williams is more forcefully critical of the literary canon's disinclination to engage subjects like his "the beautiful thing," literature's silence, Williams suggests, is often compounded by a deafness or blindness on the part of Paterson's inhabitants. Offering a marriage riddle, "So much talk of the language—when there are no / ears," Williams reveals how the problem of

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹³⁰ T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1998), 29.

¹³¹ Williams, *Paterson*, 123.

¹³² *Ibid.*

communication cuts both ways.¹³³ On the one hand, writers have failed to invent a language that will garner them an audience beyond themselves, so that, as it appears later during the library fire, “those who have written books,” “cry back to us from the fire [...] / wanting to be chaffed / and cherished.”¹³⁴ On the other hand, writers who do actively want to engage a broader audience—as Williams did—often find that audience unwilling or absent.¹³⁵ Indeed, given this riddle’s context within the third book’s self-reflexive meditation on writing and art, the dictum can be read as a lament that *this* poem, Williams’s own meditation on language and literature, will not find an audience.

The matter is certainly turned inward in following section, section II, in which the speaker acknowledges the difficulties of being a writer, by remarking that “being/ in a position to write,” is “nine tenths/ of the difficulty.”¹³⁶ A few lines later, Williams launches into a passage that is worth quoting at length:

[...] They see
to it, not by intellection but
by sub-intellection (to want to be
blind as a pretext for
saying, We’re so proud of you!
A wonderful gift! How *do*
you find the time for it in
your busy life? It must be a great
thing to have such a pastime.
But you were always a strange
boy. How’s your mother?)
—the cyclonic fury, the fire,
the leaden flood and finally

¹³³ Ibid., 106.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 123.

¹³⁵ Though I find some of his readings to be unconvincingly allegorical, Daniel Morris’s study *The Writings of William Carlos Williams: Publicity for the Self*, does present persuasive evidence that Williams actively sought out a larger audience than that normally obtained by avant-garde poetry. Williams’s attempts to engage his own neighbors with his own writing and aesthetic philosophies have been discussed earlier in this chapter.

¹³⁶ Williams, *Paterson*, 113.

the cost—

Your father was *such* a nice man.
I remember him well .

Or, Geeze, Doc, I guess it's all right
But what the hell does it mean?¹³⁷

In his critical biography of Williams, Paul Mariani cites the first few lines of this passage and reads it as referring to how the life of the writer is made more difficult by religious orthodoxies, the academies, and the big boys of literature who are jealous that the forces of poetic invention might “upset all of their poetic theories.”¹³⁸ Though certainly the forces of status quo might find writing such as Williams’s threatening, the sub-intellection that transpires in the parenthetical passage is not that of the academy but rather that of the speaker’s (be it Williams’s or Dr. P’s) neighbors and patients. The responses offered by the *melée* of voices are ones that show no engagement with the poet’s work. With their pretext of blindness, they engage it only in the realm of conversational pleasantries: “It must be a great / thing to have such a pastime.” Or when they do address the writing specifically, as one figure does, it is only quickly to resign in the face of its difficulty—“Geeze, Doc, I guess it's all right / but what the hell does it mean?”¹³⁹ For Williams, the solution is not to make the poem transparent. “Obscurity is the very necessary impact to the listener and reader when anything really new is presented,” Williams explained in an interview a year after Book Three of *Paterson* was published; “The mind is conditioned to the past” and it is only once man has “penetrated the obscure jungle” that he can “come out onto the plateau where he has a much broader vision than he ever knew in the past.”¹⁴⁰ Thus grappling with difficulty is a vital part of the reading process—a process that the reader, local or otherwise, must not evade through “sub-intellection.”

In the third section of the third book depicting the flood that afflicted Paterson in 1902 along with that year’s tornado and fire, Williams does not resolve the divorce between the literary and

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹³⁸ Mariani, *New World Naked*, 582.

¹³⁹ Williams, *Paterson*, 114.

¹⁴⁰ Williams, *Interviews with William Carlos Williams: "Speaking Straight Ahead"*, 70-71.

the local, but he does attempt to bring some resolution to Dr. P's search for language. The answer he devises is to "write carelessly so that nothing that is not green will survive."¹⁴¹ Book Four, by contrast, does gesture toward a resolution of the gulf between literary and local communities through the "idyl" of Phyllis and Corydon and through the letters of A.G. Whereas throughout *Paterson* Williams has juxtaposed and interspersed the language and concerns of literary community with the language and concerns of the inhabitants of Paterson, in the fourth book, he literally places the two in conversation with one another through the figures of Phyllis, the grounded young Ramapo nurse who trained in Paterson, and Corydon, the older cosmopolitan New York poetaster who hires Phyllis as her masseuse. Though Williams plays up the relationship between the two for its comedy, punctuating it with Corydon's romantic overtures toward Phyllis and Phyllis's unmannered deflations of Corydon's pretensions, literary and otherwise, the idyll nonetheless shows that these two worlds might indeed be brought into conversation.

The poetry that Corydon reads to Phyllis is both overly ornate and unnecessarily allusive. In one poem Corydon takes as her topic a helicopter's search for the body of a suicide in the East River, an event that she and Phyllis had witnessed from her window. However the event is comically distorted through Corydon's showy conceits: "a whirring pterodactyl / of a contrivance, to remind one of Da Vinci, searches the Hellgate current for some corpse, lest the gulls feed on it [...]"¹⁴² Later, reading the line "that love is begrimed, befouled" Corydon pauses to comment to Phyllis "I'd like to spill the truth, on that one." When plain-spoken Phyllis replies "Why don't you?" Corydon objects "This is a POEM!" suggesting her misguided belief that poetry must mask its pronouncements in metaphor and allusion.¹⁴³ Though their interaction illustrates the disjunction between a literature out-of-touch with the quotidian and an audience uninterested in literature all together, their conversation holds out the possibility that through communication they might temper

¹⁴¹ Williams, *Paterson*, 129.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 164.

each other's opposing excesses. In orchestrating this contact, Williams and *Paterson* enact what in the third book the speaker merely posited:

Say I am the locus
where two women meet

One from the backwoods
a touch of the savage
and of T. B.
(a scar on the thigh)

The other — wanting,
from an old culture .
--and offer the same dish
different ways

Let the colors run .¹⁴⁴

It is this running of colors, this blurring of boundaries between the communities' dialectical clouds that poem desires.

What the conversations of Phyllis and Corydon initiate, the letters of A.G. fulfill. The three letters Williams includes from young poet A.[llen] G.[insberg] in Books Four and Five affirm Williams's commitment to a poetics of locality, the commitment from which the poem *Paterson* is born.¹⁴⁵ Unlike the contestatory letters of E.D, Cress, and the unnamed Pound, A.G.'s letter is a letter of discipleship and identification. The figure of A.G. constitutes an overlap, a convergence that undermines the boundary between the literary and the local or, in the conceptual framework that Nardi and Dahlberg's earlier letters provide, between literature and lived experience. In introducing himself to Dr. P, A.G. appeals to him as both a member of his local and literary communities, writing,

Not only do I inscribe this missive somewhat in the style of those courteous sages of yore who recognized one another across the generations as brotherly children of the muses (whose names they well know) but also as a fellow citizenly Chinamen of the same province, whose gastanks, junkyards, fens of the alley, millways, funeral parlors river-visions—aye! the falls itself—are images white-woven in their very beards.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁴⁵ The first edition of Books IV and the New Classics reset employ the alias A. P. (McGowan 289).

¹⁴⁶ Williams, *Paterson*, 172-173.

As such, A.G. represents a bridge in the divide between local and literary that *Paterson* thematizes. Ginsberg presents himself as a man who, like Williams, envisions "some new kind of speech—different at least from what I have been writing down—in that it has to be a clear statement of fact about misery (and not misery itself), and splendor if there is any out of the subjective wanderings through Paterson."¹⁴⁷ Williams and Dr. P have thus found a fellow explorer in their search for a redeeming language that could bring into conversation the communities of locality and literature.

In his third letter, which appears towards the beginning of *Paterson's* Book Five, the young poet safely resists the temptations of mental and physical expatriation that Williams had lamented overwhelmed so many of his literary peers. Though A.G. informs Williams of a trip to the North Pole to be followed by a trip to Europe, he reassures the elder poet that he has "NOT absconded from Paterson" and that when he's seen enough he'll be back "to splash in the Passaic again only with a body so naked and happy City Hall will have to call out the Riot Squad."¹⁴⁸ His letter reaffirms his allegiance to locality as he writes, "Paterson is only a big sad poppa who needs compassion. . . In any case Beauty is where I hang my hat. And reality. And America."¹⁴⁹ In his distinctively American vernacular, Ginsberg acknowledges, as Williams had argued in "Effie Deans," that beauty can be found in any locality. It is the confluence of Williams's and A.G.'s literary and local commitments that leads Brian Bremen to read Ginsberg as representative of "the continuation of Paterson, both place and poem, in history."¹⁵⁰

The appearance of A.G. in *Paterson* as the perpetuation of Williams's literary legacy is a symbolic gesture that finds an analog in his *Autobiography*. There Williams devotes a chapter to reproducing and analyzing a large excerpt of Charles Olson's statement, "Projective Verse," which had been recently printed in *Poetry New York*. In his essay Olson expounds upon working in "OPEN [form], or what can also be called COMPOSITION BY FIELD, as opposed to inherited line, stanza, over-all form, what is the 'old' base of the non-projective," thereby developing ideas that Williams

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹⁵⁰ Bremen, *William Carlos Williams and the Diagnostics of Culture*, 196.

himself has championed in his quest to develop a new American poetic language and form.¹⁵¹ These lengthy quotations from (then) young poets serves as a means of establishing both Williams's personal legacy (Olson's essay references Williams by name) and tracing the trajectory of aesthetic ideas that are important to him by locating them in the work of younger poets.

In an unpublished essay composed circa 1948, Williams observed, "I think it takes many generations of local culture to produce great excellence in the arts—and so, in literature."¹⁵² Though the cultural soils of Paterson and the Passaic region have brought forth a like-minded poet in A. G., however this new-found fertility imports a new set of tensions to the poem's communal negotiations.

In A.G., Williams finds a figure who, like Williams himself, constitutes an overlap between the communities of locality and those of modern literature. Their shared commitment to a poetics of locality promises a further erosion of the false boundaries between the local and the literary.

However, precisely because of the unification and resolution that they bring, the A.G. letters also occupy a problematic position within *Paterson's* construction of community. In the first A.G. letter, the younger poet suggests that Doctor P "will be pleased to realize that at least one actual citizen of your community has inherited your experience in his struggle to love and know his own world-city, through your own work, which is an accomplishment you almost cannot have hoped to achieve."¹⁵³

Indeed, the net cast with the first three books of *Paterson* appears to have caught its prize fish—a reader and a writer whose local and literary commitments are in keeping with Williams's. However in occasioning this achievement, the figure of A.G. also saps some of the energy that the poem derived from its struggle. Precisely because A.G. shares Dr. P's and Williams's local and literary concerns he is a less engaging interlocutor than the provocative figures Cress, E.D. or Pound. Though certainly Williams's endless championing of the local as the only universal is indicative of his desire to win over followers to this credo, a follower doesn't present the same impetus that a challenger does.

Thus though A.G.'s second letter suggests certain local details that Williams comes to incorporate

¹⁵¹ Williams, *Autobiography*, 330.

¹⁵² William Carlos Williams, "Theory of Excellence in the Arts," in *A Recognizable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists*, ed. Bram Dijkstra (New York: New Directions, 1978).

¹⁵³ Williams, *Paterson*, 173.

into his poem, the verse that A.G.'s prompt inspires is less impassioned and far-reaching than that generated by some of Dr. P's more adversarial correspondents.¹⁵⁴ Ultimately, A.G.'s letters bring with them the satisfactions and complacencies of consolidation rather than the stimulation of contestation.

Paterson's Book Five presents a similarly problematic addendum to the poem's negotiation of literary and local community. By and large, the scholarship on *Paterson* has tended to see the poem's fifth book as a gesture towards unity. James Breslin, for example, asserts that the poet of Book Five is "is no longer struggling to get into the position in which to write; he now occupies that position" and instead of "splitting things down to their elementary particles" he now seeks to "pull them together, easily, into unity."¹⁵⁵ Adopting a slightly different perspective, Kevin McNamara astutely reads Book Five as promoting a vision of art as an "ideal of unity that does not negate the differences among its constituents." As such, McNamara sees it as producing an "effective coda to the poem's speculations on representation and community" in that it extends the work of the earlier books by "turning to the place of art in and as a community."¹⁵⁶ Yet, as I hope my analysis has shown, the place of art in and as a community has been one of the poem's chief concerns from the outset.

What distinguishes *Paterson's* final complete book is that the issue of aesthetic legacy is no longer being addressed in relation to the local particularities of Paterson, NJ. The "*local pride*" that fuelled Williams's poem in its first four books is subsumed in the fifth book's assertion that "Anywhere is everywhere."¹⁵⁷ Though this maxim is but an extension of the concept of the local as the only universal, its rephrasing shifts focus from the local we have come to associate with Paterson to the more hypothetical anywhere. The particular remains central to Williams; indeed it is an attention to the particular that, the poet suggests, constitutes the basis for an artwork's admission to

¹⁵⁴ Williams manifests his response to A.G.'s suggestion—"I wonder if you have seen River Street most of all, because that is really the heart of what is to be seen"—by situating the letter in the midst of a lengthy versification of historical prose from Charles P. Longwell's *A Little Story of Paterson as Told by an Old Man* which alludes to River Street. *Ibid.*, 193. The passage A.G.'s letter engenders, however, is neither original (the language is by and large Longwell's) or particularly interesting.

¹⁵⁵ Breslin, *William Carlos Williams: An American Artist*, 206.

¹⁵⁶ McNamara, *Urban Verbs: Arts and Discourses of American Cities*, 171.

¹⁵⁷ Williams, *Paterson*, 231.

the “WORLD OF ART / THAT THROUGH THE YEARS HAS // *SURVIVED!*”¹⁵⁸ Yet the particular that Williams takes up in Book Five is what might be termed a generalized particular grounded in the locality of *any* artist, rather than the particularized particular of Dr. P’s, Williams’s, and the poem’s own locality. Consequently, the conversations that Paterson’s methodology of collage enables in Book Five are conversations that, though they bear upon the local communities of Paterson in a theoretical fashion, are ultimately conversations between artists.¹⁵⁹ The local voices of Patersonians that populated the poem’s earlier books have, for the most part, fallen out.

In this sense, Williams’s overt turn to aesthetic legacy in the final book garners mixed results. Focusing principally on painters, Williams works throughout the section to generate a canon whose ranks include modernists Ben Shahn, Paul Klee, Picasso, and Juan Gris, alongside Dürer, Leonardo [DaVinci], Bosch, Brueghel, and Toulouse Lautrec (to whom the section is dedicated). Williams allies himself with these artists, casting them as those whose work has endured because they have succeeded in capturing the specific reality of the conditions around them. Ironically, in developing this world of art, Williams moves away from and overshadows the focus on his specific locality of Paterson. That is, in making a more generalized consolidating argument about the value of a tradition of the local and the particular in art, Williams ceases producing the type of writing on whose behalf he argues. Yet at the same time, this shift also reminds us of *Paterson*’s confluence with the more overt canonizing gestures of the *Autobiography*. Williams’s attempts to influence the evaluative standings of modern literature simultaneously entail a self-interested jockeying for position and a more philosophical argument tied to Williams’s belief in the lifting of specific communities and the (American) nation to expression—merging the projects of aesthetic representation and representative democracy.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁵⁹ Book Five does not contain any sustained language that belongs to a Paterson inhabitant or a member of Williams’s local community who is not also an artist. The letters the book incorporates are from Josephine Herbst, Allen Ginsberg, Ezra Pound, and Edward Dahlberg respectively. The book’s “prose” passages, which in previous books often drew upon newspaper and historical accounts of Paterson, are either Williams’s own or taken from artists such as Gilbert Sorrentino or Milton (Mezz) Mezzrow. Moreover, they do not treat material explicitly pertaining to the city of Paterson.

If we take in earnest Williams's address to his fellow Rutherfordians that began this chapter—that what survives through art is a distillation of the particularities and worth of a given community at a given moment—then the stakes of literary consolidation become vested with a new importance. If, for Williams, the 'wrong' strains of literature achieve cultural hegemony, then the particulars of various localities will fail to endure beyond their singular historical instantiation. Those voices that do not achieve expression in a new (and, importantly for Williams) distinctively American poetic language are fated, in the words of *Paterson*, to “die also / incommunicado.”¹⁶⁰ Accordingly, decisions regarding which figures and aesthetic paradigms achieve influence become decisions that determine which particularities and which communities will find a place in the larger national (and transnational) annals of collective memory.

¹⁶⁰ William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, 11.

Chapter 3.
Publishing the Revolution of the Word:
New Directions' Consolidation of the Communities of the 'New'

When in 1936 twenty-two year-old James Laughlin published the first issue of *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*, the annual that served as the germ for and anchor of New Directions Books, he dedicated it “TO / THE EDITORS / THE CONTRIBUTORS / & THE READERS / of / *transition* / who have begun successfully / THE REVOLUTION OF THE WORD.”¹ Over the years, the *New Directions* annuals would be dedicated to a variety of figures, many of whom had played important roles in the dissemination of literature, from “Dorothy Norman and her *American Quarterly*” in 1937 to “Alfred and Blanche Knopf” in 1948, whose commitment to publishing translations of European books Laughlin lauded as having significantly enriched American letters. Cast in this light, the dedication to Eugene Jolas’s “little magazine” *transition* stands as the first in a series of paeans recognizing the importance of sites of publication to the perpetuation of a vibrant literary culture. However the dedication also signifies in relation to another contextual framework. It gestures toward two cultural crises that threatened the viability of the technically experimental avant-garde during the mid 1930s: the dilemma of aesthetic belatedness, on the one hand, and that decade’s imperative for literature to be politically engaged, on the other. These crises, and the conversations they provoked, would ultimately shape New Directions’ publishing program, inspiring it to redefine the temporal, national, and political dimensions of the modernist ‘new.’

¹ *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*, ed. James Laughlin IV (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1936; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), iii. Laughlin was born on October 30, 1914. and the first *New Directions* annual was published in November of 1936, shortly after his birthday. Though Laughlin was an editor of the *Harvard Advocate*, he was unschooled in the logistics of publishing and distribution. As a result, *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1936* was printed without pagination. Laughlin had forgotten to instruct his first printer, Wilder Foote of Brandon, Vermont, to number the pages. James Laughlin, "Introduction," in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 50*, ed. James. Laughlin, Peter Glassgold, and Griselda Ohannessian (New York: New Directions, 1986), xii. When citing those early issues of the annual that lack pagination, I have adopted the pagination provided in the 1967 Kraus Reprint editions.

As Christopher Ames has argued, in the 1910s and 1920s many modernists, plagued by their own sense of late arrival, confronted their fears of an exhausted and increasingly codified literary tradition by attempting to “make it new.”² By the 1930s, however, the pursuit of formal innovation had itself become a well-worn practice. This newly compounded dilemma of belatedness is encapsulated in the *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* annual’s dedication to *transition* magazine—for, at the time of the annual’s initial publication in 1936, the particular revolution its dedication alludes to was already seven years old. The “Revolution of the Word” was the descriptive heading that *transition* editor, Eugene Jolas, gave to that portion of his journal containing “contemporary efforts towards the disintegration of the banal word and syntax, and towards the liberation of creative expression.”³ This section of *transition* first appeared in the magazine’s June 1929 issue, with an accompanying manifesto titled “Proclamation.”⁴ The manifesto began by professing itself “TIRED OF THE SPECTACLE OF SHORT STORIES, NOVELS, POEMS AND PLAYS STILL UNDER THE HEGEMONY OF THE BANAL WORD, MONOTONOUS SYNTAX, STATIC PSYCHOLOGY, DESCRIPTIVE NATURALISM.”⁵ However, the belated nature of *New Directions*’ allusion to *transition* is further compounded when one considers that Jolas’s “revolution” was itself deeply indebted to the iconoclastic fervor of the manifestos so closely associated with modernism’s entrance onto the literary stage nearly two decades earlier. Though the *transition* manifesto’s urging of a Blakean probing of reality was its (and Jolas’s) own particular twist, its boastful rejection of the rules and constraints of the literary status quo, its typographical scream of capital letters, and its derision of the common reader—“THE PLAIN READER BE DAMNED”—owe much to the vorticist manifestos of Wyndham Lewis’s *Blast* (1914, 1915) or (without the propensity for capitalization) to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s “The Founding and

² Christopher Ames, “Modernism and Tradition: The Legacies of Belatedness,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 25, no. 2 (1992): 40-41. The crisis of belatedness is something that almost every successive generation of writers has had to confront since the beginning of literary transcription and is certainly not the sole province of modernists. However, as Ames has shown, the modernists felt themselves particularly assailed by the weight of a deadening literary tradition (41-42).

³ Eugene Jolas, “Statement,” *transition*, no. 18 (November 1929): 175.

⁴ The signatories to the 1929 Revolution of the Word “Proclamation” were Kay Boyle, Whit Burnett, Hart Crane, Caresse Crosby, Harry Crosby, Martha Foley, Stuart Gilbert, A.L. Gillespie, Leigh Hoffman, Eugene Jolas, Elliot Paul, Douglas Rigby, Theo Rutra, Robert Sage, Harold J. Salemsen, and Laurence Vail.

⁵ “Proclamation,” *transition*, no. 16-17 (June 1929): 13.

Manifesto of Futurism 1909.”⁶ This history of linguistic and experimental revolution was not lost on *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*’s critics, many of whom, as we shall shortly see, decried the belatedness of the annual’s emphasis on experimental writing and questioned the novelty of its contributors and contributions. Thus a central crisis facing *New Directions*, and the communities of experimental writing in general, was how to continue with the revolution of the word once the notion of the avant-garde had ceased to be innovative.

On the other hand, the dedication’s allusion to the “*revolution* of the word” (emphasis mine) invokes a second specter that haunted the communities of experimental writing during the mid 1930s. It recalls the crisis occasioned by what I here label the decade’s “political imperative.” Confronted with a global depression (during which American unemployment reached 24.9 percent in 1933), the rise of fascism in Europe, and the increasing threat of war (punctuated by the outbreak of civil war in Spain in 1936), the writers of the 1930s were being called upon by the reading public, their own consciences, and, perhaps most vociferously, the pro-Communist Left to address the day’s economic and social exigencies.⁷ Judged alongside the more accessible and oftentimes more explicitly political discourse of realist fiction, experimental writing often ran the risk of being labeled politically insignificant or even politically retrograde. Figures both from within and without the heterogeneous communities of the technical avant-garde posed difficult questions about the relevance of (or, cast more hostilely, irrelevance of) formal innovation in such fraught social times. How, the critique asserted itself, would the avant-garde answer the decade’s political imperative?

If the dedication to *transition*’s “revolution of the word” betrays two determining exigencies confronting the press at its inception, it also begins to suggest the manner in which *New Directions* would respond. The dedication’s adoption of Jolas’s bombastic phrase, “the revolution of the word,” hints at the function of social reform that Laughlin would imagine for linguistic and formal innovation, while its rhetoric of temporal continuity (“have begun successfully”) foreshadows the archival and tradition-making approach the press would adopt toward the “modern” movement.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Statistics cited in Michael Szalay, *New Deal Modernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 14.

Focusing on the press's first decade, from the inaugural 1936 issue of *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* to the 1947 publication of *Spearhead: 10 Year Experimental Writing in America*, this chapter traces how New Directions' negotiation of these two formative crises evolved a publishing program that would reorient and redefine the temporal and political dimensions of modernism while constructing, consolidating, and canonizing its own tradition of "the new."

* * *

In their 1946 study, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*, Hoffmann, Allen and Ulrich, wrote of New Directions, "If the press can continue for another ten years, or even five, it will undoubtedly be known as one of the most significant literary landmarks of twentieth century America."⁸ Writing at a much later date, poet and publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti would cite New Directions' James Laughlin as "the most important avant-garde American editor + publisher in the post World War II period," an honor that I contend applies from the mid 1930s onward.⁹ Despite New Directions' influential status as the principle publisher of the later writings of such iconic modernists as William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound, and its role as a promoter of late modernist avant-garde writing through its *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*¹⁰ annuals, the press has benefited little from the recent critical interest in sites of publication.¹¹ The palpable absence of New Directions

⁸ Frederick John Hoffman, *The Little Magazine; A History and a Bibliography*, 2d ed. (1946; Princeton,: Princeton University Press, 1947), 211.

⁹ Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "A Statement," *Conjunctions* 1 (1981): 84. New Directions published Ferlinghetti's *Coney Island of the Mind* (1958), which James Laughlin would later recall as the press's first bestseller. James Laughlin, *Taking a Chance on Books: What I Learned at the Eziversity* (1992 [cited April 25, 2008]); available from http://www.nationalbook.org/nbaacceptspeech_jlaughlin.html.

¹⁰ The first annual was titled, *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*. Some subsequent annuals replaced the "and" with an ampersand. Later, the publication's title was at times shortened to *New Directions* and by 1946 the issues were identified with volume numbers rather than by year (e.g. *New Directions* 9).

¹¹ Over the past fifteen years, modernist sites of publication have increasingly become the focus of scholarly inquiry. The popularity of New Historicist methodologies and the emergence of the field of Textual and Editorial Theory have converged to generate an increased recognition of the importance of the historical and material processes involved in the production and publication of modernist texts. Critical studies such as Jayne E. Marek's *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines & Literary History* (1995), Lawrence Rainey's *Institutions of Modernism* (1998), and Mark Morrisson's *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920* (2001), have helped to excavate the important influence of publication practices on the character and reception of modernist texts. Moreover, these studies also suggest the correlation between publication practices and the complex web of aesthetic, economic, and ideological associations that subtend the narratives of modernism that we, as scholars, by turns rely on, revise, and dispute.

from the critical conversations treating modernist publication and, even more surprisingly, from those addressing modernist consolidation and canonization, is likely explained by its relatively late (1936) arrival on the modernist literary scene, as the vast majority of scholarship on modernist community has tended to favor modernism's early years; the pre-WWI communities in London on the one hand, and the Left Bank and Greenwich Village communities of the 1920s and early 1930s on the other. Likewise, the bulk of scholarship on modernist sites of publication has tended to focus on little magazines (such as *Others*, the *Egoist*, the *Criterion*, and the *Little Review*), or on fine press publishers (such as The Cuala Press, The Hours Press, Contact Editions, and The Black Sun Press), the majority of which had, by the onset of the Second World War, discontinued publication.¹² However, it is precisely because *New Directions* emerges at a time when other modernist and avant-garde sites of publication were exiting the discursive arena that it becomes so central a communal forum for aesthetic exchange and consolidation.

What treatment *New Directions* has received has been principally by way of anecdotal remembrances and memoir.¹³ In fact, much of the existing discussion of the press has been authored

¹² For example, the full title of Mark Morrison's study—*The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920* (2001)—reflects its early focus. Those critical surveys that do investigate modernism's later years, including perhaps most notably Tyrus Miller's *Late Modernism* (1999), tend to examine aesthetic or political trends without necessarily attending to issues of print communities in any great detail. As Tyrus Miller notes in his study, Alan Wilde's *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination* examines the use of irony in late modernist fiction, and Bob Perleman's *The Trouble with Genius: Reading Pound, Joyce, Stein, and Zukofsky* considers later works by important "high modernists." Neither of these studies, however, attempts substantial discussion of late modernist community. Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island* (2004) engages issues of community, but its focus is English literature and constitutions of Englishness. An important exception to this trend has been scholarship treating literature of the Left during the 1930s. Studies such as Daniel Aaron's early *Writers on the Left* (1961), Michael Denning's *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (1996), and Alan Wald's recent *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth Century Literary Left* (2002) have taken up important leftist sites of publication that emerged in and/or persisted beyond the 1930s, such as *New Masses* and the *Partisan Review*.

¹³ Two journals have devoted special issues to James Laughlin and *New Directions*. *Conjunctions'* first issue (1981) was a "Festschrift in honor of James Laughlin, Publisher of *New Directions*" and included short eulogies and living remembrances by Donald Hall, Hugh Kenner, Miriam Patchen, Hayden Carruth, Mary de Rachewiltz, Kenneth Rexroth, and Denise Levertov (among others), as well as creative pieces submitted in honor of Laughlin by such literary luminaries (and *New Directions* authors) as Robert Creeley, John Hawkes, Octavio Paz, William Stafford, David Antin, Cid Corman, Montri Umavijani, and Eliot Weinberger. Following James Laughlin's death in 1997, *Paideuma* dedicated a special volume to Laughlin as both poet and publisher (31: 1, 2 and 3—Spring, Fall & Winter 2002), which was guest-edited by Emily Mitchell Wallace. The volume was divided into "Tributes to Laughlin," "Biography," "New Directions Archives" (which briefly detailed the location and nature of *New Directions* archival material),

by its founding editor, James Laughlin, in his books *Pound as Wuz* (1987) and *Random Essays: Recollections of a Publisher* (1989), as well as in his uncollected essays and published interviews.¹⁴ Few have approached the press from a scholarly perspective. Though there have been several critical editions of the correspondence between Laughlin and some of his more famous authors,¹⁵ Greg Barnhisel's *James Laughlin, New Directions, and the Remaking of Ezra Pound* (2005) stands as the only book-length critical study to examine the press.¹⁶ Barnhisel's contribution to scholarship on the press is significant. He intelligently analyses how Laughlin deployed a program of aesthetic formalism to manage and direct "the transformation of Pound's literary reputation in America from the mid-1930s, when he became known as an anti-Semitic crank, to the close of the 1960s, when for a brief time he was seen as the most important and accomplished writer of the modernist period," while suggesting how the effects of this policy ultimately extended far beyond Pound.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Barnhisel's is but one study, and because he approaches *New Directions* through the lens of Pound,

and a "Bibliography" of selected published writings on and by James Laughlin. Again, the volume's approach was more anecdotal and biographical than scholarly. The poet Hayden Carruth, who worked for both *New Directions* and *Intercultural Publications*, which was overseen by James Laughlin, has written an informal memoir of Laughlin titled *Beside the Shadblow Tree* (1999). Carruth's book is notably not a biography; he warns us early on "I'm writing this entirely from memory. No Research. Conditions are not the best [referring presumably to his own ailing health and the death, on November 17th, 1997, five days after Laughlin's death, of Carruth's daughter, Martha]." Hayden Carruth, *Beside the Shadblow Tree: A Memoir of James Laughlin* (Port Townsend, Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 1999), 7.

¹⁴ For a more comprehensive bibliography of James Laughlin's creative and non-fictional writings, see John A. Harrison, "A Selective List of Published Writing, 1935-2002, by and about James Laughlin," *Paideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship* 31, no. 1-3 (2002): 281-298.

¹⁵ Selected Letters volumes have been issued for Laughlin's correspondence with the following authors: Thomas Merton, Henry Miller, Ezra Pound, Kenneth Rexroth, Delmore Schwartz, William Carlos Williams, and Guy Davenport. In each case, the emphasis is on the writer's rather than the publisher's letters.

¹⁶ Barnhisel's study expands upon and revises two earlier works, his article, "Ezra Pound, James Laughlin and *New Directions*: The Publisher as Spin Doctor" in *Paideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship* 29:3 (Winter 2000): 165-178, and his dissertation, Gregory Peter Barnhisel, "New Directions Press and Ezra Pound's Literary Reputation" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1999). Another unpublished dissertation, Tom G. Smith's "New Directions Press, in *Prose and Poetry: John Hawkes and Denise Levertov in an Avant-Garde Community*," seeks, within the context of *New Directions* and the eponymous authors, to redefine genre "as the textual means (in letters as well as in fiction and poetry) by which writers show their affiliations with and are recognized as members of an avant-garde community," arguing that "[i]n these writers' works, reviewers observe traits that not only explain their aesthetic concerns but also imprint them as *New Directions* authors, with positive ramifications in terms of academic reception, but more problematic results in the wider market." Smith has not yet published any articles or books that draw on this dissertation. Tom G. Smith, "New Directions Press, in *Prose and Poetry: John Hawkes and Denise Levertov in an Avant-Garde Community*" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2000), vii.

¹⁷ Greg Barnhisel, *James Laughlin, New Directions, and the Remaking of Ezra Pound* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 3.

large portions of the press's publication activities and communal fashionings remain uninvestigated. This chapter hopes to make further inroads into the understanding of New Directions, an institution whose lasting influence, for better and for worse, has shaped both the concept and the canons of modernism.

Though incisive scholarship on the press is scarce, the story of New Directions' birth is relatively well-known. In 1934 Harvard undergraduate James Laughlin took a leave of absence from his studies in order to travel in Europe. After living with Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas in Bilignin for a period, he visited Ezra Pound in Italy, enrolling in the poet's unofficial 'Ezuversity' in Rapallo thanks to an introduction from his Choate English Master, Dudley Fitts.¹⁸ An aspiring poet, Laughlin looked to Pound for advice on his writing, but towards the end of his stay, Pound, skeptical of Laughlin's literary potential, suggested that he "do something useful" and fashion himself as publisher rather than poet.¹⁹ In 1935 Laughlin began to edit a literary page for *New Democracy*, a Social Credit magazine, and Pound provided his young acolyte with introductions to and manuscripts from a variety of his literary friends. Though he was an heir to the Jones and Laughlin Steel Company fortune, Laughlin found the atmosphere of the iron and steelworks "utterly terrifying," and had no desire to enter the family business in Pittsburgh.²⁰ So in 1936, upon receiving a substantial sum of money from his father, Laughlin, still a student at Harvard, began New Directions first as an

¹⁸ Laughlin, "Introduction," xi. The course of study at the Ezuversity entailed long conversational lunches at the Albergo Rapallo, during which Pound would extemporize on a variety of subjects occasioned by that day's installment of his voluminous correspondence. This done, Pound would proceed to the meat of his colloquial lectures: "literature and history the way he wanted to revise it, because of course," Laughlin would later recall, Pound insisted that "all history had been miswritten since Gibbon." Pound's personal library was also open to the Ezuversity's itinerant students. Writing of Pound, Laughlin would recall that the comment that appeared most frequently in the margins of Pound's Herodotus was "Balls!!!" James Laughlin, *Pound as Wuz: Essays and Lectures on Ezra Pound* (Saint Paul: Graywolf Press, 1987), 4, 5-6.

¹⁹ Laughlin, *Pound as Wuz: Essays and Lectures on Ezra Pound*, 7. When the young Laughlin queried "what's useful?" in response to Pound's order, Pound's first suggestion was that Laughlin "might assassinate Henry Seidel Canby," the editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature* who had often panned Pound's books. As Laughlin tells it, becoming a publisher was actually Pound's second suggestion once the two had agreed that Laughlin wasn't intelligent enough to get away with the first. Ibid.

²⁰ Tom Vitale, "National Public Radio Tribute, Friday, November 14, 1997," *Paideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship* 31, no. 1-3 (2002): 8.

anthology and the following year as a press.²¹

From the outset, New Directions sought to foster the branches of literature which it perceived as “being victimized by the excessive commercialization of American publishing—poetry, criticism, translations, belles-lettres and unconventional fiction.”²² In each category, the press placed a special emphasis on works by modern (most often from the fifty preceding years) and/or formally innovative writers. In addition to the *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* annuals, which serve as a useful (though pointedly more “experimental”) microcosm of the press’s activities, the press, starting in 1939, evolved a variety of special series to supplement its book publications. Each of these series sought to expand the audiences for modernist literature. The Poet of the Month Series (1941-1945) attempted to enlarge the country’s poetry reading audience by offering attractively printed monthly pamphlets of poetry at low cost. The New Classics series, which began in 1939, offered cheap pocket-sized reprints of “important works of modern literature.”²³ Finally, the Makers of Modern Literature series proposed to provide “critical Baedekers’ to the great modern writers who have formed our contemporary tradition.”²⁴

²¹ The first book actually published by New Directions was not the annual, but a book titled *Pianos of Sympathy* by Montague O’Reilly (Wayne Andrews), who was a Harvard classmate of Laughlin’s. James Laughlin, “The Art of Publishing I: James Laughlin,” *The Paris Review* 25, no. 89 (1983): 164.

²² Catalog [ca. 1939], 1939 Folder [2 of 2], Catalogs, Circulars and Printed Ephemera, New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The archives for the New Directions Publishing Corp. and the James Laughlin Papers are housed at Harvard University’s Houghton Library. I will at times refer to these archives using the abbreviations NDPCa and JLa respectively.

²³ Catalog, ca. 1946-1947, 1946 Folder. NDPCa The New Classics were priced at one dollar, though this was raised to \$1.50 in 1946. Beginning in 1947 the New Classics series was supplemented by the Modern Readers Series, which included titles that were too long to publish in the low-cost New Classics pocket book format. Those titles reprinted in the New Classics series through 1948 are William Carlos Williams’s *In the American Grain* (NC1), Rimbaud’s *A Season in Hell* (NC2), Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives* (NC3), E.M. Forster’s *The Longest Journey* (NC4) and *A Room with a View* (NC5), Henry James’s *The Spoils of Poynton* (NC6), Gustave Flaubert’s *Three Tales* (NC7), Evelyn Waugh’s *A Handful of Dust* (NC8), F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (NC9), Franz Kafka’s *America* (NC10), Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood* (NC11), Kenneth Patchen’s *Selected Poems* (NC12), James Joyce’s *Exiles* (NC13), Rimbaud’s *The Illuminations* (NC14), Nathanael West’s *Miss Lonelyhearts* (NC15), Alain-Fournier’s *The Wanderer* (NC16), Charles Baudelaire’s *Flowers of Evil* (NC17), D.H. Lawrence’s *Selected Poems* (NC18) and *The Man Who Died* (NC19), Kay Boyle’s *Monday Night* (NC20), William Carlos Williams’s *Selected Poems* (NC21), and Ezra Pound’s *Selected Poems* (NC22). The three titles reprinted in the first year of the Modern Reader series were William Faulkner’s *Light in August*, Italo Svevo’s *The Confessions of Zeno*, and Louis-Ferdinand Celine’s *Death on the Installment Plan*. Catalog, [ca. 1947-1948], 1947 Folder. NDPCa.

²⁴ Catalog [ca. 1941-1942], 1941 Folder [2 of 2], Catalogs, Circulars and Printed Ephemera, New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The titles published in the Makers of Modern Literature Series through 1948 were Harry Levin’s *James Joyce*, David Daiches’s

Importantly, the four different categories of books published by New Directions—criticism, translations, contemporary literature, and reprints—did not collapse into but rather spanned these different series. For example, volumes in the Makers of Modern Literature series were often written by contemporary writers, such as Yvor Winters and Vladimir Nabokov, and treated authors writing in both English and other languages. Similarly, though the Poet of the Month pamphlets published principally contemporary works, translations and reprints were also included in the series. This interweaving of the press’s various genres of publications is suggestive of the catholic fashion in which New Directions constructed and reified its tradition of the New. The imbrication and interdependence of the branches of its publishing agenda helped to consolidate the field of modern experimentation even as it expanded its historical and national boundaries. As we shall now see, this tendency towards catholicity also inflected James Laughlin’s approach to the social function of literature, enabling him to maintain a politically diverse communal forum for experimental writing in an era of partisan politics.

I. New Directions: Politics and the Experimental Writer

In his introduction to the 1935 anthology, *Proletarian Literature in the United States*, Joseph Freeman remarked upon the new-found political tenor of American writing. At the time a committed Communist Party member, Freeman noted that “even those writers who do not agree with us have abandoned the ivory tower and begun to grapple with basic American reality, with the social scene.”²⁵ The strong emphasis throughout the 1930s on not only “revolutionary” but also a more broadly conceived politically-engaged literature helped establish realist fiction, a genre

Virginia Woolf, Lionel Trilling’s *E.M. Forster*, Edmund Honig’s *Garcia Lorca*, *G.M. Hopkins* by The Kenyon Critics, Vladimir Nabokov’s *Nikolai Gogol*, Yvor Winters’s *E.A. Robinson*, Van Meter Ames’s *Andre Gide*, H. J. Muller’s *Thomas Wolfe*, Edouard Roditi’s *Oscar Wilde*, David Daiches’s *Robert Louis Stevenson*, and Eric Bentley’s *Bernard Shaw*. Catalog. [ca. 1947-48] NDPCa; John A. Harrison and Anne Marie Candido, *Books Published by New Directions, in Chronological Order, 1936 to 1963* ([cited April 23 2008]); available from <http://www.willhallbooks.com/newdirectionsyearly.htm>.

²⁵ Joseph Freeman, "Introduction," in *Proletarian Literature in the United States*, ed. Granville Hicks, et al. (New York: International Publishers, 1935), 28. A few short years later Freeman would openly break with the Communist Party in the wake of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

particularly suited to depict and address the political and economic ills of capitalist society, as one of the dominant genres on the American scene. This renewed investment in realism at times involved a concomitant backlash against technical experimental writing. The avant-garde's focus on form and the interest of some (though importantly not all) avant-garde writers in the individual psyche left it open to charges of solipsism and bourgeois decadence. For some, the absence of a clearly defined social imperative in experimental writing constituted a form of political irresponsibility.

Though the political imperative felt during the 1930s affected writers from all political persuasions, it was particularly prominent in Leftist circles. In re-evaluating the relationship between modernism and the proletarian avant-garde in the conclusion of his 2002 study, *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth Century Left*, Alan Wald observes that the literary criticism of the Communist cultural Left provided, with a few exceptions, a "steady stream of stern pronouncements against the 'difficulty' that forms a prime feature of modernism."²⁶ Important Marxist critics like Granville Hicks urged young writers sympathetic to Communism not to adapt "the forms and idioms of the experimental reactionary poets [like T.S. Eliot]" for their own purposes. "The attempt to use their technical devices for the expression of the revolutionary spirit," Hicks explains, "inevitably involves a fundamental contradiction, and the resulting poems are confused and ineffective."²⁷ Even those figures in proletarian literature sympathetic to the project of formal innovation were wary of the alienation that it might generate between author and audience. William Phillips and Philip Rahv's essay, "Recent Problems of Revolutionary Literature," collected in *Proletarian Literature* (1935), sought to address the various tensions within Marxist literature. On the one hand, Phillips and Rahv point out the "leftist" error of attempting to "steep literature overnight in the political program of Communism [...] through a barrage of sloganized and inorganic writing."²⁸ On the other, they note

²⁶ Alan M. Wald, *Exiles from a Future Time: The Forging of the Mid-Twentieth-Century Literary Left* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 310.

²⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*

²⁸ William Phillips and Philip Rahv, "Recent Problems of Revolutionary Literature," in *Proletarian Literature in the United States*, ed. Granville Hicks, et al. (New York: International Publishers, 1935), 369.

the potential danger that formal innovation poses by stratifying revolutionary literature into “intellectual” and “popular” strains. “The Proletarian writer,” they assert,

should realize that he is functioning through his medium within the vanguard of the movement as a whole. As such, his task is to work out a sensibility and a set of symbols *unifying* the responses of his main audience, the working class, even while he strives to raise the cultural level of the masses.²⁹

The formal stylistics of proletarian writing, they suggest, should not be so jarringly innovative or difficult that they divide and perplex, rather than uplift, its popular audience. Accordingly, a Marxist allegiance to their proletarian readership posed a problem for—and even at times tempered the works of—some of the literary Left’s more stylistically avant-garde writers.

It was in relation to this cultural crisis—one in which the political, social, and economic exigencies of the thirties spurred American writers of all political persuasions to reconsider the relationship between their aesthetic and political concerns—that individuals within the politically heterogeneous field of avant-garde writing had to situate themselves. Not to respond to the period’s political imperative would be as polemical a stance as to address the issue directly. As a self-declared outlet for “experimental writing,” *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* derived much of its initial energy from the political function it imagined for technical innovation.³⁰ Though the annual’s primary

²⁹ Ibid., 372. Emphasis theirs. Following the *Partisan Review*’s break with the Communist Party in 1936-37, Phillips and Rahv, both editors of the magazine, were less inclined to express reservations about formally innovative writing and indeed the *Partisan Review* became an important venue for experimental writers.

³⁰ “Experimental writing” is the term that *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* editor James Laughlin uses most often to describe the genre that the annual sought to publish. Above the copyright information on the second page of the inaugural 1936 annual, there is a brief paragraph detailing the New Directions publishing program. It reads: “Contributions of, or on, experimental writing and all allied subjects will be read with interest by the editor, and should be sent with return postage to Norfolk, Conn.” (ii). In the third (1938) issue of *New Directions* James Laughlin would again delineate the annual’s primary interest as experimental writing, only to go on to qualify this statement a sentence later: “What [the annual] does try to do is to print the best work of a *certain kind*—the best *experimental* writing. Or perhaps the term ‘experimental’ is too narrow. It might be better to say that *New Directions* specializes in writers whose interest in problems of technique places their work beyond the commercial market.” James Laughlin, “Preface [1938],” in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1938*, ed. James Laughlin IV (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1938; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), xiii. The title pages of issues 8 (1944) and 9 (1946) self-identify as “an annual exhibition gallery of divergent literary trends,” whereas issue 10 (1948) bears a slightly modified descriptor: “An Annual Exhibition Gallery of New and Divergent Trends in Literature.” In his “Editorial Notes” for *Spearhead* (1947), a publication celebrating the first ten years of *New Directions* by reprinting some of the best work published in the *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* annuals, Laughlin characterizes the volume’s contents as “*experimental* and *advance guard*”

selection criteria was formal—it sought to publish a wide variety of “experimental writing” (a term that generally seemed to signify stylistic, linguistic, and even philological innovation, but whose precise province the annual’s editorials never prescriptively delineated)—in his first editorial statement James Laughlin chose to cast *New Directions*’ mission in political rather than purely aesthetic terms. Animated by the utopian idealism that Fredric Jameson sees as the redeeming feature of modernist writers (and modernism in general), Laughlin’s preface implicitly answers the charges of escapism, social irrelevance, and politically retrograde intellectual elitism that dogged the technically innovative writers throughout the 1930s.³¹ Indeed, far from comprising an insular realm of aestheticism, experimental writing, he argued, was functioning on the front lines of political and economic reform. In Laughlin’s view, new forms impact not only literature but the societal structures of the status quo.

Laughlin’s 1936 preface begins by detailing the annual’s origins as the literary page for Gorham Munson’s, *New Democracy*. *New Democracy* was a Social Credit magazine that based its economic philosophy on the New Economics of Major C. H. Douglas.³² Little of the writing that appeared in the “New Directions” page actually took up the theories of Social Credit, but Laughlin had justified the literary section in its first November 1st, 1935 appearance by writing that, “*New Directions* will not confine itself to the work of Social Creditors alone, but will seek to give its readers a picture of what is most vital in writing today, of the literature which reflects, though it may not

writing.” James Laughlin, “Editorial Notes,” in *Spearhead: 10 Years’ Experimental Writing in America*, ed. James Laughlin (New York: New Directions, 1947), 9.

³¹ See the conclusion of Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London; New York: Verso, 2002).

³² The American Social Credit movement, as manifested in *New Democracy*, sought the “financial emancipation of the American people” by proposing the following measures:

1. That the Cash credits of the population of the United States shall at any moment be collectively equal to the cash prices for consumable goods for sale in the United States (irrespective of the cost prices of those goods), and such cash credits shall be cancelled or depreciated only on the purchase or depreciation of goods for consumption.
2. That the credits required to finance production shall be supplied, not from savings, but be new credits relating to new production, and shall be recalled only in the ratio of general depreciation to general appreciation.
3. That the distribution of cash credits to individuals shall be progressively less dependent on employment. That is to say, that the national dividend shall progressively displace the wage and salary, as productive capacity increases per man-hour.

“The Social Credit Movement,” *New Democracy* V, no. 1 (1935): ii.

propagandize, the [innovative] spirit underlying Social Credit.”³³ Now, however, in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*, Laughlin recalibrated the dynamics of influence so as to argue for the centrality of the literary innovator to political and economic reform. Whereas initially in the literary page at *New Democracy*, the “emphasis of leadership was [...] upon the economist rather than the poet,” Laughlin explains, “nearly a year of hard experience in the propagation of Social Credit has led me to feel that the emphasis should be reversed: it is the poet—the word-worker—who must lead.”³⁴

Throughout the 1936 preface, Laughlin argues for language as a super-structural governing system with the capacity to facilitate or obstruct political change, and he casts the technically experimental writer as a figure whose art is literally, not just metaphorically, revolutionary. “The world is in crisis, and language is at once the cause and the cure,” Laughlin asserts, “New social concepts could stop the waste and the destruction. But they can only be introduced into minds ready to receive them, minds *able* to think along new lines, minds capable of imagination.”³⁵ So while the economist or political activist may devise a better system of governance or strategies for a more equitable distribution of funds, “he is confronted by such a solid wall of static thinking that he cannot force his ideas across.”³⁶ Formal and linguistic innovation in literature thus performs the politically important work of disrupting the learned (and ossified) patterns of thought that impede much needed political and economic change. In this manner, Laughlin posits a preparatory function for experimental writing. It is the battering ram that breaches the status quo, allowing the armies of reform to enter.³⁷

³³ James Laughlin, “New Directions,” *New Democracy* V, no. 5 (1935): 81.

³⁴ James Laughlin, “Preface: New Directions [1936],” in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1936*, ed. James Laughlin IV (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1936; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), vii.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, viii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, vii.

³⁷ Interestingly, Laughlin presents linguistic revolution as a more refined alternative to violent revolution: “Without the unobtrusive lubrication of fresh blood it is hard to conceive of a new social order except by revision of verbal orientation.” *Ibid.*, ix. Perhaps because as an heir to the Jones and Laughlin Iron and Steel Works fortune Laughlin was unequivocally a member of the moneyed classes, he opposed the violent class warfare advocated in certain circles of Marxist thought. Though Laughlin had numerous Marxist friends and literary compatriots, many of whom he published in *New Directions*, he firmly believed that Social Credit provided a better solution to poverty and economic disparity. In his editorial foreword to his first “New Directions” page in *New Democracy*, Laughlin aired his grievance with Marxism’s recourse to

Experimental writing, then, was to provide the means not only of resisting the ossification of the language, but also of overcoming society's "trained incapacity to think along other than familiar lines," an incapacity that Laughlin holds responsible for the paradox of poverty amid plenty.³⁸ To read Gertrude Stein becomes for Laughlin a "patriotic duty," which, "much as it may bore you," is needed "to physic your sluggish mental intestine."³⁹ Stein's contribution to the first *New Directions* annual, "A Water-fall and a Piano," enacts such a purging of staid ideas. The short three-page piece functions by invoking and then frustrating the conventions of the crime mystery. The story's italicized preface ambiguously signals its contiguity to the genre, "*There are so many ways in which there is no crime. A goat comes into this story too. There is always coincidence in crime.*"⁴⁰ Shortly after Stein introduces her reader to three unnamed women (who are potentially involved in a love triangle), one of them, an Englishwoman, is discovered dead with two bullets in her head. A doctor hints at murder, stating "nobody could shoot themselves twice," but an officer sustains the possibility of

violence: "followers of Douglas fight with the mind and not musket: for them education replaces revolution, they do not nod to the Marxist idol of hate; but liberty—social justice for all—is their whole concern." Laughlin, "New Directions," 81. Ironically, Social Credit was far from free of the taint of hate. Though certain followers like Gorham Munson would disavow anti-Semitic elements, there was a significant anti-Semitic movement within Social Credit, including the Detroit radio broadcaster Father Coughlin, whose anti-Banking stance was inextricable in his speeches from his virulent anti-Semitism. This combination manifested itself in other Social Credit advocates like Ezra Pound. Writing to Pound in 1939, Laughlin admonished his mentor along these lines: "I think anti-semitism [sic] is contemptible and despicable and I will not put my hand to it. I cannot tell you how much it grieves me to see you taking up with it." In discussing an upcoming installment of Pound's *Cantos* in the same letter, Laughlin wrote: "I will not print anything that can be fairly construed as an outright attack on the Jews and I want that in the contract in the libel clause." Ezra Pound and James Laughlin, *Ezra Pound and James Laughlin: Selected Letters*, ed. David M. Gordon (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 109, 110.

³⁸ Laughlin, "Preface: New Directions [1936]," vii.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, x-xi. James Laughlin worked for Gertrude Stein during the spring/summer of 1934. After a chance introduction to Stein and Toklas while traveling in Europe, Laughlin was engaged to perform two types of work for Stein: "changing tires on Gertrude's Ford..." and "preparing press releases for the lectures (collected in *Narrations*) of her American lecture tour later in the year." James Laughlin, Peter Glassgold, and Griselda Ohannessian, eds., *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 50* (New York: New Directions, 1986), 10. In discussing the mentally restorative properties of Stein's writing in his 1936 preface, Laughlin tells the reader that he has made "some interesting experiments with Stein texts as verbal cathartics on disinterested subjects." Laughlin explains: "Ten average individuals were asked to write a short paragraph on some non-material subject as 'Religion and the State'; they were then asked to read Stein for ten minutes; then asked to write on the same subject again without consulting their previous effort. The results were all alike—a marked decrease in the use of stereotyped and stock phrases, a greater directness of style. Laughlin, "Preface: New Directions [1936]," xi. The inaugural issue of *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* included Stein's piece "A Water-Fall and A Piano."

⁴⁰ Gertrude Stein, "A Water-fall and a Piano," in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1936*, ed. James Laughlin IV (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1936; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), 4.

suicide, stating that during the war when an officer “wanted to be dead” he often had to shoot himself twice, having only succeeded to put a bullet in his scalp on the first try. By furnishing details that invite the reader to attempt to solve the mystery, Stein induces her audience to further scrutinize her language for evidence. However, her refusal to provide a clear solution not only upturns the conventions of the genre but ultimately disables a model of language that is purely teleological, a means to an end.⁴¹ Because the simplicity of Stein’s diction does not lessen the story’s inscrutability, the reader must abandon staid patterns of meaning-making and attend to her language differently. Though the content of Stein’s “experimental” story is not explicitly political, it performs what Laughlin would likely argue is the politically important work of forcing its audience to reexamine how they read and use language.

Laughlin would go on to expand and clarify his vision of “language as a social force” in the 1937 annual.⁴² His article “Language and the Experimental Writer” contextualizes contemporary experiments as part of a longstanding avant-garde tradition that combats the decay of language and its concomitant political stagnation.⁴³ There, Laughlin develops lines of argumentation that anticipate a number of the claims George Orwell would advance in his much more widely read “Politics and the English Language” (1946).⁴⁴ For both Laughlin and Orwell, the stakes of language

⁴¹ For example, Stein informs her reader that one of the other two women later married “an officer.” If this were the same “an officer” who supported the theory of suicide, then it is a “coincidence” that might implicate the first woman in the Englishwoman’s death by raising the possibility that she married the officer out of gratitude or debt. However, such a supposition is frustrated by the referential indefiniteness of the word “an,” a recognition that Stein’s inclusion of this detail forces her reader to confront.

⁴² James Laughlin, “Preface [1937],” in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1937*, ed. James Laughlin IV (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1937; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), xiv. In his 1937 preface, Laughlin writes: “In my preface last year I had a good deal to say about language as a social force and about the value of experimental writing. My theories caused a good deal of mystification, and so I have restated them, I hope more clearly, at least more fully, and they are to be found in an article—‘Language and The Experimental Writer’—in the back of the book” (xiv).

⁴³ Laughlin’s article first appeared under the title “New Words for Old: Notes On Experimental Writing” in the December 1936 issue of *Story* magazine. Laughlin also delivered this essay as a lecture at Vassar College on March 22, 1937. He deemed the essay significant enough to later include it in his *Random Essays* (1989). This later reprinting restores the original *Story* magazine title. James Laughlin, “Language and the Experimental Writer,” in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1937*, ed. James Laughlin (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1937; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), 273.

⁴⁴ Like Orwell, Laughlin denounces “associative word linkages,” particularly “the hackneyed expressions of ‘clichés’ or ‘bromides,’” that allow the vast majority of the population to believe that they are thinking when in fact they are “only repeating to ourselves predigested groupings of words that have caught in the

usage are political and of the utmost importance. However, whereas Orwell asserts that “the fight against bad English [...] is not the exclusive concern of professional writers” and accordingly emphasizes the importance of the average citizen’s attention to and emendation of his or her own language usage, Laughlin focuses on the primacy of the experimental writer as a front-line combatant against the decay of the language.⁴⁵ Laughlin thus makes the case that the political intervention of the experimental writer is “as valuable, in its way, as that of the monetary reformer,” and urges the reader to “give honor where honor is due: honor to the shock troops, the fighters in the front line of language, the small intransigent company of experimental writers.”⁴⁶ In so doing, he recuperates the ‘New’ as a category of reform and provides a social function for the communities of experimental writing.

Interestingly, Laughlin’s foregrounding of the social force of formal and linguistic innovation involves two strategic evasions of politics.

First, there is a significant “contentlessness” to the politics Laughlin associates with experimental writing. His early prefaces and essays discuss experimental writing and its practitioners in terms of their potential to enact “social change”⁴⁷ and “social reform,”⁴⁸ but the specific nature of this change is rarely stated. Indeed the politics of experimentalism that Laughlin delineates in *New Directions* are deconstructive rather than prescriptive. Experimental writing functions as a destabilizing force: it undermines existing (and presumably flawed) political and economic structures leaving the way clear for new (though not necessarily prescribed or pre-determined) social and economic orders.

memory.” Similarly, both men critique the disassociation of certain words and phrases from any concrete meaning. Indeed, the similarities between Laughlin’s list of offenders—“economic freedom, the American system, constitutional rights, Jeffersonian, liberty, democracy, social justice . . .” and some of those that Orwell cites, “*democracy, socialism, freedom, patriotic, realistic, justice*” is striking. *Ibid.*, 264, 267; George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language,” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature Vol. 2* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000), 2466.

⁴⁵ Orwell, “Politics and the English Language,” 2462.

⁴⁶ Laughlin, “Language and the Experimental Writer,” 273.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Laughlin, “Preface: New Directions [1936],” xi.

This, of course, is not to say that specific politics did not weave themselves into the *New Directions* annuals. Having been converted to Social Credit theory by Ezra Pound and others, Laughlin would reference these beliefs in his prefaces, and Social Credit material occasionally appeared in the annual's pages (especially in the early volumes). The 1936 annual, for example, contained a two-page manifesto by Gorham Munson titled "New Directions in Economics" advocating Social Credit. Munson's piece was followed by Ezra Pound's "Canto XLVI" in which the poet pursues the "case" of usury, and accuses the American government of collusion with bankers to create an economy of interest based on no actual principal. The 1937 annual included another essay, "The New Direction in Economics" by Paul Hampden that again advocated and, in juxtaposition to Munson's manifesto, explained Social Credit theory. And yet despite the recurrence of Social Credit propaganda and themes, Laughlin and the annual eschewed dogmatism. Laughlin almost always framed his discussions of Social Credit in terms of his individual beliefs.⁴⁹ Moreover, he did not shy away from publishing works whose politics were different from his own. The 1938 annual, for example, allots 56 of its 292 pages to Louis Zukofsky's explicitly pro-Communist "A-8."

Indeed, the political catholicity of *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* was a function of its second strategic political evasion—its subordination of the political content of a text to the "libratory/revolutionary" politics of its form. During a period of political factionalism (one has only to think of the wars between *New Masses* and the *Partisan Review*), *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*

⁴⁹ In his 1937 preface, for example, Laughlin, in speaking of the new economic order needed to reform the editorial practices of corporate publishing, writes: "What that new order will be is anybody's guess. My own choice is Social Credit. But whatever it finally proves to be, there is no doubt that it is coming—and in the meantime *New Directions* will do what it can to clean up the mess and keep the ideal of serious artistic writing alive." Laughlin, "Preface [1937]," xiii. Following a passage in his 1939 preface in which he champions the socialization of credit, he half-heartedly apologizes for his remarks: "And there goes my good resolution not to put the contributors to this volume through the yoke of my economic heresies. I'm sorry. And no more of that." James Laughlin, "Preface [1939]," in *New Directions in Prose & Poetry 1939* (Norfolk, Conn.: *New Directions*, 1939; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), xv. Moreover, Laughlin was not averse to publishing critical prose whose politics were different from his own. Describing in the 1946 preface that year's contribution by James T. Farrell, an essay entitled "Some Observations on the Future of Books" that analyzes the influence of economics on the publishing industry, Laughlin notes that, "Mr. Farrell is for socialism; I am for Social Credit, as I have been for the past fifteen years." Laughlin, "Preface [1937]," xiii; James Laughlin, "Editor's Notes [1946]," in *New Directions 9*, ed. James Laughlin IV (New York: *New Directions*, 1946; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), xxii. Laughlin could be impassioned in his discussion of his own personal beliefs, but in framing them as personal, he lefts space for those among his readers and contributors whose opinions differed.

strove to connect experimental writing to politics without engaging in an editorial policy that would dictate the political views of its contributors or limit its community on political grounds.⁵⁰ Just as it employed a catholic approach to the types of experimentalism it included, as I shall soon discuss, it was similarly catholic in terms of the politics of its contributors. Indeed, likely with the *Partisan Review* / *New Masses* antipathy in mind, Laughlin declared in his 1937 preface that he disavowed political allegiances in favor of good writing. *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*, he explained, “is not trying to show that poems written by a man who likes Trotsky will be better than those of a man who likes Stalin.”⁵¹ Thus, because in the early years of the annual Laughlin chose to justify experimental writing by arguing for the larger political and social value of formal innovation, that is, by focusing on form as the primary significance-bearing element, his editorial philosophy subordinated, and even willfully overlooked, the political *content* of its contributions. *New Directions* had addressed the political imperative of the 1930s—Laughlin had argued laboriously for the social relevance of the experimental writing—yet it had done so in a fashion that required no alteration in

⁵⁰ *New Masses* professed allegiance to and was an organ of the Communist Party. The *Partisan Review*, though it maintained its “responsibility to the revolutionary movement in general,” chose to sever its official association with the Communist Party, asserting in its December 1937 editorial statement that its “reappearance on an independent basis signifies our conviction that the totalitarian trend is inherent in [the Communist] movement and that it can no longer be combatted [sic] from within.” The *Partisan Review* adopted the position that “the cause of revolutionary literature is best served by a policy of no commitments to any political party.” “Editorial Statement,” *Partisan Review* IV, no. 1 (1937): 3. This split resulted in an antagonism between the two magazines, which played out in their pages and amongst their contributors. William Carlos Williams, whose politics were more centrist than either magazine, was caught up in a turf war between the two publications during the fall of 1937/winter of 1938 after having submitted work to both magazines. As Williams would explain in a 1937 letter to the *Partisan Review*, “You know, of course, that I have no reason for liking the PARTISAN REVIEW. I have, at the same time, no partisan interest in the New Masses. I had occasion to appear as a writer, for a special reason, in the New Masses and it looked as though I might appear also in the PARTISAN REVIEW. As my contribution to the New Masses was of longer standing and of more importance to me than the other and since I found the New Masses violently opposed to you on political grounds, so much so that they refused to print me if I remained a contributor to PARTISAN REVIEW, I made my choice in their favor.” “The Temptation of Dr. Williams,” *Partisan Review* IV, no. 2 (1938): 61. The *Partisan Review* published this letter and others in the exchange under the title “The Temptation of Dr. Williams” in the Riposte section of the January, 1938 issue. They began their presentation of this exchange by stating, “the Communist Party seems to consider the destruction of PARTISAN REVIEW as important an effort as the destruction of Franco—perhaps a bit more important” (61). The *Partisan Review* closed the riposte by stating that this was proof of *New Masses*’ attempt to “stifle independent left-wing expression” through its insistence that Williams boycott *Partisan Review*, and that they “would not for a moment presume to put any such conditions on our writers” (62). For a further discussion of this as it pertains to William Carlos Williams, see Paul Mariani, *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 406.

⁵¹ Laughlin, “Preface [1937],” xii.

the themes or subject matter of this writing. Conceived in this fashion, the politics of a literary text's form and the politics of its content had the potential to function independently.⁵²

Laughlin's 1936 preface closes by acknowledging the supervening nature of his vision of formal politics and its independence from the politics and ideologies of the various writers it subsumes. "For however my contributors may see themselves," he writes,

I see them as agents of social reform as well as artists. Their propaganda is implicit in their style and in probably every case (originally, at least) unconscious. For their protection I must make it very clear that in this preface I am speaking for myself alone. I hope that they will find themselves in sympathy with my views, but it was not on this basis that the selection of material was made. If I have *used* them I hope it has not been to a degree which transcends the critic's accepted privilege. Their points of departure and immediate objectives are various, but all have a similar aim—the perfection of a clearer, richer, more meaningful verbal expression.⁵³

If the annual's community achieves a shared politics, it is through no conscious effort on its own part. Rather, Laughlin suggests, it is through larger issues of form that they restructure the body politic.

In his revelatory study, Greg Barnhisel suggests that Laughlin's advancement of a program of aesthetic formalism in *New Directions*' marketing of Pound during the late 1940s and beyond was in "many ways a rejection of his own earlier ideas about the interdependence of art and politics."⁵⁴ While this bears out in certain respects, what Barnhisel's comment fails to recognize is the paradox that was always at the heart of Laughlin's conception of the relationship between art and politics. From the outset, Laughlin had conceptualized this interdependence as principally a formal rather than topical one. His interest in the political power of experimental writing had always been broader, vaguer, and less prescriptive than any specific political allegiance. Experimental writing laid the way

⁵² Interestingly, as I will discuss in my chapter on *Perspectives USA*, an analogous argument appears during the Cold War in *VOKS Bulletin*, the publication of the "U.S.S.R. Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries" in the service of a critique of modernist/experimental literature. In the 1948 *VOKS* article "Features of Soviet Realism," A. K. Vasiliev argues that it is a mistake for writers sympathetic to Communism to attempt to adopt experimental forms because, despite these writers' best intentions, this formal decision will sap the revolutionary force of their writing. He explains that "decadent forms of art cannot express [revolutionary writers'] ideas of freedom. The Procrustean bed of decadent formalistic 'isms' distorts their ideas, turning them into individualistic, fruitless, and abstract rebellion." Thus in both *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* and *VOKS*, form is political. A. K. Vasiliev, "Features of Socialist Realism," *VOKS Bulletin*, no. 53 (n.d., ca. 1948): 35.

⁵³ Laughlin, "Preface: *New Directions* [1936]," xi.

⁵⁴ Barnhisel, *James Laughlin, New Directions, and the Remaking of Ezra Pound*, 7.

for social reform, but Laughlin and New Directions didn't presume to dictate the specific partisan character of that reform. Though Laughlin envisioned a progressive politics emerging from the formal innovation of experimental writing, he was less concerned with the idiosyncratic politics of a given contribution so long as it possessed some interesting technical dimension. Despite his larger claims for experimental writing, it was to this absence of partisan politics that Laughlin referred in an April 27, 1939 letter to Delmore Schwartz. Having submitted his poem, "A Letter to Hitler," a commentary on fascist regime censorship, to the *Partisan Review*, Laughlin explained to Schwartz that he hoped it would clarify his political position and exonerate him from the charges of fascism he sometimes suffered due to his connection with Pound. "I don't make political statements in *New Directions*" he explained to Schwartz, "because I want that to be strictly non-political."⁵⁵

As New Directions established itself, Laughlin's prefaces for the annuals began to speak less about the political import of experimental writing and avant-garde communities. In 1937 Laughlin had announced his desire to establish a "permanent symposium on Semantics" that would become the backbone of New Directions, as he was convinced that "Semantics is a subject of the very greatest importance and that nothing will bring the world out of its chaos more quickly than a general recognition of that fact."⁵⁶ That such a symposium never came to fruition suggests Laughlin's—and New Directions'—shifting focus. What did materialize in 1938 was a recurring section titled "New Directions in Design," which, under the editorship of Edgar Kaufmann Jr., sought to expose the annual's readers and contributors to new developments in the field of product design and architecture. In 1939, the outbreak of war once again placed added political pressure on the arts. In some camps the arts were being criticized as an extraneous activity at a time when, according to this view, it was either indecorous or wasteful to expend energy on non-essential activities. Like many other literary figures, Laughlin defended the importance of literature precisely at a moment when

⁵⁵ Delmore Schwartz and James Laughlin, *Delmore Schwartz and James Laughlin: Selected Letters*, ed. Robert Phillips (New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), 64.

⁵⁶ Laughlin, "Preface [1937]," xiv.

“men are being killed by the thousands.”⁵⁷ Laughlin frames the writing and consumption of literature as a right of mental and spiritual freedom that must be affirmed during the war, since he notes that in “the minds of most of us this war is a war for freedom.”⁵⁸ Later in his commentary, he reiterates a version of an assertion that he first made in earlier prefaces that “one great cause of the world’s general sickness was malady of language, that confusion of terms, and often the deliberate distortion of terms and concealment of meanings on the part of interested groups, were responsible for the preservation of social and economic systems which permit poverty in the midst of plenty,” and notes that the current war reinforces this thesis.⁵⁹ Though he quickly launches into further advocacy of the socialization of credit, he first observes that “The Nazi war engine rolls because the young people believe, and they believe because they have been systematically mesmerized—with rotten words.”⁶⁰ Implicit here is Laughlin’s earlier argument that experimental writing can revitalize the language. Nonetheless, the notion never becomes explicit.

By the time the United States enters the war in December 1941, the relationship he construes between literature and politics is a much more traditional one—one where satire, not radical form, instigates change.⁶¹ On the few occasions when Laughlin moved in the direction of adopting specific political positions, it threatened to disrupt the politically diverse community of experimental writers he had assembled. In 1940, Laughlin had dedicated the annual to “the men of the Royal Air Force / *“Seldom in history have so many owed so much to so few”* / --Winston Churchill.” He

⁵⁷ Laughlin, "Preface [1939]," xiii.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., xiv.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ In his 1942 preface Laughlin asserts that in the years following the war that there will be a great need for “effective satire as a social weapon” (xiii). Returning, as he often does, to the topic of economics, Laughlin states that he fears that the country’s leaders will reward those who fought in the war “not with a new world based on a clean economic system, but with a shiny and delusive new world imperialism incorporating most of the old economic fallacies and wrongs” (xiv). Laughlin suggests literature can and should play a role in evading this fate, remarking that we “must hope for popular political action to drive out the old gang and their obsolete fixed ideas and for a militant creative literature that will reinforce and even inspire the political movement” (xiv). However, rather than advocating a wide range of linguistic experiment, Laughlin specifically champions a more traditional form of literary social critique: “we must hope for satirists who will relentlessly expose both the sham of the old order and the false stuffing of the new costume in which the rotting old body is to be decked out for resale to the gullible public” (xiv). James Laughlin, "Preface [1942]," in *New Directions in Prose & Poetry 1942* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1942; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967).

explained, “It is unlikely that any of them will ever see a copy of *New Directions*, or that they would be particularly interested if they did, but can there be much doubt that the future of free culture and of the kind of writing that *New Directions* stands for depends in great measure upon the outcome of their courageous battle?”⁶² Laughlin’s support of the RAF proved controversial among some of his more pacifist contributors. Dwight MacDonald of the *Partisan Review* wrote Laughlin,

[...] I don’t at all approve of your dedicating the volume to the RAF. I don’t think you had any right to do so unless you had first consulted the contributors (some of whom, like [Paul] Goodman, would probably object). And I see your action in so doing as a very small symptom of the flagwaving war hysteria which is growing ever here and which threatens both the political-social and the literary values I believe in.⁶³

Though he defended his decision, the publisher was careful to avoid articulating explicit political stances when in a later project with the Ford Foundation he would call upon modernist literature to represent the American side in the cultural skirmishes of the Cold War.⁶⁴

Thus though *New Directions* responded to the political imperative of the 1930s by positing a social function for experimental writing, when the annual’s initial emphasis on the reformist potential of experimental form waned, the magazine’s subordination of content to form aligned it with the aestheticism and conservative apoliticism associated with New Criticism. The distancing of personal politics from literary merit was something that clearly concerned Laughlin in his 1946 preface. There he defends himself against those who would indict him for publishing Ezra Pound, a fascist, or Paul Eluard, a Stalinist. “I don’t care whether he is a Stalinist or what he is; the man can *write*. He is a poet and no mistake. That’s enough for me [...] A poem is a thing in itself. You judge it by itself, for itself, and of itself—not by the politics of the man who wrote it” Laughlin would declare.⁶⁵ Though this appeal to a depoliticized formalism strikes a different note from the political formalism Laughlin espoused in 1936, an implicit argument regarding the centrality of form underlies both. Ultimately, it was a formalist approach to politics that enabled Laughlin to ascribe social

⁶² *New Directions in Prose & Poetry 1940*, ed. James Laughlin IV (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions), v.

⁶³ Dwight MacDonald to James Laughlin, n.d. [ca. 1940/41], *Partisan Review Correspondence Folder* [2 of 3], Records, *New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers*, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

⁶⁴ See Chapter Four of this dissertation, “Institutionalizing Anti-Institutionalism: The Paradox of *Perspectives USA*’s Cold War Modernism.”

⁶⁵ Laughlin, “Editor’s Notes [1946],” xxii.

relevancy to experimental writing while simultaneously maintaining and consolidating a politically catholic community under the aegis of the New.

II. The Ancestral (and Filial) New: Re-envisioning the Temporal and National Parameters of the Modern Movement

During the 1930s technically experimental writers were also forced to confront a second existential crisis. Though for New Directions that decade's political imperative had kindled a bright hot flame that initially fueled the editorials of its early annuals, this blaze, as we have just seen, eventually dwindled. However, by contrast, the spark occasioned by the crisis of belatedness over time ignited multiple growing fires that would affect New Directions' publishing program for decades to come. Rejecting the basic terms of the critique of belatedness, James Laughlin and New Directions would revise an earlier modernist pose, in which the 'New' was predicated on notions of radical rupture and a break with tradition, to re-contextualize instead the current communities of experimental writing as participating in a tradition of the New. In so doing, the press expanded the literary timeline of modernism to include a useable and influential past and a borrowing, to-be-influenced future. By creating and consolidating a larger and more inclusive genealogy for the moderns, New Directions would play a central role in their institutionalization.

Before examining New Direction's response to the problem of belatedness, it is important first to sketch out the terms of the critique. I have already mentioned that New Direction's founder and editor, James Laughlin IV, was twenty-two years of age when he began the press in 1936. However it would be perhaps more to the point to note the date of his birth. It was 1914, the same year that the short-lived vorticist magazine *Blast*, under the editorship of Wyndham Lewis, first sought to scandalize the literary establishment with its political and aesthetic iconoclasm. By the time that the inaugural issue of *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* was published over two decades later, many of the early advocates of modernist innovation—those whom Peter Nicholls in his study *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* labels the “Men of 1914”: Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce, but also others including H.D., Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, and William Carlos Williams—

were in or nearing their fifties. Moreover the avant-garde Left Bank communities of Paris now also bore some signs of their advancing age, having by then been made the subject of literary memoir in Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) and Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return* (1934). It is not surprising then, that one of the crises that faced both *New Directions* and the communities of experimental writing in general was how to continue to "make it new" over twenty years into an avant-garde revolution.

Though it was criticized along a variety of lines—including on the unevenness of its contributions and the (to some) perplexing nature of its eclecticism—it was perhaps the charge of belatedness that appeared most frequently in contemporaneous reviews of the *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* annuals. This criticism took on two distinct, but related, forms. The first was that a number of the writers included in the annual could not in good faith be counted as new, their having occupied the literary scene for two or more decades. The second was that those "new faces" who did appear in the annuals were producing what amounted to stale and derivative writing. Surveying reviews from the annual's first ten years exposes the persistent, and often comedic, fashion in which such critiques were leveled. In an appraisal that he would later recant in the "Letter To James Laughlin" that opens his 1980 collection *Memories of the Moderns*, Harry Levin, for example, expounds the thesis that the 1937 *New Directions* annual makes its appeal "on archaeological and sentimental grounds."⁶⁶ Levin notes disparagingly that Laughlin has "exhumed" numerous "old-fashioned non-Euclidean" like Stein, Cummings, Williams, Cocteau, and Gorham Munson. "It is comforting to know," he writes, "that these venerable and well-loved figures now have a suitably rococo old actors' home, full of false perspectives and vistas that lead nowhere, where they may rehearse their favorite roles and live again their triumphs."⁶⁷

Critical of the contributors' failure to engage with a "recognizable reality," Edna Lou Walton in her March 1938 *Poetry* review, describes the annual's "'new' writers" as "not very new" authors

⁶⁶ Harry Levin, "Innovation and Collective Talent," *The Nation* 146, no. 7 (1938): 186.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

who “resemble the poorer post-war sur-realists.”⁶⁸ She further accuses them of mistaking “novelty for newness, fancy for allegory.” Though her critique possesses less wit than Levin’s, it arrives at a similar point: “Among them [the volume’s contributors] is not one important writer who has not already said all he has to say.”⁶⁹ A year later, William FitzGerald’s review of the 1938 *New Directions* for *Poetry* would declare that “the ‘experimental’ tendencies in this volume belong almost without exception to the unlamented twenties, and Mr. Laughlin curiously resembles those expatriate men of means who subsidized the frenetic Left Bank utterances out of the secret conviction that ‘it must be good since it’s Greek to me.’”⁷⁰

Variations on this theme of belatedness appear in a variety of other reviews. George Barker begins a 1942 review for *The Nation* by remarking, “I can best begin this piece by observing that there are no new directions in prose or poetry.”⁷¹ Randall Jarrell, evaluating the 1941 *New Directions* for the *Partisan Review* suggests that the annual has no *raison d’être*, “or rather, it has one that was dead and unburied ten years ago, like Hoover.” “Nowadays,” he muses,

seeing people being consciously experimental together has the brown period smell of the Masonic ceremonies in *War and Peace*; even Mr. Laughlin and the few Constant Experimenters know something has happened to experiment—so *New Directions*, especially the experimental sections, gets more conventional every year. (In such matters, it is the first step that counts.) What use is it now, anyway?⁷²

⁶⁸ Edna Lou Walton, “And So Gradually Nothing is Said,” *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* LI, no. vi (1938): 344.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 346.

⁷⁰ William FitzGerald, “Make it New--Or Else!,” review of *New Directions in Prose & Poetry 1938*, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* LIII, no. IV (1939): 214. In an interview published as a part of the *Conjunctions* festschrift for James Laughlin, Kenneth Rexroth would lament that some would-be writers just saw Laughlin as a patron and potential source of income. He explained:

But the whole attitude [of writers who petitioned Laughlin for money] was that, and nobody took his work seriously. Just as nobody took Caresse Crosby seriously. There’s no such thing as Black Sun Press books published by Harry Crosby. Harry Crosby couldn’t count to twenty without taking off his shoes [...] And Caresse was just looked on as a giddy, aging debutante by the establishment. The same was true of Peggy Guggenheim. I have found that the patrons of the arts as people are greatly superior to the people they patronize.

In the *Conjunctions* interview and elsewhere, Rexroth in later years sought to alert others to the important (and underestimated) contributions Laughlin had made to modern literature. Kenneth Rexroth and Bradford Morrow, “An Interview with Kenneth Rexroth,” *Conjunctions* 1 (1981): 54.

⁷¹ George Barker, “In All Directions,” *The Nation* 154, no. 12 (1942): 347.

⁷² Randall Jarrell, “In All Directions,” Review, *Partisan Review* IX, no. 4 (1942): 347.

Nor were these criticisms limited to “outsiders”; writers at the heart of the New Directions community questioned its novelty. Delmore Schwartz, who published four books with New Directions and contributed numerous times to the annual, discoursed publicly upon the derivativeness of much of the writing in *New Directions 1944*. “[I]s there anything less experimental than the deadly earnest imitation of experimental writing from twenty-five years ago?” he asks, “Some of the Poets here echo the idiom and subject matter Ezra Pound brought forth after the last war, and others are highly involved in imitating their own efforts of fifteen years ago.”⁷³ Indeed, this criticism of belatedness became such a standby in reviews of *New Directions*, that when reviewing *Spearhead* for the hardly avant-garde *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Gerard Previn Meyer was able to remark,

Of course, as has so often been pointed out (and, I suppose, as must be pointed out once more), these particular writers [Pound, Cummings, Stein, and Williams] exerted their greatest influence in the Twenties, when their directions were indeed new; it is hard to justify their position as innovators in the decade covered by “*Spearhead*,” especially when, as in the cases of Cummings and Williams, at least some of their contributions to that volume actually date back as far as 1921 (Williams) and 1931 (Cummings).⁷⁴

Moreover, the criticism of belatedness was a recurring theme in James Laughlin’s correspondence with a number of the authors whom he published, the network of consultants that constituted the New Directions community. For example, the poet Kenneth Rexroth, one of Laughlin’s most trusted advisors, whose letters to Laughlin were by turns adulatory, plaintive, and acerbic, warned the publisher in 1948: “You just keep on taking the advice of NYC cocktail hacks and printing warmed over nonsense from the Café Dome and they will put you in the Smithsonian Institution along with Fulton’s paddle wheel.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Delmore Schwartz, “Delights and Defects of Experiment,” *The Nation* 159, no. 17 (1944): 476.

⁷⁴ Gerard Previn Meyer, “Night-World Voyagers, and Others,” *The Saturday Review of Literature* XXX, no. 48 (1947): 30.

⁷⁵ Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin, *Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin: Selected Letters*, ed. Lee Bartlett (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 96. Kenneth Rexroth was one of the Press’s community of authors who (along with others like Edouard Roditi, Delmore Schwartz, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams) advised Laughlin on which authors and texts to publish. It was Rexroth, for example, who in the 1970s urged Laughlin to snatch up the reprint rights on much of H.D.’s oeuvre. *Ibid.*, 256.

Of course, it was modernism itself (or at least one early incarnation of modernism) that had furnished the knives with which the critics now so gleefully set upon the annual. One of the notable, if not defining, features of (early) modernism was its pose of temporal rupture and the iconoclasm of its 'New.' Marinetti's "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism 1909" for example, famously alludes to the poisonous influence that the institutions of the past have on the artist, and instructs its readers to "set fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums!"⁷⁶ Imagining an interlocutor who might object to such remarks and argue for the past's relevance and value, Marinetti adopts a willfully dismissive tone: "Enough! Enough! We know them [your objections]... We've understood!... Our fine deceitful intelligence tells us that we are the revival and extension of our ancestors—Perhaps! If only it were so!—But who cares? We don't want to understand!... Woe to anyone who says those infamous words to us again!"⁷⁷ Indeed, more than simply rejecting the past, some modernist manifestos sought to contract the continuum of time to the present moment.⁷⁸ The proclamation titled "Long Live the Vortex!," which in 1914 opened the first of *Blast's* two issues, pledged an allegiance to "the Reality of the Present—not [...] the sentimental Future, or the sacripant Past."⁷⁹ Even *transition's* much later "Proclamation" (1929), the same manifesto whose championing of the revolution of the word Laughlin found so inspirational, would approach time, and the teleology that often accompanies it, with distaste, declaring it "A TYRANNY TO BE ABOLISHED."⁸⁰ It

⁷⁶ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism 1909," in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, ed. Vassiliki Kolocotroni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press; reprint, 1998), 252.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁷⁸ Inevitably, and paradoxically, this gesture has a variety of well-documented antecedents, from the late-seventeenth century Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, to Baudelaire's definition of Modernity as "*the transient, the fleeting, the contingent*" whose role in art must be embraced so that we do not fall into "*the emptiness of an abstract and indefinable beauty*," to Walter Pater's presentist championing of the fleeting experience in his "Conclusion" to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, wherein the "testing of new opinions and the courting of new impressions" along with art provide "the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake." Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 12; Charles Baudelaire, "From 'The Painter of Modern Life,'" in *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* (1863; Chicago: University of Chicago Press; reprint, 1998), 107; Walter Pater, "From Studies in the History of the the Renaissance," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (1873; New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 840, 841.

⁷⁹ "Long Live the Vortex," in *BLAST I*, ed. Wyndham Lewis (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 2002), 7.

⁸⁰ "Proclamation," 13.

must be ceded, of course, that this rejection of literary tradition and break with the past was in fact a *pose*, and an almost always qualified one. Thus, even as the *transition* manifesto disparages time, it registers the importance of literary history through its parenthetical citations of William Blake and Rimbaud. Similarly, despite his earlier rejection of the governance of past and future, Lewis would later contextualize the vorticist movement in a potentially sentimental temporal economy: “We are not only the ‘last men of an epoch!’ We are more than that. *We are the first men of a Future that has not materialized.* We belong to a ‘great age’ that has not ‘come off.’”⁸¹ If modernism’s and the avant-garde’s initial pose of temporal rupture is revealed to be just that, an inconsistent pose, it is nonetheless worth noting that it was a pose that *New Directions* chose never to adopt.

Rather, *New Directions*’ publishing program was predicated upon an expansive vision of the temporal continuum of literature. Indeed, perhaps because it came after a generation of violent revolt, it was less aggressive towards its forbearers, embracing its belated status.⁸² Or rather, it embraced the notion that its ‘New’ owed much to the ‘New’ of its predecessors and that, in turn, the ‘New’ it presently published would inspire future innovation. With satiric irony, Alan Pryce-Jones, chose the title “The Ancestral New” for his 1947 *TLS* review of *New Directions* and *New Road* (an anthology of European art and literature). He notes that those readers who ask themselves “with eager curiosity, what is ‘new and divergent’ to-day” will disappointedly open *New Directions* to find “a translation of Lautréamont—he would have been 101 a week or two ago—and forty foreseeable pages by MR. HENRY MILLER on Rimbaud placed beside the work of writers who have been before the public for a generation or more.”⁸³ Clearly working from a definition of the New premised upon the velocity of the previous generation, Pryce-Jones indicts both miscellanies for being “less up-to-date in their own time than *The Keepsake* or *Friendship’s Offering* a century ago.” “They sincerely expect

⁸¹ Quoted in Bradford Morrow, “Blueprint to the Vortex [Introduction],” in *BLAST 1* (reprint, Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 2002), vii.

⁸² It is worth noting, for example, that *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* began as an annual that sought to reprint the most significant experimental writing published in other magazines. Though the annual soon shifted its emphasis to publishing material that had not appeared in other venues first, a certain willful and consolidating cultivation of belatedness informed it from the start.

⁸³ Alan Pryce-Jones, “The Ancestral New,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 2361 (1947): 211.

the reading public to march with an advance guard which stands on the same spot from one decade to another,” he laments.⁸⁴ Yet Pryce-Jones’s satiric “ancestral new” is something that Laughlin and New Directions approached with utter sincerity. To excavate and archive this ancestral new was a project that New Directions saw as continuous with and vital to its nourishment of a filial and imminent “New.” Indeed, through both its editorial statements and its publishing activities, New Directions sought to retrace the definitional boundaries of the New.

In anticipation of examining how this redefinition of a central term of modernism transpired, I want first to address the extent to which we might fairly construe New Directions’ publication history as constitutive of a philosophy or agenda. Reflecting upon the press’s first twenty-five years in 1964, James Laughlin would de-emphasize the role that any philosophy might have played in the evolution of the New Directions list. “[O]ne fact stands forth; for better or for worse,” he explained, “there has been no editorial pattern beyond the publisher’s inclinations, his personal response to the manuscripts which came his way.”⁸⁵ Indeed, at that particular moment in time, Laughlin chose to minimize the place of the new in New Directions. Citing Gorham Munson as the source of the press’s name, he notes that this moniker “is as often as not misleading in its implication of the experimental, the avant-garde and the ‘offbeat.’” Though he admits that from the outset the press emphasized these areas, especially in the *New Directions* annuals, he observes that “many of the most important books have been works written in traditional, even conventional forms, or have been translations of classic texts from other languages.”⁸⁶ Laughlin would, however, offer a different assessment in his 1992 acceptance speech for the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. There he would frame the press’s accomplishments in terms of providing a forum for experimental and ‘advance-guard’ writing, highlighting the paucity of publication opportunities for such writing when New Directions first started as compared with the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ James Laughlin, "Publisher's Foreword," in *A New Directions Reader*, ed. Hayden Carruth and James Laughlin (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1964), xi.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

numerous forums available at the time of his speech in 1992.⁸⁷

To be sure, New Directions did indeed publish a number of “traditional” books, such as the anthology *Twelve Poets of the Pacific* (1937), edited by Yvor Winters, Dudley Fitts’s *One Hundred Poems from the Palatine Anthology* (1938), or works like Dylan Thomas’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1940), whose form might be more conventional but whose indebtedness to the “modern” tradition is evident in its title. However, by and large, the booklist from the press’s first ten years reflects a pronounced emphasis on the experimental and the modern. Whether consciously intended or not, New Directions does in the end reflect an agenda *precisely because* the books it published were either a function of Laughlin’s whim or, as Laughlin notes in the same introduction, were “recommended by [New Directions’] writers and friends.”⁸⁸ Though personal inclination occasionally resulted in some titles that stand apart from the rest of the press’s list—an avid skier, Laughlin chose to publish a number of skiing titles such as Emile Allais, *How to Ski by the French Method* (1947) or Sverre Engen’s *Ski with Sverre* (1947)—for the most part the titles reflect the modernist bias of Laughlin and the literary community that constituted New Directions. Though Laughlin certainly did not follow all of Ezra Pound’s advice, it is worth recalling that when Pound suggested that Laughlin abandon poetry to become a publisher it was so that Laughlin would provide a forum for Pound and likeminded writers. Indeed, the poet Hayden Carruth, a friend of Laughlin’s who worked for both New Directions and Laughlin’s 1950s project with the Ford Foundation, Intercultural Publications, recalls in *Beside the Shadblow Tree*, that when the publisher rejected the second half of one of his manuscripts, he did so by explaining that Carruth’s work was “only partly experimental, not offbeat enough for an

⁸⁷ Laughlin explained, “Now, 57 years later, the situation for experimental writing - or call it advance-guard writing, if you will - has totally changed. There are dozens of very competent small presses all over the country and scores of well-edited little magazines that are eager to publish writers whose work is unconventional. Beyond that, many of the commercial houses are willing to take a chance on novels that defy all the rules of traditional fiction. Huge schools of creative writing in the colleges turn out hundreds of poets who sound like Wallace Stevens.” In his speech Laughlin noted that he knew the advance guard was overcoming its isolation in the 1960’s when “the stories of Donald Barthelme came out in *The New Yorker* and were promptly published in book form by Little, Brown and Company.” Laughlin, *Taking a Chance on Books: What I Learned at the Ezuversity* ([cited]).

⁸⁸ Laughlin, “Publisher’s Foreword,” xii.

avant-garde publishing house like New Directions.”⁸⁹ It was this commitment to publishing the avant-garde that Kenneth Rexroth would laud in *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*: “All through the years when the avant-garde was not supposed to exist [presumably the 1940s and 1950s], he went bravely on, publishing them—everybody—from all languages—for many years at a considerable financial loss. This is the kind of patronage that counts.”⁹⁰ For Rexroth, New Directions was a principal, and sometimes sole, venue for avant-garde community. Ultimately, if we put Laughlin’s 1964 protestations aside, New Directions’ editorial statements, publicity materials, and its development of thematic series reflect the centrality of an evolving concept of the New to the press. Not only, as we have just seen, did the press expand the social function of the New, but it implicitly argued for the enlargement of its temporal and national-international boundaries.

This re-working of the concept of the New pervades Laughlin’s early essay “Language and the Experimental Writer”. Here Laughlin historicizes the project of technical innovation and experimentation not simply within the recent context of modernism, but in relation to a much longer timeline. This move entails an abnegation and subsequent reconfiguration of notions of the New. “There is nothing new about experimental writing,” Laughlin begins his essay, “In the Second Century B.C. “Father” Ennius was making trimeses worthy of our own E. E. Cummings [...] Nashe and Shakespeare were quite as ready to invent a word as is James Joyce.”⁹¹ Laughlin’s New therefore is not a new that proclaims itself apart from tradition and time, but rather one whose linguistic and formal innovation participates in and is indebted to, whether consciously or not, a lineage that extends backward to ancient times. Wordsworth is thus a “brash experimenter” whose insistence in “Preface To The Lyrical Ballads” upon a poetic diction akin to the language of the common man,

⁸⁹ Carruth, *Beside the Shadblow Tree: A Memoir of James Laughlin*, 70. For a detailed discussion of *Perspectives USA* and Intercultural Publications, see Chapter Four of this dissertation. Carruth’s memoir suggests that Laughlin’s motivations for not publishing some of his works were also financial. Carruth’s volumes did not sell and both men knew it. Whatever diplomatic function Laughlin’s invocation of experimentalism may have served, it is nonetheless telling that this was the standard he used in articulating his decision.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Rexroth, *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 126. Rexroth also dedicated this book to his longtime publisher: “To My Friend / JAMES LAUGHLIN / to whom modern literature / owes an incalculable debt” (5).

⁹¹ Laughlin, “Language and the Experimental Writer,” 261.

Laughlin argues, “compares in spirit with the manifestos of the *transition* group trying in other ways to liberate poetic diction.”⁹² In this way, Laughlin subsumes modern experimentation into an age-old process of innovation that ensures the viability of language and, as a result, the health of society.

In response to the many cries of belatedness, Laughlin felt compelled, in his 1938 preface, to justify and explain “the interpretation I put on the word ‘new’ in the name *New Directions*.”⁹³ Noting that “[i]t has become almost a habit for a certain kind of reviewer to complain that writers like Stein and Cummings are not *new*,” Laughlin delineates a concept of the New that centers on issues of assimilation into mainstream literary culture and literary history.⁹⁴ Until Stein and Cummings are accepted by a broader public they must be “kept in current print if the value of their experiments is not to be lost.”⁹⁵ He uses a similar justification in discussing the technique of Pound’s *Cantos*. The Poundian method, he claims, is still a new direction because, though it is no longer in the experimental stage with the poet, “it certainly is with the general poetry audience.”⁹⁶ Laughlin also answers critiques of derivativeness by taking up the example of Zukofsky’s “A-8,” which appeared in that issue of *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*. Anticipating a critic who would reproach Zukofsky for using the same disjunctive and condensed technique found in Pound’s *Cantos*, Laughlin responds, “It would be just as sensible to damn everybody but Petrarch for using the sonnet form.”⁹⁷ So the newness of *New Directions* was not to be an exclusively or radically disjunctive one, but one predicated upon and rooted in its ties to that which has gone before.

Simultaneously, *New Directions* extended the temporal continuum of the New forward in time to address a filial New. It is this imminent New, Laughlin explains, that informs the catholic editorial policy of the *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* annuals. The 1938 preface in particular functions as a site in which this re-formulation and re-articulation of the New transpires. Having come under fire from Ezra Pound for the absence of a high enough standard in the writing published

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Laughlin, "Preface [1938]," xvi.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., xvii.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

annuals and in its larger publishing program, seeks to archive and foster, since, Laughlin suggests, the future of technically innovative writing turns on the awareness and vitality of this recent tradition. Writing in the 1939 *New Directions* preface, Laughlin explains, “You may say that a great writer requires no immediate tradition. I think that the history of literature disproves that” and cites Italy as a nation, which, though it possesses an illustrious literary past, has stagnated in recent years because the “tradition of the last century and a half is so hopeless and insipid from a technical point of view—there is only Leopardi who can be read without boredom—that the young writers simply cannot make headway.”¹⁰²

Though these proclamations appear within the context of *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*, the communal importance of the innovation also informs *New Directions*’ larger publishing philosophy. As I shall discuss shortly, it is this revised notion of a temporally contingent New that subtends not only *New Directions*’ publication of contemporaneous literature, but the genealogical, consolidating, popularizing, and didactic tenor of activities such as its *New Classics* reprint series and its *Makers of Modern Literature* critical series.

However, *New Directions*’ ‘New’ involved not only expanding the concept’s temporal continuum, but also rethinking its spatial—that is its national/international—dimension. For the press, an important new direction was that provided by looking outside of American and Anglophone traditions to consider the literary offerings of other nations. “Literature is now polylingual,” Laughlin asserted in 1938, and for this reason “American writers and active readers must know what is going on in other countries.”¹⁰³ Not to publish a poet like Eluard, he argued,

¹⁰² Laughlin, “Preface [1939],” xvii. It is worth noting that Laughlin’s discussion of technique, particularly in the *New Direction in Prose and Poetry* annuals, almost always carries with it the inference of technical [i.e. formal] research, that is, the discovery and refinement of technical innovations. This theme is evident, for example, in a paragraph from Laughlin’s 1939 preface that follows his example of the Italian literary dilemma:

The ideal of technique as the backbone of writing must be held in esteem. That principle defines the character of this book [*New Directions in Prose & Poetry*]. And it explains why we turn away many good pieces of writing that have no technical interest, and why we often print work that is not entirely successful because, imperfect though it may be, it does have technical interest. (xviii)

¹⁰³ Laughlin, “Preface [1938],” xv.

“would be simply to retard willfully the progress of our own poetry.”¹⁰⁴ Laughlin felt it one of New Directions’ principal duties to “present to the American public exhibitions of important foreign literary movements, and to present them with as much impartiality as possible” so that “readers and writers can decide for themselves what is good and what is bad about the way of writing, what should be rejected as abortive and what should be studied for its possibility of future usefulness.”¹⁰⁵

During the period that this chapter examines, between 1936 and 1948, the New Directions annuals both interspersed individual pieces by foreign-language authors amongst its English-language contributions and spotlighted particular national or regional traditions in special anthology sections. Though often, as in the 1940 “Values in Surrealism” section, these foreign-language contributions were drawn from Western European nations whose relationship to modernism was already well-established, the annual also drew upon less widely read literatures in translation.¹⁰⁶ For example, the same issue that featured the Surrealism exhibit, also included, as part of a section on chainpoems, two chainpoems by the Japanese Vou group. A quick survey is instructive. The literature in translation that appeared in the first ten New Directions annuals included pieces by Jean Cocteau (1936, 1937), Federico Garcia Lorca (1939, 1944), Bertolt Brecht (1941), Franz Kafka (1941, 1942, 1946), André Breton (1941), Boris Pasternak (1946), and George Seferis (1948), to name a few, and the special exhibition sections “Modern Poets of Japan” (1938), “Soviet Russian Poetry” (1941), “Latin-American Section” (1944), “A Little Anthology of Mexican Poetry” (1946), “New Poems from Peru” (1948), “A Little Anthology of Italian Poetry” (1948), and “Little Anthology of French Poetry” (1948).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ James Laughlin, “Preface [1940],” in *New Directions in Prose & Poetry 1940*, ed. James Laughlin IV (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1940), xvii.

¹⁰⁶ The “Values in Surrealism” exhibition, was curated by Nicolas Calas. It was overtly didactic and adopted a historical perspective. The section included an interview with Calas titled “The Meaning of Surrealism” as well as his “Towards a Third Surrealist Manifesto,” and a “Surrealist Pocket Dictionary.” His surrealist anthology was divided into “pre-surrealists” (such as Apollinaire, de Chirico, Duchamp, Kafka, De Lautréamont, de Nerval, Rimbaud, and others) and “surrealists” (such as Louis Aragon, Hans Arp, André Breton, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Paul Eluard, Pablo Picasso, Philippe Soupault, Tristan Tzara, and others). The exhibit was rounded out by two essays, “Surrealism: A Dissenting Opinion” by Herbert J. Muller and “Surrealism” by Kenneth Burke.

Though early on in the development of the annuals Laughlin had considered the possibility of publishing an annual of exclusively foreign material (including non-American Anglophone literatures) and transforming the American contents of the annual into a quarterly, he chose ultimately to integrate the translations with its English language offerings (both within the *New Directions* annuals and within the press's various book series).¹⁰⁷ *New Directions* was not alone in emphasizing the international character of modern literature. Both the *Little Review* and *transition* (which in its subtitle alternately declared itself an "international" and "intercontinental" venue) had advanced a poly-lingual aesthetic. What distinguishes *New Directions* is that it evolved a lasting publishing program around this internationalism, ultimately bringing non-English literature to a larger public. Translations permeated the various activities of the press: its *New Classics and Modern Reader* reprint series, *The Poet of the Month* pamphlet series, and its regular non-series titles.¹⁰⁸ The press also published critical works on foreign language authors, such as Gide, Lorca, and Gogol, in its *Makers of Modern Literature Series*.

In enlarging these temporal and national boundaries of the modernist New, *New Directions* constituted and constructed, to borrow Lawrence Rainey's term, an "institution of modernism" that, unlike many of its early institutions,—including the transient and often the factional little magazines—would provide an umbrella for a variety of its movements and authors.¹⁰⁹ Through this formal, temporal, national, and (as we saw in the previous section) political catholicity, the press would help to consolidate and in turn canonize a version of the modern movement that it saw as

¹⁰⁷ Laughlin proposed this as an "ideal solution" in the 1938 *New Directions* preface, that would be "carried out as soon as it is practical to do it." Laughlin, "Preface [1938]," xv. From 1952-1956, Laughlin would serve as the managing editor of *Perspectives USA*, a quarterly review funded by the Ford Foundation published in English, French, Italian, and German language editions that presented American "high culture" to a world audience. See Chapter Four for a detailed discussion of this endeavor.

¹⁰⁸ The *Poet of the Month* pamphlet series, which sought to widen the readership for poetry by providing it in a physically interesting and yet cost-effective format, ran for four cycles between the years 1941 and 1944. The series was forced to change its name to "The Poets of the Year Series" in response to threats of legal action from the Book of the Month club.

¹⁰⁹ Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

being—in the language of its early catalogues and advertising—of “enduring literary value.”¹¹⁰

This construction and consolidation of “new directions” in literature often entailed a pedagogic approach that sought to ensure that the modern literature the press printed did in fact endure and reach an ever-widening, if not still elite, audience. Like many modernist pedagogues, James Laughlin was wary of universities and their approach to teaching literature. In his retrospective essay, “Some Irreverent Literary History” Laughlin would comment that in a half year’s study at Pound’s “Eziversity” he “learned more that was useful about what mattered in literature than I did in my four years at Harvard.”¹¹¹ Yet despite his distrust of “the beaneries” as institutions, Laughlin recognized their importance to securing the literary legacies of the authors he championed. Greg Barnhisel’s study of New Directions’ management of Ezra Pound’s literary reputation intelligently illustrates how the press targeted the exploding post-war college market during the mid-to-late 1950s through its use of the trade paperback (or, as New Directions termed it, paperback); however, the press’s courting of the college audience had begun much earlier. Among the first publications to review the 1936 *New Directions* annual were college literary magazines such as *Yale Lit*, the *Vassar Review*, and the *Harvard Crimson*. The press would recognize the importance of keeping

¹¹⁰ It is important to note here the qualitative distinction that the press articulated between the pieces that it published in the *New Directions* annuals and those it published as a part of its book list. While, as discussed previously, the annuals sought to exhibit not “the best” in modern letters but instead “sincere and not incompetent experiments with the forms of literature” which might then evolve great literature, the books published by the press were ostensibly ones of serious literary merit. Laughlin, “Preface [1938],” xiii. Though Laughlin’s personal correspondence reveals misgivings about the quality of some New Directions titles, the press’s public pronouncements relied on the rhetoric of literary value. The following proclamation, which appeared as a part of a 1939 New Directions advertisement, is characteristic:

In 1936 James Laughlin founded The New Directions Press—with a special purpose: to foster the branches of literature that have suffered most from the commercialization of American Publishing—poetry, criticism, belles-lettres and unconventional fiction. New Directions books are chosen *entirely on the basis of literary value*, with an emphasis on technique, originality and contemporaneity. They are published for people who know that literature is an art and not a business, that poetry is an important part of life, and that reading involves thinking [...].

Advertisement Proof [ca. 1939], 1939 Folder [1 of 2], Catalogs, Circulars and Printed Ephemera, New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Emphasis mine.

¹¹¹ James Laughlin, *Random Essays* (New York: Moyer Bell Limited, 1989), 221. Laughlin also expressed this distrust in the Poundian barb cited earlier in this chapter: “If we allow many words to mean, in effect, nothing at all we shall be eligible for the presidency of a large university, a national trust, or a legislative body.” Laughlin, “Preface: New Directions [1936],” viii.

abreast of and maintaining a relationship with college literary magazines, and in 1942 Laughlin would send out surveys to compile contact and editorial information for student journals.¹¹²

Furthermore, its New Classics and Makers of Modern Literature Series addressed, at least in part, a student audience. In announcing the philosophy of the Makers of Modern Literature series, the catalogue copy explains that though there have been other biographies and studies on the authors that the Makers series would cover, “there are very few succinct, compact guidebooks, which give a student or reader all the basic material he needs in brief form.”¹¹³ The Makers series thus constitutes part of a popularizing and canonizing agenda. It popularizes by making its critical studies readily accessible in both financial and intellectual terms: the editions were to sell for a dollar and serve as a distillation of “basic materials” on the given author. However, it also canonizes, since implicit in this series was the (then still relatively radical) notion that modern authors were worthy of study—that their books were not only to be read and enjoyed, but that they were important enough to merit scholarship and be contextualized in relation to the canons of literature.

While the Makers series encouraged readers to approach modern authors with an analytic eye, it was careful to distance itself from the dry academicism that college students might associate with their coursework. “[T]oo many books have been written by academics who do not themselves understand the creative process and who write criticism that is arid and lifeless, doing real injustices to a great artist’s vitality,” the catalogue copy proclaims. The Makers series would accordingly be written by ‘creative critics,’—with early titles in the series being penned by Harry Levin, Lionel Trilling, Edmund Honig, Vladimir Nabokov, and Yvor Winters, David Daiches, and the Kenyon Critics—men, the catalogue asserts, “who are scholars but are also themselves creative and thus able

¹¹² The letters of inquiry, printed on New Directions letterhead read, “Gentlemen: / We are making a survey of undergraduate literary magazines in leading colleges and universities, and would be much obliged if you could fill in the information we need on the form below and mail it to us in the enclosed return envelope. / With many thanks, / New Directions.” The attached form asked for the following information: Name of college, Name of Undergrad lit mag, Issued how often?, Faculty supervision?, Name of present Ed-in-chief, Name of Faculty advisor, remarks. Form Letter, October 30, 1942, 1942 Folder, Catalogs, Circulars and Printed Ephemera, New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

¹¹³ Catalog [ca. 1941-1942]. NDPCa.

to assess and interpret in wide and various terms.”¹¹⁴ In this fashion, the Makers series reified both the “living” and historical aspects of the books it incorporated into its modern tradition. The press also sought to contextualize the works of better known innovators. It was New Directions who in 1944 first published the manuscript of Joyce’s *Stephen Hero*, the predecessor to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.¹¹⁵

At the same time that New Directions’ didactic approach entailed acts of genealogical excavation and canonization, its emphasis on these archival processes was derived from its belief that future literary inventions are born of and dependent upon an understanding of what has gone before. Thus experimental writers participate in a community that extends both backwards and forwards in time. This ethos inflects how New Directions framed its publication of Stuart Gilbert’s translation of Edouard Dujardin’s *Les Lauriers Sont Coupés* (1888), *We’ll to the Woods No More* (1938). Laughlin appends to the 1938 translation of the text an editorial essay titled “Dujardin’s New Direction,” which contextualizes the novel in terms of its innovative and communal significance. Laughlin begins the essay by posing a question: “Why [...] with so much good American writing available, did New Directions undertake to publish a rather delicate little French novel written fifty years ago?”¹¹⁶ Laughlin’s answer, now obvious in hindsight, was perhaps not so at the time. New Directions published *We’ll to the Woods No More* because it represented an important moment in the history and genealogy of modernist experimentation. As Laughlin states it, “*Les Lauriers* was the first novel to be written entirely in the interior monologue, and thus Dujardin was the pioneer in one of the most significant new directions of modern literature – the technique which we call the stream-of-consciousness.”¹¹⁷ In reasoning such as this, Laughlin manifests his Poundian provenance. Though Pound was far from alone in his championing of innovation, Laughlin’s justification shares much in common with the primer on reading that Pound offers in “How to Read” (1929). There Pound,

¹¹⁴ Ibid. NDPCa.

¹¹⁵ The book was published the same year by Jonathan Cape in England.

¹¹⁶ James Laughlin, “Dujardin’s New Direction,” in *We’ll to the Woods No More* (New Directions, 1938), 149.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

arguing in his distinctive mixture of two parts elitist disdain and one part democratic populism, suggests that the low-brow reader can best acquire an education in literature by reading for innovation. Pound imagines an anthology in which each poem would be included not because it is a nice poem but because it contains an invention.¹¹⁸ Nearly ten years later, Laughlin's afterword reveals New Directions' own pedagogic investment in publishing for innovation. Given its status as Joyce's alleged inspiration for his honing of stream of consciousness in *Ulysses*, and the subsequent adoption and adaptation of this technique by other writers, *Les Lauriers* becomes a central text for the incipient scholars of the modernist movement. "Obviously," Laughlin explains, "it was part of New Directions' job to make a book of such importance available to the English reading student."¹¹⁹

Moreover, Laughlin's afterword constructs a temporal economy that argues for the importance and interrelation of both the archiving of the innovations of the past and the promotion of current innovation. According to Laughlin, Dujardin's experiment, which received almost no attention upon its first publication in 1888, finds itself justified through Joyce's appropriation of stream of consciousness in *Ulysses*, whose popularization of that technique, has rendered it "one of the most useful tools of the modern novelist."¹²⁰ Yet again Laughlin suggests that the value of experimentation is the way in which it may be (unexpectedly) taken up by future generations. Given the past's ability to inspire a future, the seeming nostalgia of Laughlin's list is also justified. To publish new classics is not only to provide a genealogy of the current avant-garde, but, potentially, to inspire still another avant-garde. Yet the "happy ending" of Dujardin's experiment—the prominence that it has brought the innovator in his old age—provides Laughlin with the opportunity to lament the plight of the experimenter in his youth. His afterword warns the reader against forgetting that "while the important critics are making glad the old age of Dujardin they are sure to be making bitter the youth of some other experimenter [sic], some other young genius who has discovered a new

¹¹⁸ Ezra Pound, "How To Read," in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T.S. Eliot (New York: New Directions, 1968), 17.

¹¹⁹ Laughlin, "Dujardin's New Direction," 149. Laughlin writes, "It was Joyce, of course, in *Ulysses*, who perfected the silent monologue. But it was Dujardin who invented it, a debt which Joyce has frequently acknowledged" (149).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

direction in literature and must eat air and drink hope for the next thirty years till all the important critics feel it is safe for them to announce his genius.”¹²¹ Accordingly, Laughlin’s stable of young experimenters finds its justification in the now-recognized accomplishments of older experimenters, and vice versa.

The press also used a didactic approach in contextualizing and marketing its contemporary works. A promotional ad appearing in *The Nation* for the anniversary publication of *Spearhead: Ten Years’ Experimental Writing in America* (1947) quizzed readers on their knowledge of experimental writing (Figure 3.1). Listing the authors included in the anthology vertically along its left side, the advertisement inquired, “How many of these writers have you read? / Check through the list. / These are the important Advance-Guard authors of the past decade,” those who have “extended the literary horizons of America.”¹²² Publishing any anthology is inherently a consolidating and canonizing move, but what is particularly striking about New Directions’ approach is—in rhetoric that invokes elitism even as it popularizes (or, more pointedly, seeks popularization through appeals to elitism)—its use of tropes of tradition-making to characterize its ‘New.’ “Here,” the *Spearhead* ad boldly concludes, “is literary history in the making.”¹²³

The title of the press’s first reprint series, “New Classics,” epitomizes the manner in which New Directions rejected the negative connotations of belatedness and instead posited the forces of tradition and innovation as continuous rather than antagonistic. Through this series, New Directions sought simultaneously to canonize (hence the attribution of the label “classics”) and popularize (hence the dollar price and the easily transportable pocket-size hardcover format) what it saw as important modern works of literature. The first three volumes in the series were William Carlos Williams’s *In the American Grain* (1939), Delmore Schwartz’s translation of Rimbaud’s *A Season in Hell* (1941) and Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives* (1941).¹²⁴

¹²¹ Ibid., 152.

¹²² “Spearhead Advertisement,” *The Nation* 165, no. 21 (Nov. 29, 1947): 593.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Schwartz’s translation of Rimbaud’s *A Season in Hell* was replaced with Louise Varèse’s in 1945 as the series’ N[ew]C[lassic] 2.

Visual presentation—or in the language of textual and editorial theory, bibliographic codes—played an important role in the consolidation and codification enacted by the New Classics series. In contradistinction to the visual format of the Modern Library series, the front covers of the New Classics dust jackets used minimal text and instead signaled the book’s avant-garde credentials through striking allusions to modern art.¹²⁵ ¹²⁶ The designer responsible for the New Classics series was Alvin Lustig (1915-1955), whom James Laughlin met in Los Angeles around 1939.¹²⁷ Laughlin was drawn to the creativity and modernity of Lustig’s abstract experimentations with standard type ornaments, finding the results of these experiments “disturbing [...] [m]echanistic and yet suggestive.”¹²⁸ Laughlin invited Lustig to design covers for New Directions, and Lustig’s first cover for the press was Henry Miller’s *The Wisdom of the Heart* (1941). As Laughlin commented in a 1949 article for *Publishers Weekly*, Lustig’s covers helped New Directions distinguish itself from commercial houses; they “set a distinctive style which has come to symbolize in physical terms the desired isolation of our editorial program from that of the great commercial houses.”¹²⁹ In fact, some booksellers felt that Lustig’s designs rejected the commercial aspects of publishing too forcefully and

¹²⁵ The Modern Library series was begun by the publishers Boni and Liveright in 1917 and taken over by Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer in 1925. Cerf and Klopfer would go on to found Random House in 1927, with the Modern Library as its centerpiece.

¹²⁶ Though the New Classics series began in 1939, they did not carry Alvin Lustig’s modern art inspired covers until 1945. Laughlin described these earlier NC volumes as “jacketed [sic] in a very conservative, ‘booky’, way.” James Laughlin, “A Statement by the Publisher,” in *Bookjackets by Alvin Lustig for New Directions Books* (New York: Gotham Book Mart Press, 1947), unpaginated. The first New Classics volume to be issued with a Lustig cover was Evelyn Waugh’s *A Handful of Dust* (NC8) in 1945. Once Lustig began designing the New Classics covers, the first seven New Classics titles were reissued with Lustig covers. According to Laughlin, the Lustig covers greatly increased what had been up to then the “dreary” sales of the series. James Laughlin, “The Book Jackets of Alvin Lustig,” *Print Magazine* (Oct/Nov 1956), http://www.alvinlustig.org/bp_intro.asp. Lustig would go on to design covers for the first thirty-six New Classics titles.

¹²⁷ In a November 5, 1949 article for *Publishers Weekly* titled “The Designs of Alvin Lustig,” James Laughlin recalls first meeting Lustig in 1939 after hearing from a writer friend that he “ought to investigate a young chap who was doing ‘queer things’ with type.” Steven Heller, a Lustig scholar, however, gives the date of their first encounter as 1940, and names Jacob Zeitlin, a bookstore owner in L.A., as the man responsible for the introduction. James Laughlin, “The Designs of Alvin Lustig,” *Publishers Weekly* 156, no. 19 (1949): 2005; Steven Heller, “Down the Pigeonhole,” *Print Magazine* (Jan/Feb 2004), http://www.alvinlustig.org/ai_intro.asp.

¹²⁸ Laughlin, “The Designs of Alvin Lustig,” 2005.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*: 2005-2006.

complained about the often small size of the title and author's name in his covers.¹³⁰ In all, Lustig designed over 80 covers for *New Directions* between 1941 and 1955, including jackets for the first thirty-six titles in the *New Classics* series, which design scholars Ned Drew and Paul Sternberg have characterized as "one of the most formidable series of book covers in twentieth-century American design."¹³¹ The Press's attention to the visual appearance of its books provided further aesthetic context for their literary consolidation.

In introducing the addition of a "New Directions in Design," section to the *New Directions* annual, James Laughlin expressed his belief that "parallel movements in different arts are complementary," and that though the experimental writer "may not specifically learn anything from the modern architect [...] he will derive from him a sense of support and solidarity."¹³² In using Lustig's designs for the press's covers, Laughlin foregrounded the complementarity and solidarity of modern visual art and modern literature. Just as the publication of the *New Classics* series effected a construction and consolidation of the "modern" tradition in writing, its covers' allusions to and invocations of modern art constituted a larger construction and consolidation of a modern tradition *across* the arts. Indeed, part of Lustig's design philosophy was to modernize book design so as to bring it into conversation with modern advances in other fields. "Nearly every phase of our physical environment, our architecture, transportation, and methods of communication has changed its form almost completely in the last fifty years," Lustig noted, "whereas books have essentially the form they have had for the last two centuries."¹³³

In their critical survey, *By Its Cover: Modern American Book Design*, Drew and Sternberger count Alvin Lustig as "among the most rigorous of the American graphic designers who strove to

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*: 2006.

¹³¹ Ned Drew and Paul Sternberger, *By Its Cover: Modern American Book Cover Design* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 46.

¹³² Laughlin, "Preface [1938]," xvi. The *New Directions in Design* section edited by Kaufmann appeared in the annuals in 1938, 1939, and 1940.

¹³³ Alvin Lustig, *The Collected Writings of Alvin Lustig* (New Haven, CT: Holland R. Melson, Jr., 1958), 46.

adapt both the forms and philosophy of European modernism to the realm of design.”¹³⁴ In his covers for the New Classics series, Lustig employed a design lexicon that borrowed from the likes of Matisse, Picasso, and Miró, artists whom he described as the “really great painters of our time.”¹³⁵ Before the reader even opens the book, the allusions in Lustig’s cover design contextualize the text in relation to the formal innovations of modern abstract art. This framing was particularly significant for some of the books in the series that might be read in relation to other contexts. For example, the minimalist, quasi-cubist busts that adorn the cover of Lustig’s New Classics edition of Gustave Flaubert’s *Three Tales* (Figure 3.3), suggest the participation in and relevance of Flaubert’s 1877 volume to the modern tradition.¹³⁶

This pairing of modernist design and modernist literature, moreover, was a highly effective marketing strategy; according to Laughlin, the “*New Classics Series* sales tripled after Lustig jackets were adopted.”¹³⁷ The eye that would be drawn to Lustig’s boldly modern covers, would be one sympathetic to the innovations of modern art—precisely the reader that New Directions sought to target. Thus Lustig’s New Directions jackets, and particularly those of the New Classics series, helped to inform instantly the reader of the modern, modernist, and even perhaps avant-garde nature of the text pressed between its covers. As Drew and Sternberger recognize, “Modernist design was a means of expressing the publisher’s dedication to an intellectual literary tradition distinct from the mainstream—a sophisticated visual language that at once created and affirmed its market.”¹³⁸

If, as Drew and Sternberger imply, modernist book design mobilized certain elitist associations, it also, paradoxically, entailed a popularizing thrust. In the same manner that New Directions, despite the elitism that often permeated its anti-commercial stance, sought to expose a larger audience to the modern movements in literature, Lustig saw the medium of graphic design as an opportunity to project onto the public level the “great private symbols which [modern painters]

¹³⁴ Drew and Sternberger, *By Its Cover; Modern American Book Cover Design*, 45.

¹³⁵ Lustig, *The Collected Writings of Alvin Lustig*, 21.

¹³⁶ The addition of such a dust jacket also helped link the text to another “classic” in the series, Gertrude Stein’s *Three Lives*, which in part took Flaubert’s *Trois Contes* as its inspiration.

¹³⁷ Laughlin, “The Designs of Alvin Lustig,” 2006.

¹³⁸ Drew and Sternberger, *By Its Cover; Modern American Book Cover Design*, 50.

have evolved.”¹³⁹ In a 1956 article, James Laughlin would regret that Lustig had not opted to be a painter, noting that he would have liked to hang Lustig’s *Nightwood* abstraction on his living room wall (Figure 3.2). Laughlin, however, explained that Lustig “was compelled to work in the field he chose because he had had his great vision of a new realm of art, of a wider social role for art, which would bring it closer to each and every one of us, out of the museums into our homes and offices, closer to everything we use and see.”¹⁴⁰ Lustig’s book designs therefore not only helped New Directions to codify and consolidate its version of the New, but they also participated in and contributed to the press’s popularization and canonization of modern and avant-garde art.

* * *

Emerging alongside and in response to the 1930s exigencies of belatedness and increased political imperative, New Directions was instrumental in a late modernist re-orientation of the temporal, (inter)national, and political signification of the New. In expanding and reifying this central category of modernism, New Directions guarded the communities of experimental writing against cultural obsolescence and instead helped install them as an object of study. Accordingly James Laughlin becomes a figure integral to both modernism’s anti-institutionalism and its institutionalization. In publicity for the press, Laughlin vociferously denounced the commercialization of publishing, casting the New Directions as a force which championed both the individual and unusual against “the dangerous standardization [...] being forced on American writers.”¹⁴¹ However, Laughlin chose to champion modernism’s anti-institutional ideals by

¹³⁹ Lustig, *The Collected Writings of Alvin Lustig*, 21.

¹⁴⁰ Laughlin, "The Book Jackets of Alvin Lustig," unpaginated.

¹⁴¹ Catalog, "To the Librarian", [ca. 1937], 1937 Folder, Catalogs, Circulars and Printed Ephemera, New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Especially at first, the twenty-two year-old Laughlin was not particularly subtle in using individualism and anti-commercialism to appeal to his reader. One of the first New Directions promotional circulars asks: Dear Reader: // JUST ONE QUESTION ! // ARE YOU AN INDIVIDUALIST IN/ YOUR READING?// If you are, you will want to read an unusual new book called NEW DIRECTIONS. If you are one of a growing number of cultivated readers who feel that the increasing standardization of American writing is an insult to their intelligence...if you resent the commercialism that promotes “bestsellers” at the expense of fine writing and poetry...if you are dissatisfied with stereotyped books...and if you like to read things that stimulate the mind—if you are this kind of reader, the really intelligent reader, NEW DIRECTIONS will interest you.” Promotional Circular, "Dear Reader", [ca. 1936], 1936 Folder, Catalogs, Circulars and Printed Ephemera, New Directions Publishing Corp. Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

in the 1937 annual, Laughlin clarifies that *New Directions* is not intended to be a “critical review” that prints “the best work in any given year.” Rather the annual is intended as a “sort of exhibition gallery in which innovations in prose and poetry can be put on view. Not a salesroom but a testing ground.”⁹⁸ For this reason, it was important that the annual not be limited to any particular school, a priority that would lead Laughlin to proclaim that there is “work in the book which I myself don’t like, but it is printed because it is obviously an authentic experiment.”⁹⁹ It is both the reader and the future writer who will decide which of the experiments published are the most valuable, the most valid: “The value of many of the experiments in *New Directions* is not that they will be adopted for general use, but that their best elements [...] will be absorbed by succeeding writers and put to good use,” for the inventor “seldom perfects his own invention” and “if the invention is hid under a bushel it never gets perfected.”¹⁰⁰ By making the annual a forum for a community that consciously applies itself to the development of new formal techniques, Laughlin explicitly extends the domain of modernist innovation both forwards and backwards. Thus *New Directions* approaches new writing both in terms of its participation in a tradition of innovation and its potential utility for and influence on future writers and readers.

Laughlin’s tradition is not identical with the totalizing tradition that T. S. Eliot discusses in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” Though Laughlin is certainly interested in the larger “Tradition,” which incorporates all types of writing, both conventional and innovative, he is particularly concerned with recognizing and excavating a *recent* and *innovative* tradition, as this is the branch that he sees as particularly under threat from the increased commodification of literature and the commercialization of publishing.¹⁰¹ It is this modern tradition that *New Directions*, both in its

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹⁰¹ Despite his constant excoriation of the hegemony of commercial interests in the publishing industry, James Laughlin did not always completely ignore the pressures of the market when choosing which books to publish. See footnote 89. For studies that treat how modernist presses and writers participate in the commodification of literature see Lawrence Rainey’s *Institutions of Modernism* (1998) and Kevin Dettmar and Stephen Watt’s collection *Marketing Modernisms: Self-Promotion, Canonization, and Rereading* (1996).

generating a lasting institution for them. The 1937 circular cited above was in fact one addressed “To the Librarian,” with the stated aim of making New Directions books “readily available to libraries, especially to school and college libraries.”¹⁴² The longevity of New Directions press—it survived Laughlin’s 1997 death and recently celebrated its 80th anniversary—suggests its success as an institution of modernism. However, as the following chapter on *Perspectives USA* will illustrate, Laughlin’s attempts to wed modernism’s anti-institutional ideas to institutional settings would invoke ideological schisms as he mobilized modern literature’s internationalism on behalf of American foreign policy.

¹⁴² Catalog, “To the Librarian”. This catalog was one of three identically formatted catalogs, each of which contained a page-long address targeting a different audience. In addition to the “To the Librarian” version, there were also “To the Reader” and “To the Bookseller” versions, each of which modulated its arguments on behalf of New Directions to appeal to that audience. It is interesting to note that though the Reader and Librarian versions contain lengthy pronouncements against “big business” publishing, Laughlin judiciously omitted such remarks from the statement targeted at booksellers, suggesting the types of concessions he was willing to make in order to advance his cause.

Lionel Abel
 James Agee
 Djuna Barnes
 John Berryman
 Kay Boyle
 Eleanor Clark
 e e cummings
 Walker Evans
 Charles Henri Ford
 Paul Goodman
 Samuel Greenberg
 Maude Hutchins
 Randall Jarrell
 Eugene Jolas
 Jack Jones
 H J Kaplan
 David Kerner
 James Laughlin
 Robert Lowry
 Georg Mann
 Josephine Miles
 Henry Miller
 Marianne Moore
 Wright Morris
 Anais Nin
 Montagu O'Reilly
 Kenneth Patchen
 Ezra Pound
 Kenneth Rexroth
 Selden Rodman
 Muriel Rukeyser
 William Saroyan
 Delmore Schwartz
 Karl Shapiro
 Gertrude Stein
 Parker Tyler
 José Garcia Villa
 John Wheelwright
 Oscar Williams
 Tenn Williams
 W C Williams

How many of these writers have you read?

Check through the list.

These are the important Advance-Guard authors of the past decade.

These are the writers who have extended the literary horizons of America.

And here in one big volume are the stories and poems, the prose and the plays that have made them significant.

Here is literary history in the making!

SPEARHEAD

NEW DIRECTIONS BOOKS

\$5

Figure 3.1 *Spearhead* ad published in *The Nation* in November 1947

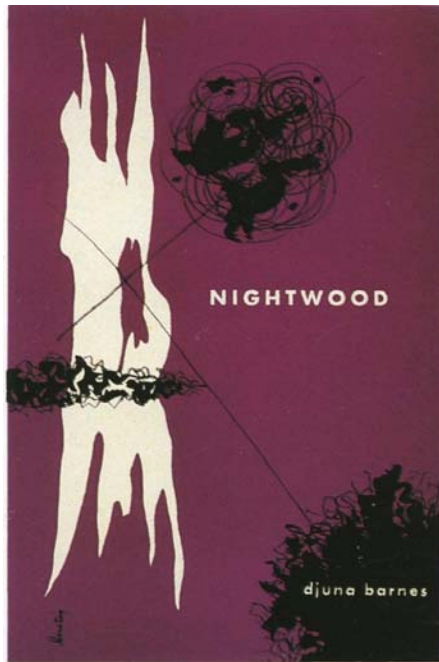


Figure 3.2 New Classics book jacket for Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (NC 11 1946); design by Alvin Lustig.

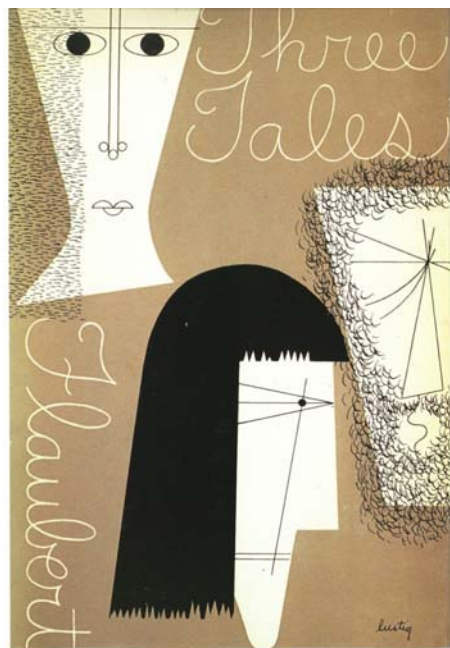


Figure 3.3. New Classics book jacket for Gustave Flaubert's *Three Tales* (NC 7 ca. 1945); design by Alvin Lustig.

Chapter 4.
Institutionalizing Anti-Institutionalism:
The Paradox of *Perspectives USA*'s Cold War Modernism

“In Memory of W. B. Yeats,” a poem not included among the three Auden selections published in Issue 14 of *Perspectives USA*, comments upon the inevitable appropriation of a poet’s writing by his or her audience: “The words of a dead man / Are modified in the guts of the living.”¹ The qualifier “dead,” of course, is not necessary for this process. Though the poet is not entirely without control over the dissemination of his or her works, literature is nevertheless transformed by the contexts and conditions in which it is read. In another oft-quoted line from the same poem, the speaker famously declares “Poetry makes nothing happen: it survives.”² As the history of the cultural front of the Cold War suggests, both individuals and institutions within the Soviet Union and the United States were banking that the opposite was true. The two sides poured intellectual and financial resources into a variety of governmental and non-governmental projects in the hope that poetry (and the arts in general) could make something happen—that it could foster ideological alliances and influence the sympathies of readers around the world, and that these sympathies might in turn shape the political positions that policy-makers adopted throughout the Cold War.³

¹ W. H. Auden, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats,” in *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (1976; New York: Vintage International; reprint, 1991), 247-249. The American and British editions of *Perspectives* printed Auden’s poems “The Old Man’s Road,” “Hunting Season,” and “Streams” in Issue 14, as did the French (*Profils*); the German edition (*Perspektiven*) of Issue 14 contained his “The Traveller,” “Prime,” and “Songs and Other Musical Pieces [XI].”

² *Ibid.*

³ The extent to which a particular organization or publication might be deemed governmental or non-governmental is not always clear-cut. Organizations that presented themselves as independent initiatives, such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and *Encounter Magazine* were famously discovered to have been the beneficiaries of covert CIA funding. *Perspectives USA*, though funded by the Ford Foundation, was guided by a Board of Directors and a larger Ford Foundation hierarchy that included numerous figures with ties to both the U.S. government and more specifically to the Central Intelligence Agency. For example, Paul Hoffman, the former administrator of the Marshall Plan, served as the Foundation’s president between 1951 and 1953. John McCloy, a member of the Allied High Commission created in 1949 to govern the reconstruction of Germany, served both as a consultant and a Trustee for the Ford Foundation. William J. Casey, a member of Intercultural Publications’ Board of Directors, had served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during the Second World War and would later become the Director

Among literary modernism's many afterlives, the story of its mobilization on the cultural front of the Cold War stands as an important episode in tracing its changing relationship to the institutional structures of Western modernity. This chapter seeks to map out some of the bridges and gulfs in this relationship by taking up *Perspectives USA*, a quarterly magazine that was funded by the Ford Foundation and overseen by James Laughlin, the founder and publisher of New Directions. *Perspectives USA* occupies a particularly salient position in the narrative of modernist literary consolidation in that it published both literary rebels in their waning years—including William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, William Faulkner, Wallace Stevens, Archibald MacLeish, Thornton Wilder, e e cummings, Conrad Aiken, Kenneth Rexroth, and Ezra Pound—as well as the critics—including Malcolm Cowley, Arthur Mizener, and Kenneth Burke, Phillip Rahv, Lionel Trilling, F.W. Dupee, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and R. P. Blackmur, (thus New York Intellectuals and New Critics alike),—who helped to establish and explicate emerging modernist canons. Originally a magazine of literature, music, and art, *Perspectives USA* drew upon modernist paradigms of cultural elites and mobilized modernist texts in an attempt to counteract European preconceptions about the shallowness of American cultural life. Appearing in English, Italian, French, and German language editions, the quarterly published sixteen issues between 1952 and 1956 and anchored Intercultural Publications Inc., an umbrella and putatively independent non-profit organization established by the Ford Foundation to carry out a variety of activities aimed at advancing cultural exchange.⁴ In his editorial introduction to *Perspectives'* first issue, Laughlin made his (and the magazine's) argument for

of the Central Intelligence Agency under Ronald Reagan. Accordingly the relationship between “non-governmental” organizations and elements of the U.S. government is often a matter of degree and directness rather than a simple yes or no.

⁴ James Laughlin first proposed the idea of a magazine like *Perspectives USA* in a 1948 *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* editorial. He served as the President of Intercultural Publications, which was incorporated on March 31, 1952. Between 1952 and 1957 the Ford Foundation would allocate \$1,615,000 to the organization, serving as its sole financier. Ludovic Tournès, "La Diplomatie Culturelle de la Fondation Ford; Les éditions *intercultural publications* (1952-1959)," *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 76 (2002): 67, <http://www.jstor.org/journals/02941759.html>. There were five different editions of *Perspectives*, each printed in a different country. The British edition was titled *Perspectives*, the French *Profils*, the German *Perspektiven*, and the Italian *Prospetti* (it had originally been titled *Prospettive*, but this title had to be changed due to a preexisting publication of the same name). The edition published and circulated within the United States was titled *Perspectives USA*. Unless I specify otherwise, my quotations come from the American edition of the magazine.

American high culture: “America, if judged merely by second-rate motion pictures, may appear to be a land of gilded barbarians; but America judged also by the poems of a Marianne Moore, the paintings of a Ben Shahn, the music of an Aaron Copland, or the outlook of a teacher like Jacques Barzun, becomes something different: a culture that exhibits an exciting and rounded vitality.”⁵

Greg Barnhisel has recently argued in *Modernism/Modernity* that *Perspectives USA*'s mobilization of modernism in the service of the state contributed to its transformation “from an avant-garde, oppositional movement to a style that could be comfortably embraced by diverse spheres of elite culture in the U.S.”⁶ Though I agree with many of Barnhisel's findings, my discussion in this chapter demonstrates that this institutionalizing project was neither as smooth nor as successful as Barnhisel suggests. In attempting to use modernism as a tool of cultural diplomacy or— cast more skeptically—cultural imperialism, *Perspectives USA* throws into relief aspects of modernism and modernist community that were already vexed from the outset. Familiar problems relating to modernism's allegiances to national and cosmopolitan discursive communities, its negotiation of individual and collective interests, its constitution of self-designated cultural elites, its relationship to patronage, and its belletristic stance toward both its readership and the main currents of American (and Western capitalist) culture all offer, if not resistance to the project of diplomacy, then resistance to the type of diplomacy practiced by institutions like the Ford Foundation. Though *Perspectives USA*'s editorial staff recognized these areas of contention and implemented strategies to address them, an examination of the quarterly's contents and its internal politics reveals the extent to which their solutions were only provisional. Conflicts both behind the scenes and on the page

⁵ James Laughlin, “The Function of This Magazine,” *Perspectives USA*, no. 1 (1952): 6.

⁶ Gregory Barnhisel, “*Perspectives USA* and the Cultural Cold War: Modernism in Service of the State,” 14, no. 4 (2007): 730, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/modernism-modernity/>. When I began my research on *Perspectives USA* and Intercultural Publications, almost no criticism had been written on the quarterly. The only significant treatment it had received—Ludovic Tournès's French-language article, “La Diplomatie Culturelle de la Fondation Ford; Les éditions *Intercultural Publications* (1952-1959)” —focused primarily on outlining the activities and failure of Intercultural Publications Incorporated's (IPI's) Cold War cultural exchange projects and did not enter into any real detail about the contents of and contributors to *Perspectives*. Barnhisel's article, “*Perspectives USA* and the Cultural Cold War: Modernism in Service of the State,” examines the publication less in reference to its impact on the Cold War than for its recasting of modernism. Though both Barnhisel and I are interested in the magazine's codification of modernism, my chapter focuses on the ideological and practical frictions resulting from its deployment of modernist texts.

perpetually threatened to disrupt the very national cultural consolidation that the magazine attempted. This chapter offers a coda to my discussion of the mechanisms of late modernist literary community and consolidation by revisiting key communal negotiations treated in previous chapters. By attending to *Perspectives USA's* new iterations of longstanding predicaments, I explore the difficulties that arise in attempting to instrumentalize one rather eclectic version of American modernism to represent the nation. The chapter closes with an examination of the magazine's publication of Ezra Pound, offering a specific case study that illustrates the continuing resistance of certain modernist texts to assimilation into mainstream culture.

I. Formal Skirmishes

The Moscow Trials of 1936, the Stalinist purges of 1937-1938, and the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939 had turned many American artists and intellectuals once sympathetic to Soviet Communism against it. Among the non-Communist Left, former Communist Party members and fellow travelers like Phillip Rahv, Dwight MacDonal and Mary McCarthy had adopted an increasingly impassioned anti-Stalinism. It was not, however, until the diplomatic chill of the Cold War set in that the American government and independent national institutions like the Ford Foundation would look to the arts as means—both direct and indirect—of combating the expansion of communist influence in the international arena. Toward the end of the Second World War, the United States established a number of “America Houses” and reading rooms abroad to facilitate the dissemination of American culture. This initiative was further codified in the post-war years with the creation of the United States Information Agency in 1953. The USIA's libraries and cultural activities provided an official point of contact for foreign populations with American thought and creative expression. Such programs, however, were susceptible to the shifting whims of American policy, a reality that at times resulted in the undermining of their own diplomatic efforts. Such was the case in 1953 when, under the influence of McCarthyism, the USIA set about expunging from their libraries all those titles and authors judged to exhibit un-American ideals, especially books by

Communist sympathizers past and present, including Dashiell Hammet, Langston Hughes, and Howard Fast.⁷ “Independent” organizations also sought to sway international sympathies. The Congress for Cultural Freedom, an international organization in which Americans played key roles, attempted to turn Leftist intellectuals away from communism by showcasing Western cultural freedom in conferences, concerts, exhibits, and its literary-political publications *Preuves* and *Encounter*. Though the Congress for Cultural Freedom was ostensibly a non-governmental organization, in the late 1960s it was exposed as having received covert funding from the Central Intelligence Agency.⁸ Still other American Cold War cultural initiatives included the financing of exhibitions of abstract expressionist art abroad and, as Penny Von Eschen has treated in great detail, the sponsorship of jazz tours throughout the Eastern Bloc, Africa, and Asia.⁹

That modernist art should play an important part in the ideological struggles of the Cold War is not entirely surprising. Indeed, as historian David Caute has noted, the official Soviet contempt for modernism’s formal innovations helped to make it an active front in the cultural Cold War. There was a vociferous reactionary element in the United States government (as well as in the culture-at-large) that believed modern(ist) art to be degenerate or, in the words of Michigan

⁷ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (1999; New York: The New Press, 2000), 193. For a concise discussion of the mission and policies of the United States Information Agency see Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, trans. Diana M. Wolf (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 58-62.

⁸ As Frances Stonor Saunders has reported, this revelation was first aired publicly in a speech given by Conor Cruise O’Brien in 1966. A *New York Times* article titled “Electronic Prying Grows” later repeated the claim that the Congress for Cultural Freedom and *Encounter* had received CIA funds. “Electronic Prying Grows: C.I.A. Is Spying From 100 Miles Up,” *New York Times* (27 Apr. 1966), <http://proquest.umi.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/pqdweb?RQT=309&Fmt=10&VType=PQD&VName=HNP&VInst=PROD&did=79094148&SrchMode=1&index=61&sid=4>. A full scale exposé on CIA covert funding was published in the leftist magazine *Ramparts* in April 1967. Stonor Saunders’s *The Cultural Cold War; The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* offers one of the most extensive examinations of the association between the CIA and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, though her documentation is at times less detailed than one might hope.

⁹ In her study, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, Von Eschen analyzes how jazz was mobilized as an intrinsically American artform that could help counter Soviet press about the oppression of African Americans in the United States. As Von Eschen discusses in detail, this tactic entailed a “glaring contradiction”: “the U.S. promoted black artists as goodwill ambassadors—symbols of the triumph of American democracy—when America was still a Jim Crow nation.” Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 4.

Republican Congressman George Dondero, “Communitistic.”¹⁰ However, for Caute, it is difficult to imagine what form the cultural conflict between capitalism and communism might have taken had Lenin and Stalin admired and endorsed the various “isms.” “Would the CIA have resorted to cultural road-shows featuring Andrew Wyeth, Norman Rockwell, Sinclair Lewis, and *The Grapes of Wrath*?” he facetiously asks.¹¹

The transposition of the ideological schism between the United States and Soviet Union onto modernism and realism was perhaps nowhere as pronounced as in pages of *VOKS Bulletin*, the publication of the “U.S.S.R. Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.”¹² Unlike less sophisticated Soviet propaganda that summarily dismissed American culture as mindless and materialistic, *VOKS* trained its critical eye on “highbrow” culture and held forth on the political consequences of different aesthetic choices. Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, in essays such as “Aspects of Two Cultures,” “Features of Socialist Realism,” “Against Formalism in Soviet Music,” “Cultural Relations Between the Soviet People and Foreign Countries,” and “Socialist

¹⁰ Dondero’s comments went so far as to assail particular movements within modernism: “Cubism aims to destroy by designed disorder. Futurism aims to destroy by machine myth...Dadaism aims to destroy by ridicule. Expressionism aims to destroy by aping the primitive and insane. Abstractionism aims to destroy by the creation of brainstorm...Surrealism aims to destroy by the denial of reason.” Quoted in Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War*, 253.

¹¹ David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13. Though Caute’s text provides detailed material on a variety of aspects of the cultural Cold War, it must be noted that he writes from a particular perspective. In assessing the field of Cold War studies in his conclusion, Caute rails against a variety of trends including the use of jargon in scholarly writing; the predominant focus on the American end of the Cold War and American internal politics in a manner that he argues often overlooks the rest of the world and the reality of the Soviet threat; and the emphasis on conspiracy in recent histories, a criticism in part directed at Stonor Saunders’s study, whose British title, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, he not-so-subtly references: “Too often this ‘investigative’ approach leads to the false conclusion that he who paid the piper wrote the tune; that the promotion explains the product; that all we need to know is who paid for the ink, the acrylic and the auditorium.” Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 617.

¹² V.O.K.S. (Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul’turnoi svyazi s zagranitsei) was founded in 1925 to promote cultural ties between the Soviet Union and other countries. Its many activities included the oversight of Soviet friendship societies in foreign countries and the publication of the *VOKS Bulletin*. During the late 40s and early 1950s, the *Bulletin*’s contents included reprinted speeches by Stalin, announcements of the winners of the “Order of Stalin” awards, reports on the activities of the different VOKS national chapters, and critical articles on the arts, the sciences, and sociology. Such articles generally made arguments for the Soviet Union’s advanced thinking in each of these domains. As Michael David-Fox has noted, VOKS was a ‘Society’ and “not formally an Arm of the Soviet State”—an enabling fiction that he describes as having been “designed for external and internal consumption” (11). Michael David-Fox, “From Illusory ‘Society’ to Intellectual ‘Public’: VOKS, International Travel and Party-Intelligentsia Relations in the Interwar Period,” *Contemporary European History* 11, no. 1 (2002): 10, 11.

Realism and the Artist's Individuality" *VOKS* took up the Soviet Union's ideological struggle with the West by championing the classical tradition in music and realism in art and literature over and against modernism.¹³

Inverting the discourse of novelty associated with modernism, the *VOKS* critics argued that "Socialist Realism," as practiced by Soviet writers, stood as the true expression of progress in the world of art. Modernism was, by contrast, retrograde. "All those 'original' tricks which the formalists of Europe and America take such pride in, were ousted by Soviet artists long ago as ridiculous and anachronisms," proclaimed *VOKS* editor Vladimir Kemenov in his essay "Aspects of Two Cultures."¹⁴ Deeply attuned to the aesthetic rhetoric of the West, the *VOKS* critics bolstered their arguments through the strategic deployment of an alternate aesthetic terminology. They conspicuously avoided the word 'modernism' and opted instead for the derisive umbrella term "decadent bourgeois art" or the tactically advantageous "formalist art," a label that not only emphasized what they viewed as modernism's prioritization of formal experimentation over social and political content, while simultaneously stripping it of its linguistic associations with modernization and modernity. Indeed, the very characteristics so important to the discourse of modernist art—formal experimentation, subjectivity, individualism, and rebellion against society's mores—become the very features against which the *VOKS* critics railed. In "Aspects of Two Cultures," for example, Vladimir Kemenov denounces "decadent bourgeois art" for "its falseness, its belligerent anti-realism, its hostility to objective knowledge and to the truthful portrayal of life in art."¹⁵ In a formulation that recalls the corrupting effect of the poisonous book in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, critic A. K. Vasiliev asserts that the "works of bourgeois individualistic writers nurture narrow-mindedness, a selfish subjectivism, a submission to base instincts, cynicism in relations to

¹³ Vladimir Kemenov, "Aspects of Two Cultures," *VOKS Bulletin*, no. 52 (1947); A. K. Vasiliev, "Features of Socialist Realism," *VOKS Bulletin*, no. 53 (n.d., ca. 1948). ; "Against Formalism in Soviet Music," *VOKS Bulletin*, no. 54 (n.d., ca. 1948). "Cultural Relations Between the Soviet People and Foreign Countries," *VOKS Bulletin*, no. 64 (1950). V. M. Zimenko, "Socialist Realism and the Artist's Individuality," *VOKS Bulletin*, no. 74 (1952).

¹⁴ Kemenov, "Aspects of Two Cultures," 36.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

society and the masses—all those negative moral qualities encouraged by the filthy tribe of Laval.¹⁶ The allusion here to French collaborationist politician Pierre Laval is significant since the *VOKS* articles often set out to draw direct correlations between aesthetics and politics. Formal choices had social consequences, they argued. An anonymous 1950 editorial (likely penned by Kemenov) went so far as to suggest that the West suffered during WWII because “decadent bourgeois culture” was “effete” and thus incapable of equipping its populations with the tools necessary to combat Nazism. Conversely, the Soviet Union —through its books, films, paintings, placards, and music—was able to mobilize the “spiritual forces of the peoples in the fight against the enemy.”¹⁷ Soviet art’s deep connection to its population is a constant theme throughout *VOKS*. Whereas modernist art is described as “divorced from the people, hostile to the interests of the democratic masses [...]”, Soviet art is “created for the people” and inspired by their achievements. Socialist Realism, Kemenov argues, gives back to the population by enriching them with “lofty ideas and noble images.”¹⁸ Though the *VOKS* articles vacillate between propagandistic posturing and a more sincere aesthetic criticism, they clearly adopt the position that poetry *can* in fact *make something happen*. Aesthetic form becomes a matter of utmost importance precisely because its effects extend beyond the world of art.

Indeed, the *VOKS* critics’ correlation of politics and form offers an uncanny mirror image of certain arguments about experimental form that James Laughlin advanced in his early *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* editorials. In both theories, an artist’s formal choices possess a politics of their own that supersedes the specific political content or intent of a given work. In “Features of Soviet Realism,” for example, Vasiliev outlines what he terms a “curious paradox of modern art”:

many bourgeois artists, due to the bourgeois limitations which prevent them from understanding the dialectics of social development, reject the principles of realism, voice hysterical protests against bourgeois life in tattered verse, impeding comprehension with tricks and turns of the pen—in the name of the fruitless idea of ‘unlimited subjective freedom.’ The superficial, seeming ‘revolutionary’ esthetic platform of these bourgeois

¹⁶ Vasiliev, “Features of Socialist Realism,” 34. Vasiliev almost certainly here refers to Pierre Laval, a French politician integral in establishing the Vichy government that collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. After a French trial, Laval was executed for treason in 1945. Vasiliev’s comment thus indicts modernist art by linking it to the self-serving ethos of the Vichy government.

¹⁷ “Cultural Relations,” 25.

¹⁸ Kemenov, “Aspects of Two Cultures,” 36.

rebels sometimes attracts sincere supporters of the revolutionary struggle who are seeking new esthetic forms for the expression of their political ideas. [...] western writers with revolutionary ideas sometimes do not understand the simple truth that decadent forms of art cannot express their ideas of freedom. The Procrustean bed of decadent formalistic 'isms' distorts their ideas, turning them into individualistic, fruitless, and abstract rebellion.¹⁹

Arguments such as this intentionally invert the rhetoric of "freedom" that many Western critics deployed to indict the Soviet government for the restrictions it placed on its artists. Conversely, here formal experimentation becomes a tool of oppression rather than a symbol of intellectual freedom regardless of the artist's intent, an outgrowth and expression of what one editorial termed bourgeois culture's "anti-democratic character."²⁰ Moreover, the *Bulletin's* critics argued that if some well-intentioned artists are accidentally derailed by their formal choices, others more wittingly participate in acts of oppression, so that "[b]y their endless and empty formalist trickery, their decadent content, they seek to conceal from the toiling masses their class interests, to blind them to the vital social problems of the day."²¹ In instrumentalizing aesthetic form, they cast it as a tool of utmost political import with the power to either uplift or subjugate its audience.

However, in attacking "formalism," the *VOKS* critics also helped to ally European and American artists. When Kemenov denounces a long list of modern artists, including, "Picasso and Sartre, Jacques Lipchitz and Paul Nash, Frederick Hawk and John Tanard, Henry Moore and Edward Parr, Al Calder and Edward Wadsworth, Morris Graves and Paul Klee, Joan Miro, Peter Blume, Piet Mondrian and many others like them," asserting that their works are the products of diseased minds, he also inadvertently illustrates modernism's transnational character.²² Indeed, his list suggests how modernism serves as a *lingua franca* for American and European artists. It was exactly such aesthetic associations that *Perspectives USA* hoped to foster. When James Laughlin first proposed the idea for a magazine like *Perspectives USA* in his editorial for the 1948 *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* annual, he couched it as vehicle for reestablishing the creative exchange between American and European artists

¹⁹ Vasiliev, "Features of Socialist Realism," 35.

²⁰ "Cultural Relations," 22.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Kemenov, "Aspects of Two Cultures," 32.

that had been disrupted by the Second World War and the postwar inflation crises in Europe.²³ To this end, many of the items published in the journal's first issue—Marianne Moore's translations from La Fontaine, Thornton Wilder's "Goethe and World Literature," Oscar Handlin's article on the importance of the immigrant to American politics, Meyer Schapiro's essay "On a Painting of Van Gogh"—emphasize the conversations between American and European culture.

At the same time, the magazine sought to recalibrate the power dynamics underpinning the avant-garde discourse of the teens and early twenties. Not only was the assumption of European cultural supremacy no longer a given, but, as the magazine intended to illustrate, American "high culture" had something to teach foreign audiences. It was no coincidence, then, that the piece that opened the magazine's first issue was William Faulkner's acceptance speech for the 1950 Nobel Prize in literature, a clear reminder of American accomplishments to a potentially skeptical European audience. Though articles like Schapiro's and Wilder's treated Old World aesthetic achievements with a tone of reverence, the first issue also hinted at Europe's complicity in the same crimes it was so quick to condemn in Americans. William Carlos Williams's "The Destruction of Tenochtitlan," for example, which had been first published nearly three decades earlier as Williams fought to create an American literature independent of European influences, illustrates how the materialism and cultural chauvinism of the conquistadors brought about the demise of a sophisticated and vibrant Aztec civilization. Throughout his account, Williams describes the opulence and craftsmanship on display in Tenochtitlan, thereby intentionally exploding the myth

²³ Laughlin discusses the financial causes of this disruption of creative exchange at length in his introduction. He laments, "The only American 'culture' which the average European can now see is not representative of our best tendencies—*Life*, *Readers Digest*, Hollywood movies and translations of bestsellers. Our serious culture—the Little Magazines and the good books—hardly permeate Europe, because the profit in importing them is not great enough to overcome the exchange obstacles. A reader in England or France cannot simply order an American book or magazine by mail at will. Far from it. He is forbidden to send out of the country any of his nation's horde of dollars, even in picayune amounts. Nor are most European bookstores allowed to import American publications, except medical and scientific texts. [...]" Laughlin again discourses at length on the disruption of the outflow of literature and art from the United States to Europe (the opposite path is less blocked, he argues) in his editorial introduction to the pilot issue (as opposed to No. 1) of *Perspectives USA*. James Laughlin, "A Few Random Notes From the Editor," in *New Directions 10*, ed. James Laughlin (1948; New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation; reprint, 1967), 510-511.

of European cultural superiority.²⁴ Williams's narrative contrasts the uncouth behavior of Cortez with Montezuma's "aristocratic reserve" (15) as the former's forces wage war against Tenochtitlan in search of imperial and material gain.²⁵ Though Williams had written "Tenochtitlan" in a different context, its publication in *Perspectives USA* indirectly answers the accusations of those across the pond who saw the United States as "a land of gilded barbarians" by reminding Europe of its own participation in acts of philistinism. In "Tenochtitlan" it is Cortez and Europe who play the part of the "ugly American." However, the narrative cannot be reduced to a riposte. In Williams's caution that "Spain cannot be blamed for the crassness of the discoverers," the foreign reader of *Perspectives* finds perhaps the grounds for an analogous pardoning of the United States for the crassness of some of its agents.²⁶ *Perspectives*' first issue thus offered contributions that by turns catered to and (in grand modernist style) challenged its international audience. However, as the journal progressed, it became difficult to sustain this push-pull dynamic without eliciting sharp criticisms from either its readership, contributors, or sponsors.

²⁴ Williams's narrative is laden with detailed lists and descriptions that suggest the sophistication of Tenochtitlan's material culture. These range from the descriptions of the gifts Montezuma sent out to Cortez upon his arrival, to the architecture of Tenochtitlan, to the descriptions of the multitude of items and services available in the public square. A brief excerpt from this last list is illustrative: "Here 'everything which the world affords' was offered for purchase, from the personal services of laborers and porters to the last refinements of bijouterie; gold, silver, lead, brass, copper, tin,; wrought and unwrought stone, bricks burnt and unburnt, timber hewn and unhewn, of different sorts; [...] grain—either whole, in the form of flour or baked into loaves; different kinds of cotton thread of all colors; jars, jugs, pots, and an endless variety of vessels, all made of fine clay, most of them glazed and painted; eggs, cakes, *pâtés* of birds and fish; wine from the maguey; finally everything that could be found throughout the whole country was sold there, each kind of merchandise in a separate street or quarter of the market assigned to it exclusively, thus the best order was preserved. There was an herb street, there were shops where they shaved and washed the head, and restaurateurs who furnished food and drink at a price." This list, which I have greatly abridged for the purposes of space, emphasizes the variety, order, and levels of processing ('burnt and unburnt,' 'hewn and unhewn,' 'whole, in the form of flour or baked into loaves') of Tenochtitlan's goods so as to suggest the complexity of Aztec civilization. William Carlos Williams, "The Destruction of Tenochtitlan," *Perspectives USA*, no. 1 (1952): 16.

²⁵Ibid.: 15. Williams's description of the first face-to-face interaction between Montezuma and Cortez juxtaposes the former's urbanity with the latter's uncouth behavior: "Montezuma spoke: 'They have told you that I possess houses with walls of gold and many other such things and that I am a god or make myself one. The houses you see are of stone and lime and earth.'—Then opening his robe: 'You see that I am composed of flesh and bone like yourselves and that I am mortal and palpable to the touch.'—To this smiling sally, so full of gentleness and amused irony, Cortez could reply nothing save to demand that the man declare himself a subject of the Spanish King forthwith and that, furthermore, he should then and there announce publicly his allegiance to the new power." Ibid. In particular, Williams's allusion to Montezuma's amused irony emphasizes the ruler's composure and intelligence when confronted with Cortez's invading party.

²⁶ Ibid.: 11.

II. Modeling Nationalist / Internationalist Modernism

To advance its diplomatic mission, the magazine adopted a complex and multiply-motivated approach to aesthetic internationalism. *Perspectives USA* married an attempt to actualize some of modernism's more utopian transnationalist imaginings with a more mercenary desire to instrumentalize modernism's internationalism on behalf of American foreign relations. Though for Laughlin the goal of the magazine was not purely political—his longstanding commitment to cultural exchange is evinced by his emphasis on translation in New Directions' publishing program—the Cold War clearly functioned as a governing context for its dissemination of America's "finest creative spirits and [...] most perceptive intellectuals."²⁷ *Perspectives'* parent organization, Intercultural Publications Inc. (also headed by James Laughlin and hereafter referred to as IPI), was funded under "Area 1" of the Ford Foundation, a division rather optimistically titled "Contributions to World Peace."²⁸ Area 1 was principally concerned with projects that helped to foster alliances amongst non-Communist "free countries" and to procure goodwill towards the United States during an increasingly polarized global political atmosphere. In a 1953 memorandum titled "Notes on a Program for Area I," Shepard Stone, one of those overseeing the Foundation's international activities, began his "Estimate of the Problem" by writing, "We are facing a long period of cold war. In the years ahead, the USSR will use every political, economic and psychological weapon to damage (a) American unity and the faith of Americans in their free institutions; (b) the alliance of free nations; and (c) the possible movements of so-called neutral nations in the direction of the free."²⁹ Stone proceeds to assert that "[i]n this situation, the United States will need wisdom and maturity to

²⁷ Laughlin, "The Function of This Magazine," 7.

²⁸ This is the title used for Area I in the table of contents for the Docket of the Meeting of the Trustees February 23-27, 1953 in Pasadena. The Docket reveals that in 1953, IPI was one of sixteen projects falling under the purview of Area I. "Docket of the Meeting of the Trustees February 23-27, 1953 in Pasadena", 1953, Box 31.

²⁹ Shepard Stone, "Notes on a Program for Area 1", Box 31, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

hold the free peoples together,” suggesting that the Foundation, along with other private institutions, is in a position to take actions that the government no longer can.³⁰

Despite this Cold War provenance, both the periodical and the larger program of IPI offered, from Laughlin’s perspective at least, a belated opportunity to fulfill some of modernism’s more grandiose ambitions. That is, it promised to provide an institutional and authority-bearing vehicle for its aesthetic internationalism. *Perspectives USA* exported American ‘highbrow’ thought and art to over fifty countries worldwide in four language editions—English (*Perspectives*), French (*Profils*), German (*Perspektiven*), and Italian (*Prospetti*).³¹ An American copyright edition with a smaller print run (*Perspectives USA*) was circulated within the United States. In its second year, IPI began publishing a series of “Country Perspectives” aimed at exposing American readers to “the best of contemporary creative writing and art of many countries throughout the world”³² Printed as supplements to the *Atlantic Monthly*, these “Country Perspectives” offered what the editors termed an ‘inflow’ program to complement *Perspectives USA*’s outflow.³³ Issues were compiled on India (October, 1953), Holland

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Almost all of the editing and the compiling of material was conducted in the United States. The New York office assembled the British/American edition which was then sent to be translated. Once this process was complete, foreign editions were brought out by Hamish Hamilton in England, Calmann-Levy in France (who were replaced in 1955 Editions Corrêa), S. Fischer Verlag in Germany, and G.C. Sansoni in Italy so that each edition could be sold in its respective country’s currency. The different language editions were then distributed to various countries throughout the world according to each country’s language needs. Additional language editions of *Perspectives* were contemplated throughout the magazine’s run, including editions in Russian, Spanish, and Japanese as well as an English-language Asian edition. However none of these ever came to fruition.

³² “To the Reader,” Front Matter, *Perspectives USA*, no. 13 (1955): 4.

³³ Like *Perspectives USA*, the Country Perspectives sought to achieve Cold War political goals in conjunction with and in addition to their general goal of familiarizing the American reading public with foreign literature. Responding to a draft of IPI’s 1953 annual report to the Ford Foundation, Laughlin asked Porter McKeever to make a more forceful argument for the aims of the Country Perspectives, which had been couched as being “designed to serve as a counterpart to PERSPECTIVES USA by helping the American reader become better acquainted with the work of writers, artists and critics of other countries.” Draft of Intercultural Publications Annual Report [1953], February 11, 1954, Box 31. Laughlin explained, “I feel a bit stronger about this than the way you have it. I feel that we can really influence the climate of opinion in America about the foreign countries with whom we have to live. For example, we came out with the Indian job [Perspective of India] – which puts India in a good light – at the time when the American press was blasting India as a Communist stooge because of the Korean muddle. In other words, where there is a short-term friction in terms of American public opinion about a given country, we can come in with something which will present a counter picture in the interest of long-term amity. Of course, you may feel that this line is better left unsaid – influencing politics, so to speak. But if you like the idea, you may want to include it.” James Laughlin to Porter McKeever, February 15, 1954, Box 31, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

and Belgium (April 1954), Japan (January 1955), Greece (June 1955), Brazil (February 1956), Indonesia (June 1956), The Arab World (1956), Germany (1957), Burma (1958), and Italy (1958). Other IPI projects included a “Magazines Abroad” program (which funded the distribution of American “high culture” periodicals to foreign libraries otherwise unable to afford them), financial support for an Anglo-American edition of UNESCO’s magazine *Diogenes*, and for the “planting” of translations of American writing in foreign periodicals.³⁴ Laughlin also consulted on the Foundation’s sponsorship of the Southern Languages Book Trust, an initiative that translated Western books into Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kanarese for distribution in India.³⁵

Throughout the first half of the century figures associated with modernism had helped to install an aesthetic internationalism. This cosmopolitan penchant was embodied in activities whose scope ranged from Ezra Pound’s emphasis on translation, to the multilingualism of *transition*, to the establishment of multinational aesthetic communities in London, Paris, New York, and other locales.³⁶ *Perspectives USA* sought to expand and capitalize on this internationalist agenda. However,

³⁴ The Magazines Abroad program sent magazines to over 500 foreign libraries (with as many as 701 libraries participating at the peak) in over 70 countries (summary sheet dated April 26, 1956, box 67 IPI Archives). Magazines circulated under this program included *Poetry*, *The Musical Quarterly*, *Art News*, *The American Scholar*, *The Partisan Review*, and *the Kenyon Review*. James Laughlin to Nathaniel Leverone, January 24, 1956, Box 34, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University. The tactic of planting material was seen as particularly useful in those countries that were suspicious of any publication that overtly sought to disseminate American culture. In *Perspectives*’ closing days, Laughlin wrote to H.J. Heinz, a member of the IPI board of directors, that they might actually do better in France by ‘planting’ translations of American material in existing French magazines then by searching for a way to continue *Profils* without Ford Foundation funding (something that was attempted, though ultimately unsuccessfully, for the German and Italian editions). “There is still so much hostility to an American ‘package’ in France.” Laughlin argued. James Laughlin to H. J. Heinz, April 4, 1956, Box 31.

³⁵ In a letter to Frederick Lewis Allen, who was made a Ford Foundation Trustee shortly before his death, Laughlin wrote of the Southern Languages Book Trust: “The project has two related objectives: (1) to provide good, inexpensive reading matter in certain Indian vernaculars to combat the flood of Communist publications, to strengthen democracy in India and to strengthen ties with the West; (2) to demonstrate to Indian publishers by a pilot operation that good books can be sold profitably in quantity if prices are lowered and modern distribution methods employed, so that local publishers can carry on the job on their own.” James Laughlin to Fred Allen, October 6, 1953, Box 30, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

³⁶ It is worth noting that each of the three projects I name above were ones of great influence on Laughlin. Laughlin had taken a hiatus from Harvard during which he tried out expatriate life in Europe, studying with Stein in Bilignin and Paris and Pound in Rapallo. Pound had served as a formative mentor for Laughlin, encouraging him to begin a literary press. In a 1983 interview with the *Paris Review*, Laughlin remarked that Pound had pushed him away from the type of literature taught at universities to “a much more interlingual, international literature. That has persisted to this day. A great deal of what we do now at New Directions is still translations of foreign books. Last winter we did a Swedish novel, a Hungarian novel,

in so doing, it also replicated some of the failings of modernism's cosmopolitanism. Though IPI's cultural initiatives attempted to create bonds across nations, they simultaneously reified the nation as a principal significance-bearing cultural community. What might have been channeled into a more cosmopolitan transnationalism instead, under the weight of the organization's diplomatic and propagandistic mission, took the form of a national(ist) internationalism wherein aesthetic affinities with foreign artists were mobilized as a means of promoting rather than transcending the nation.

When in response to reader feedback, *Perspectives* would attempt to make itself into more of a conversation between nations than an American soliloquy, even its integration of foreign articles continued to conform to national boundaries.³⁷ Contributions from Italian writers on American subject matter were printed solely in the Italian edition of the quarterly, while contributions from French writers appeared exclusively in *Profils*. Likewise, when the magazine held a symposium on the relationship between artist and audience in its ninth issue, the foreign language contributions to the symposium were published only in their own country's edition. Thus while all five editions carried symposium articles by Saul Bellow, Robinson Jeffers, Robert Motherwell, and Roger Sessions, the responses by Roger Caillois, Jacques Audiberti, Jean Paulhan, and Boris de Schloezer were carried only in the French edition; those by Corrado Alvaro, Salvatore Quasimodo, Felice Casorati, and Luigi Dallapiccola only in the Italian; and those by Luise Rinser, Hans Egon Holtthusen, and Karl Hofer only in the German. Accordingly, the discursive community that *Perspectives* generated was often more bilateral than international or cosmopolitan in character.

and a Brazilian novel. And if you look at our annual anthology you'll find that often a third of it is made up of translations of foreign poets from all over the world." James Laughlin, "The Art of Publishing I: James Laughlin," *The Paris Review* 25, no. 89 (1983): 171. Laughlin had also greatly admired *transition* and dedicated the first issue of his *New Directions in Prose and Poetry* annual to it (see Chapter Three of this dissertation).

³⁷ *Perspectives* included a questionnaire in the foreign editions of Issue 5 that sought out its readers' opinions on the contents and editorial policies of the magazine. One of the questions asked was "Would you prefer PERSPECTIVES to be more international in content?" According to the summary of questionnaire responses compiled internally by the magazine, readers were in favor of internationalizing the content by a margin of a little under two to one, with 1018 readers responding "yes", 584 readers responding "no", and 61 leaving the question blank. The responses broke down by country accordingly: English edition: Yes—176, No—129, Blank—8; German edition: Yes—373, No—227, Blank—18; French edition: Yes—88, No—51, Blank—10; Italian edition: Yes—381, No—177, Blank—25. "Analysis of Questionnaire on 'Perspectives'", n.d., Box 35, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Similarly, IPI's 'inflow' program, the Country Perspectives, exposed American readers to world literature through the lens of the nation—a move that compartmentalized international literary discourse even as it attempted to encourage it. However IPI's failure to achieve a more organic integration of its different international projects also finds an antecedent in aspects of modernism's cosmopolitanism. There the persistence of national boundaries took its most conspicuous material form in the oft-noted clustering of artists by nationality in the Paris cafés of the 1920s. Though in his memoir Samuel Putnam writes of interwar Montparnasse as a "House of all Nations" with "Frenchmen, Americans, Englishmen, Germans, Scandinavians, Spaniards, Italians, Russians, Hungarians, Poles, Bohemians, Czechs, South Americans," a few sentences later he hints at discursive isolationism underlying this physical proximity.³⁸ He takes note of the eight solemn and non-communicative "blonde Icelandic giants" who haunted the Dôme each night, but confesses that his familiarity goes no further: "they were said to be painters: that was all anyone knew about them."³⁹ Jimmy Charters suggests a comparable dynamic in describing the composition of the motley throng at the Dôme: "tall, raw-boned Swedes, sleek Russians and Spaniards, noisy Americans, self-conscious English, anxious or portly French, all intent on their own affairs or minutely searching the crowd for a friend or sucker."⁴⁰ Spatial miscegenation did not necessarily translate into intellectual and aesthetic exchange.

Perspectives also reflects modernism's Eurocentric approach to aesthetic cosmopolitanism. Though IPI's "Country Perspectives" series extended its literary boundaries to include India, Burma, Brazil, Indonesia, Japan and (in a rather problematic catchall) the "Arab World," *Perspectives* itself rarely broadened its discursive purview to include non-European nations, despite the fact that as

³⁸ Samuel Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress: Memoirs of a Lost & Found Generation* (New York: The Viking Press, 1947), 81.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Jimmie Charters and Morrill Cody, *This Must Be the Place: Memoirs of Jimmie The Barman* (1934; New York: Lee Furman, Inc., 1937), 16. Indeed Charters notes that, in a show of national allegiance, the Anglo-American colony boycotted the Rotonde after its *patron* requested that a young and hatless American woman smoking in its terrace move inside, since "in those moralistic days, a 'lady' did not smoke in public. Neither did she appear on the street without a hat" (14). The ensuing debate, which pulled in surrounding customers, ended with the flight of the woman and her English and American champions across the street to the Dôme. After that, Charters notes, the Rotonde was "largely filled with Russians, Germans, and visitors from the Balkan States" (15-16).

Cold War strategic alliances in Europe stabilized, the magazine increasingly sought out audiences in the Middle East and Asia, those regions where relationships with the Soviet Union and the United States were the most fluid.

Even with its limitations, modernism's internationalist approach to art had opened important lines of communication, allowing for the possibility that artists might facilitate discourse between countries. In the 1930s, Laughlin had, along with writers like Joyce and Pound, endorsed C. K. Ogden's Basic English, a system of English that through a simplified syntactical system and an 850-word vocabulary proposed to serve as a universal language.⁴¹ *Perspectives USA* provides an interesting counterpoint to this early interest, for it takes modern art itself as international language. Instead of reducing English to a small easily understood lexicon, it would translate literature and use the stylistic language of modernism to effect more targeted international communication. It was this type of idealized aesthetic transnationalism that Laughlin invoked in his inaugural editorial, arguing that cultural exchange through art is "one of the best methods of fostering the development of world understanding and a sense of moral community among the peoples of the world."⁴² The arts, he asserted, could "provide a meeting ground where men of conflicting political allegiances can learn to know and respect each other as human beings."⁴³ However despite Laughlin's calculatedly idealistic rhetoric, part of what makes IPI and *Perspectives* such interesting outgrowths of modernism's cosmopolitan forum is that they literalize its internationalism in the most state-centered and bureaucratizing fashion. Indeed, it is precisely *Perspectives'* drive toward aesthetic institutionalization

⁴¹ BASIC was an acronym for British, American, Scientific International Commercial (English). C[harles] K[ay] Ogden, *Basic English; A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar*, 4th ed. (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1933), 4, 5. James Laughlin would allude to Basic English and the ideas of C.K. Ogden both in his preface to the first *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* annual and in his essay "Language and the Experimental Writer" in the second annual. Laughlin argued that Basic English had "a national as well as an international purpose" since its syntax and vocabulary were so simplified that "no crannies remain where language habit can take root and proliferate" making it a useful tool for combating stale language and thought patterns. James Laughlin, "Language and the Experimental Writer," in *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 1937*, ed. James Laughlin (Norfolk, CT: New Directions, 1937; reprint, New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967), 272.

⁴² Laughlin, "The Function of This Magazine," 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

and instrumentalization that surfaces fundamental conflicts only half-exposed in the pre-war period's less programmatic approach to internationalism.

III. National Representatives: (Mis)Adventures in Synecdoche

Inherent in the premise of *Perspectives USA* was a series of nested synecdochal relationships: the artists it published were to represent the larger community of American highbrow culture, which in turn was to function as a representative of the nation itself. However, the nation proved a problematic connective tissue for a print community. Within the communities of "American highbrow culture," the rallying point of the nation tended to imply a sympathy and/or commonality where there was none. Yet the conditions of *Perspectives USA's* patronage prevented the magazine from simply printing a more cohesive community: in order to fulfill its diplomatic mission it had to be "representative" of the spectrum of trends in American High Culture. On a broader level, the magazine also had to confront the task of constituting and characterizing the relationship between the self-designated "cultural elite" that it published and the larger U.S. national culture.

That *Perspectives USA* deployed modernism as its dominant aesthetic exacerbated both of these tensions. In the first instance, the history of modernist publications offered an inauspicious precedent for the sharing of the stage that the magazine demanded, revealing instead not only a tendency towards factionalism, but often an inability or unwillingness to subordinate individual aesthetic interests to the larger project of collective representation. The literary history of modernism is rife with such schisms of print community: Pound's break with Imagism and the Imagist anthologies over what he viewed as Amy Lowell's diluting of its principles with lesser contributions; the dispute between former coeditors of *Secession*, Matthew Josephson and Gorham Munson, and the ensuing antagonism between Munson's *Secession* and Josephson's *Broom*; or the divestment of the Stein-Paul contingent from *transition* and the subsequent debates between Stein and *transition* editor Eugene Jolas over the 'true' history of the publication.⁴⁴ In the second instance, the tension between

⁴⁴ In *Exile's Return*, Malcolm Cowley uses the *Broom/Secession* feud to develop a moral about how the intense individualism of the period made communal action near impossible and thus hindered writers from

‘cultural elites’ and the broader national culture was exacerbated because one of modernism’s principle modes of intellectual engagement was critique, and when it trained its eye on American culture, its stance tended to be critical rather than expository or promotional, those modes of engagement that the Ford Foundation would have preferred.

Perspectives USA’s adoption of modernist strategies in the constitution of its print community makes it a rich site in analyzing the mechanisms of late modernist literary consolidation. The quarterly employed such tactics to resolve the two fraught communal negotiations outlined above. In the first instance, the magazine would attempt to achieve catholicity and “representivity” by using a series of guest editors, a policy that would allow it to fulfill its diplomatic mission without compromising the aesthetic investments or integrity of any single issue’s editor. In the second instance, the magazine would allow cultural self-critique to stand, using it to signal the vitality and self-awareness of intellectual discourse in the United States and thereby (they hoped) winning the respect of the foreign cultural elites that were its initial target audience. Neither solution, however, would appease the magazine’s Ford Foundation sponsors, and the radical format changes that the quarterly underwent during its four-year, sixteen-issue run reflect their methodological clashes. James Laughlin’s attempt to deploy strategies imported from an earlier modernism’s countercultural and coterie settings in a nationalist Cold War environment brings into focus the contradictions inherent

achieving major accomplishments. Detailing the descent into chaos of a Prince Street meeting at which those who had worked for *Secession* and *Broom* were to “define our separate positions, [and determine] whether or not we [could] make plans to go ahead,” Cowley writes: “For the first time I realized the pathos and absurdity of the fierce individualism preserved by American writers in the midst of the most unified civilization now existing. ‘Politicians unite to share the boodle,’ I thought, ‘and businessmen to plan a sales campaign: why can’t we come together for ten minutes in the cause of literature?’” Malcolm Cowley, *Exile’s Return; A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s*, ed. Donald W. Faulkner (1934, 1951; New York: Penguin Books; reprint, 1994), 181,182. For Cowley, the Thirties by contrast appeared to promise, through an alliance with the interests of workers, a reinvestment in community and communal action that could provide “a sense of comradeship and participation in a historical process bigger than the individual” (331). However, as he explains in his epilogue to the 1951 edition of *Exile’s Return*, the Thirties ultimately failed to fulfill these communal hopes.

Stein published her Paul-centric account of *transition* in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933). Eugene and Maria Jolas and the *transition* group then issued an alternative narrative of Paul and Stein’s involvement in “Testimony Against Gertrude Stein.” Though Paul was an important force in *transition*’s first year or so, it was Jolas who directed and was responsible for the journal’s internationalist and surrealist tenor in subsequent years. See, for example, Samuel Putnam’s account of the dispute in Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress: Memoirs of a Lost & Found Generation*, 220-227.

in *Perspectives USA's* consolidating and institutionalizing project; it is to these contradictions that I now turn.

As alluded to above, the magazine's initial strategy for accommodating both catholicity and individual aesthetic investments was its system of rotating guest editors. Each issue was to function like a different 'little magazine' or anthology with 'representivity' achieved cumulatively rather than within the pages of any single issue.⁴⁵ In so doing, Laughlin hoped to avoid dilemmas such as those that Allen Tate, a member of *Perspectives'* capacious advisory board, had foreseen.⁴⁶ Prior to the magazine's first issue, Tate had warned Laughlin, "If you or anybody else became permanent editor, there would shortly be a failure of cooperation. More serious than that, a permanent editor would inevitably try to be "representative" and fair-minded, with the result that the magazine might well become merely average, and thus represent nothing."⁴⁷ Tate's concerns about potential conflicts between the magazine's aesthetic and diplomatic objectives proved well-founded. Even with the guest-editor system in place, the issue of how to incorporate different groups and trends was not so easily dispatched for the various camps of the quarterly's contributors, editors, or Ford Foundation sponsors.

In fact, *Perspectives USA's* second number foregrounded the tension between catholicity and aesthetic interest. The issue's editor (and the magazine's first guest editor), Columbia University

⁴⁵ The notion of a rotating editor extended back as early as 1948, when in outlining a proposal for a magazine that would ultimately become *Perspectives USA*, Laughlin suggested that "A system of guest editors might make for catholicity." Laughlin, "A Few Random Notes From the Editor," 511.

⁴⁶ The "Advisory Board" that Laughlin compiled for *Perspectives* reveals both the modernist and (even more pronouncedly) academic slant of the journal. The members of the advisory board listed in *Perspectives'* first issue were Mortimer Adler, James Agee, W.H. Auden, Jacques Barzun, Paul Bigelow, R.P. Blackmur, François Bondy, Harvy Breit, Cleanth Brooks, Marguerite Caetani, Cyril Connolly, Aaron Copland, Malcolm Cowley, James T. Farrell, Francis Fergusson, W. H. Ferry, Alfred M. Frankfurter, Albert J. Guerard, Hiram Haydn, Alfred Kazin, Paul Henry Lang, Melvin J. Lasky, Harry Levin, Alvin Lustig, Richard P. McKeon, Perry Miller, Robert Motherwell, Dorothy Norman, Charles A. Pearce, Norman Holmes Pearson, Duncan Philips, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Redfield, Kenneth Rexroth, Edouard Roditi, Selden Rodman, Eero Saarinen, Meyer Schapiro, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Delmore Schwartz, Gilbert Seldes, Karl J. Shapiro, Wallace Stegner, Allen Tate, Lionel Trilling, Ralph E. Turner, Robert Penn Warren, Victor Weybright, Monroe Wheeler, Tennessee Williams, Kurt Wolff, and Morton D. Zabel, to which the following names were added in subsequent issues: Henry Russell Hitchcock, Renato Poggioli, Mark Schorer, Bernard Berelson, Hallie Flanagan Davis, Rudolf Hirsch, Annada Sankar Ray, Gordon Bailey Washburn, Irwin Edman, and William C. Johnstone, Jr..

⁴⁷ Allen Tate to James Laughlin, February 18, 1952, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

professor and literary critic Lionel Trilling, saw the nation as a questionable nexus of literary association. In his editorial introduction, Trilling expounded on the antipathy between the viewpoints of the writer and the cultural ambassador. The cultural ambassador, Trilling explains, “must believe that he is representing a harmonious unity.”⁴⁸ He approaches his national culture dispassionately, with the “kindly objectivity of the academic historian of literature a century hence,” imagining “all the sides shaking hands after the battle,” a battle which he “understands not to have been a real battle at all.”⁴⁹ The writer, however, sees his or her culture “as embroiled in something like civil strife”:

He cannot think of culture as a happy atelier in which the workers, in all their different ways, are contriving monuments of national glory which will suit every taste [...] for he believes that the one thing that must be argued about is taste, that because people choose certain poems and pictures they will have certain personalities and ideas which will ruin or save the state. He takes sides for and against even the illustrious dead, and does not believe that it is possible for him to stand in a simple relation to a whole national literature.⁵⁰

Whereas Laughlin chose to cast the diversity of the American scene as a function of its intellectual freedom and pioneering spirit in the first issue’s introduction, Trilling instead emphasizes its contestatory nature.⁵¹ This bellicose view of the writer reflected the antagonistic vision of the literary landscape that modernism helped to install. As I discussed in Chapter Two, William Carlos Williams had used similar metaphors in a 1936 unpublished essay, declaring the world of art “a battleground, not a bland Elysium [...] a battleground where differences of emotional and intellectual opinion may be engaged to the enhancement of the soul.”⁵² Trilling’s invocation of such ideas suggests how the enlistment of modernist aesthetics for the purposes cultural diplomacy set in action a series of conflicting agendas. Though, as a diplomatic initiative, conflict and controversy were things that the magazine sought to eschew, Trilling reminds his readers that controversy is that which the genuine

⁴⁸ Lionel Trilling, “Editor’s Commentary,” *Perspectives USA*, no. 2 (1953): 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*: 6, 7.

⁵¹ Laughlin wrote, “[The U.S.’s] culture sometimes strikes the outsider as chaotic because many serious American writers and artists still feel that they are setting out into new territory with freedom to develop it in whatever way their tastes and conscience dictate.” Laughlin, “The Function of This Magazine,” 6.

⁵² William Carlos Williams, “The Neglected Artist,” in *A Recognizable Image: William Carlos Williams on Art and Artists*, ed. Bram Dijkstra (New York: New Directions, 1978), 92.

artist cannot and *should not* avoid. For Trilling, individual interest must trump the project of representivity, as the latter inevitably distorts the actual dynamics of any national culture by sidelining its important debates for the purposes of an outward show of unity.

Though Trilling's figure of the cultural ambassador serves as a straw man, it permits him to expose the opposing centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in a magazine like *Perspectives*. In attempting to be representative, the magazine would in essence be confederating warring factions. Though Trilling does not go so far as to delineate explicitly the matter as such, his introduction gestures toward a particularly thorny dilemma: the magazine must either surrender its claims about American intellectual freedom by suppressing the very real disputes between different cultural factions or it must risk highlighting for its foreign audiences the internal critiques of American culture that animate the back and forth between factions. Trilling's solution is to remain parochial.⁵³ He explains his willingness to edit the magazine for a single issue by stating that he believes the writer can do a better job than the 'Cultural Ambassador.' He argues that intercultural exchange is more effectively advanced by the writer's admission that "his national culture, that all living national cultures are a mess—a confusion, a disappointment, a competitive struggle."⁵⁴ Though the candor of such an assertion might be well-received by some of the intellectuals and artists among *Perspectives'* foreign readership, the concession that American culture was at times a "disappointment" and a "mess" frustrated those on the IPI Board of Directors and at the Ford Foundation who wanted to see the magazine advance a more unequivocally positive assessment of American culture.

Trilling, however, was not alone in his dissent. The constraint of being representative and impartial continued to elicit objections from the magazine's guest editors and contributors. Malcolm Cowley, for instance, found fault with the section of *Perspectives* that offered synopses of the contents of current American periodicals. "The necessity to be impartial and the wish to represent different

⁵³ Laughlin's correspondence reveals that some did indeed find Trilling to be too parochial. Writing to Carl B. Spaeth, who had praised Trilling's issue, Laughlin confessed, "A number of people have expressed the view that he [Trilling] restricted himself too much, and I have had to defend to them our theory of guest editorships." James Laughlin to Carl B. Spaeth, March 11, 1953, Box 30, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁵⁴ Trilling, "Editor's Commentary," 10.

schools of opinion make the notes a little colorless,” he complained to Laughlin.⁵⁵ For others, the mandate to be representative was especially problematic when it was extended beyond aesthetic movements to encompass identity categories. Guest editor and Columbia History Professor Jacques Barzun was particularly vehement in his objections to Laughlin’s suggestion that he include something in his issue by a Catholic writer so as to represent a group of interest to many Europeans. Though he ultimately conceded, printing a piece on Lamennais’s break with Catholicism by Waldemar Gurian, Barzun wrote Laughlin that in principle, “the idea of “representing” American groups is a disastrous one.”⁵⁶ Barzun’s objections were three-fold: first, that transatlantic culture was

⁵⁵ Malcolm Cowley to James Laughlin, July 1, 1953, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁵⁶ Jacques Barzun to James Laughlin, Oct. 14, 1952, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University. *Perspectives USA* did not in fact do a very good job of representing American groups. Notably, it contained only a paltry number of contributions by women and African Americans. One of the only contributions by an African American was a piece by Richard Gibson, titled “A No to Nothing,” which conjured international modernism as it argued against those currents in American publishing and culture-at-large that attempt to limit the African American artist to treating the issue of race. Gibson reminds the young African American artist that “he lives in the age of Joyce, Proust, Mann, Gide, Kafka and not merely that of Chester B. Himes,” that he is “a contemporary of Eliot, Valéry, Pound, Rilke, Auden and not merely of Langston Hughes,” and that “regardless of what some might wish him to believe, he shares as much as any other literate member of this civilization the traditions that produced those men.” Richard Gibson, “A No to Nothing,” *Perspectives USA*, no. 2 (1953): 91. Gibson’s piece, which had originally appeared in *The Kenyon Review* in 1950, ran in Lionel Trilling’s issue where it was paired with James Baldwin’s “Everybody’s Protest Novel” under the heading, “Two Protests Against Protests.” Ironically, this pairing foregrounded the issue of race so that, within the context of *Perspectives USA*, Gibson falls into the very predicament that he railed against: he is only published when he writes on the topic of race. Moreover, these two pieces treating race and protest literature are two of the only works by African American writers that *Perspectives USA* published during its four-year run. In a folder titled “EDITORIAL IDEAS (1)” in the Intercultural Publications archive at the Lilly Library, there is a scrap of paper on which is written “negro contributions,” however tellingly there are no potential names jotted down. A second scrap of paper on which is written only “Wright” can be found in the “EDITORIAL IDEAS (2)” folder. This perhaps refers to Richard Wright, though it is more likely an allusion to Frank Lloyd Wright, who had reproductions appear in Issues 4, 8, and 13. Editorial Suggestion [“negro contributions”], n.d., Box 36, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University; Editorial Suggestion [“Wright”], n.d., Box 36, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Novelist, historian, and art critic, Nancy Wilson Ross, wrote to James Laughlin lamenting *Perspectives USA*’s lack of female contributors and editors. Wilson Ross explained:

In view of the international circulation of this magazine, and its avowed intention of “furthering friendship and understanding among the peoples of all countries through the exchange of cultural materials” I was startled to observe how few women have anything to do with this “exchange” on the American front. Among seven directors—not one woman! On an advisory board of 58—only three women: one living in Italy, all well past middle life. In this particular issue, Number Four, not one single contributor is a woman; though there are some photographs of a woman dancer, Martha Graham.[...] The list that I saw of contributors to the next issue would appear to indicate the maintaining of a fairly consistent attitude in this respect, and since I am forever being told by women friends of mine among Chinese, Japanese and Indians that American women are really not

meant to be a step away from sectarianism and its attending social strife, so that “we look to the work first, then to the man, and last to the group, if at all”; secondly, that if the magazine were to attempt representation at all it would be committed to representing *all* such groups, which is “endless because it’s American”; and thirdly, that giving Europeans what they expect will only harm the magazine in the long run. “If our stuff is akin to theirs,” Barzun argues, “they will simply say they originated every bit of it and still do it better than these American imitators. If, moreover, they detect an attempt to flatter or placate, they will not be grateful but contemptuous. In short, we have got to stand or fall on our own merits as we see them over here.”⁵⁷ For Barzun, the issue of representation—or as he preferred to cast it, the avoidance of bias and neglect—was already addressed through the revolving editorship, and therefore should not be of concern to individual editors. Though the guest editor policy had been put in place to balance the interests of artists with the obligation of representivity, it was failing to satisfy either.

At the Ford Foundation, Trilling’s second issue editorial had raised eyebrows. Not only had William J. Casey, a member of IPI’s Board of Directors, complained to Laughlin about the pessimism of Trilling’s issue, but Ford Foundation consultant Frederick Burkhardt had singled it out for rebuke in a preliminary analytic report ordered to assess the magazine.^{58 59} Reporting to Area I

accepted on the “equal” terms we so fondly advertise, I do think this is something for the board of PERSPECTIVES to look into.

Laughlin was apologetic, stating that he hadn’t realized the situation was so dire. *Perspectives USA* later published a book review of *The Sacred Pipe, Black Elk’s Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (edited by Joseph Eps Brown) by Ross in No. 8; however, the number of female contributors did not improve significantly following Ross’s letter. Nancy Wilson Ross to James Laughlin, November 22, 1953, Box 36, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University; James Laughlin to Nancy Wilson Ross, January 4, 1954, Box 36, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University; Nancy Wilson Ross, review of *The Sacred Pipe, Black Elk’s Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, Edited by Joseph Eps Brown, *Perspectives USA*, no. 8 (1954).

⁵⁷ Jacques Barzun to James Laughlin., emphasis Barzun’s.

⁵⁸ Corresponding with Lee Bartlett, editor of Laughlin and Kenneth Rexroth’s selected letters, Laughlin recalled that Casey, who would serve as Director of the CIA during Ronald Regan’s administration, “was put [on the Board of Directors] by the Foundation to keep an eye on me.” In the same letter, Laughlin also suggests that IPI was set up as an ‘independent’ organization by Ford so as “to insulate the Foundation from my wickedness.” Quoted in Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin, *Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin : selected letters*, ed. Lee Bartlett (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 177. The members of the IPI Board of Directors— James F. Brownlee (who resigned to join the Fund for the Republic in December, 1952), William J. Casey, Charles Garside, Joseph Hambuechen, H. J. Heinz II, Alfred A. Knopf, James Laughlin, and Richard Weil, Jr—were principally businessmen.

Head Donald K. Price, Burkhardt commented, "In [Issue] No.2, the editor was apparently embarrassed by the policy [of cultural diplomacy] and put out a poor number because he didn't want to appear to be a propagandist."⁶⁰ Burkhardt's dispute was not simply with Trilling but with the functioning of the guest editor system as a whole, which he felt did not ultimately make for a representative sampling of American 'High Culture.' Rather, Burkhardt asserted, "[t]he revolving editorship policy is conducive to filling an issue with the cronies of the editor. (This is most flagrant in No.'s 6 [Blackmur] and 2 [Trilling], and pretty bad in No.'s 3 [Barzun] and 4 [In-house])."⁶¹

When called to respond to Burkhardt's report, Laughlin took issue with the charge of cronyism, arguing that the guest editors had been *asked* to print the kind of work they liked best.

"Bear in mind what the original plan called for--," Laughlin explained to Price,

a series of anthologies in which editors from various groups and backgrounds would each present his own choice of what he thought best in contemporary letters. This they have done pretty honestly, I think. Where I have been at fault is in selecting guest editors whom themselves were not sufficiently different from each other in their points of view"⁶²

⁵⁹ Frederick Burkhardt was at this time the President of Bennington College. In his capacity as a Ford Foundation Consultant, Burkhardt prepared a three-page evaluation of and series of recommendations for *Perspectives* based on his reading of the first six issues. The Ford Foundation further commissioned him to conduct a study on the impact of and responses to *Perspectives* in England, France, Germany, and Italy. This 76-page report, submitted to the Foundation on July 15, 1954, was based on correspondence with and questionnaires sent to foreign and American intellectuals, students, and artists. Ford Foundation Trustee Judge Charles Wyzanski, Jr. had written an earlier report researched during a trip to Europe in July and August, 1953. Four pages of this September 8, 1953 report were devoted to the response to *Perspectives* in Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and the United Kingdom. Upon reading Burkhardt's report, Alfred Knopf, one of IPI's Directors, wrote Laughlin, "I am not impressed – not by the report, nor by the idea of such a report being ordered by your superiors." Alfred Knopf to James Laughlin, Sept. 30, 1954, Box 31, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University. Knopf argued that just as good recommendations could have been offered by the IPI Board of Directors if it had been given the opportunity to make them. The generating of this series of reports demonstrates that despite its putative independent status, *Perspectives* was subject to significant oversight from the Ford Foundation. *Perspectives* itself would also generate and submit to the Foundation its own report based on the findings of the questionnaire it included in the foreign editions of Issue 5. The findings of this questionnaire differed significantly from those of the Foundation-generated reports. Readers responded 1238 to 291 in favor of maintaining the guest editor system. In response to the question of whether the magazine should be more scholarly or more popular in its treatment of material, 361 responded "More scholarly", 159 responded "More popular" and an overwhelming 1117 responded "As is." "Analysis of Questionnaire on 'Perspectives'".

⁶⁰ Fred Burkhardt to Don K. Price, April 6, 1954, Box 30, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁶¹ Ibid., emphasis Burkhardt's.

⁶² James Laughlin to Don Price, April 30, 1954 [transcribed May 4, 1954], Box 36, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University. Emphasis Laughlin's.

Laughlin's mea culpa is sound. Of all of the guest editors to publish issues—Trilling, Jacques Barzun, Malcolm Cowley, R.P. Blackmur, and Irwin Edman—only Cowley, a man-of-letters, was not a professor. Among the academics, Blackmur and Trilling taught literature, while Edman and Barzun taught Philosophy and History respectively, though both had strong ties to and had published on literature and the arts. Such trends in editorship help to explain the at times didactic tenor of the quarterly. Though in 1948 Laughlin had imagined that the magazine's guest editors might be supported by "a committee made up from the editors of existing Little Magazines," *Perspectives'* reliance on professors reflects its belated and historicizing focus.⁶³ Likewise, it supports the claim that Cowley had advanced in his Issue 5 editorial: that the dominant genre of the moment was not poetry, drama, or the novel, but criticism.⁶⁴ Yet even this consolidating turn toward the pedagogic rather than the creative, toward a modernism explained rather than a modernism expressed, did not dispense with the problem of representivity.

The reason that the cronyism of the guest editor system became such a point of contention with the Ford Foundation is that the Foundation had become increasingly concerned about the merit of *Perspectives'* initial plan. The quarterly had started by following the "little magazine" strategy of targeting not the largest number of people, but what it perceived to be "the right" people. Kenneth Burke argued in *Counter-Statement* (1931) that "a work can by devious ways, profoundly affect people who have never laid eyes upon it." Just as a single book might impact the nation by influencing one person in a position of authority, so too, Burke proposed, "the group that turns to 'minority' art may be a 'pivotal' group."⁶⁵ For both Burke and Laughlin, this group "need not be 'pivotal' in the sense that they enjoy particular social, political, or economic prestige," but simply that "they are more articulate and enterprising in the assertion of their views and the communication of their attitudes."⁶⁶ The Ford Foundation, however, was less inclined to accept this caveat. If *Perspectives USA's* guest editors and contributors had expressed skepticism about the project of being representative, its

⁶³ Laughlin, "A Few Random Notes From the Editor," 511.

⁶⁴ Malcolm Cowley, "The Literary Situation: 1953," *Perspectives USA*, no. 5 (1953): 10.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 71.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

patrons had become increasingly skeptical about what exactly it was that *Perspectives USA* was representing.

They had given the magazine the green light, but it was quickly becoming apparent that many at the Foundation were less than committed to the idea of a publication that used literature and the arts as its principal envoys of American culture. They preferred instead to move away from an “avant-garde” aesthetic to a more generalist focus through essays treating trends in the social sciences and “serious” articles about the American way of life. These texts, they believed, were more representative of and better propaganda for the United States. Though, as the articles of *VOKS* indicate, modernism stood as a site of ideological struggle in the Cold War, it was a site the Ford Foundation feared was of only limited interest. The initial logic of deploying modernism—that it appealed to an elite audience—soon became a liability.

Tellingly, one of the questions that Frederick Burkhardt aimed to answer in conducting his extended study of *Perspectives USA* was whether those who read it “consider it too high brow, avant garde, of interest only to special tastes?”⁶⁷ Though by the 1950s the majority of *Perspectives*’ contents could not be accurately called “avant garde,” there was a clear disconnect between the editors and the Foundation over the issue of accessibility. Following the second issue’s publication of an article about and reproductions of works by abstract painter Arthur Dove, Laughlin found himself under pressure from one of his directors, likely William J. Casey, to seek out quickly contributions from artists “who understand and can express conservative traditional values.”⁶⁸ To this end, Laughlin wrote to the Director of the Carnegie Institute Department of Fine Arts, Gordon Bailey Washburn, in search of a recommendation that “might satisfy [his director’s] conservative tendencies without being too dreadfully bad or dull.” His reluctance to comply with his director’s request, whether genuine or (equally interesting) affected, is further evinced when he explains, “I am using Marsden Hartley in the next issue that we are doing ourselves [Issue 4, which was devoted to conservative

⁶⁷ Frederick Burkhardt, “A Study of “Perspectives” in England, France, Germany and Italy” (Report, Bennington College, July 15, 1954), 4.

⁶⁸ James Laughlin to Gordon Bailey Washburn, March 12, 1953, Box 34, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

tendencies], and I should think there would be enough representation there to keep him halfway happy. But before long we had probably better do someone who paints in every hair on the old man's chin.”⁶⁹ Laughlin's perception that Marsden Hartley, a figure very much associated with modernist little magazines and the art circles of 1910s and 1920s New York, might be at least temporarily satisfactory as a representative of “conservative tendencies” points to the still-present divide separating modernist-influenced aesthetic communities from the more staid arena of the general population.

Additional internal correspondence reveals that other Board and Foundation members were voicing related concerns centered on the composition of the readership the magazine attracted. Reporting in September of 1953 to Charles Wyzanski on the reader survey to be included with Issue 5, Laughlin acknowledged the Trustee's concerns regarding audience: “If we find, as you suspect, that we are reaching advance-guard people rather than solid thinkers there are a lot of steps we can take to go after the latter—not only by broadening the magazine, along the lines of Number IV [the ‘conservative’ issue], but also by special promotional efforts to selected groups.”⁷⁰ This pressure to target an audience of more ‘solid thinkers’—presumably those with greater access to and influence upon foreign policy debates in their own countries—ultimately led the magazine to expand its scope so as to appeal to a broader audience.

The conflicts surrounding the guest editorship and the role of cultural elites were symptomatic of more generalized structural tensions born of the magazine's relationship with the Ford Foundation. Though the Foundation's grant to Intercultural Publications was ostensibly bestowed without detailed conditions, in practice it entailed a fair amount of institutional oversight. At least initially, however, the Foundation's sponsorship of *Perspectives USA* had perhaps seemed a realization of certain modernist fantasies regarding patronage. Pound, for example, had in his early essay “Patria Mia” (1913) advocated institutional sponsorship of the arts as means of enacting a

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ James Laughlin to Charles Wyzanski, September 30, 1953, Box 30, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

national literary renaissance.⁷¹ In later years, the poet's investment in institutional patronage contributed to his support of Mussolini, whom he believed an enlightened leader in part because the Italian dictator had sponsored the arts, incorporating them into the Fascist state apparatus. William Carlos Williams, another of Laughlin's most influential mentors, had also advocated institutional support of the arts as a vital source of national spirit and identity.⁷² Despite the anti-institutional ethos fueling their aesthetic endeavors, figures such as Pound and now Laughlin believed that, if given the reigns, they could subvert or remake these institutions to suit their purposes. So though *Perspectives* was to be propaganda for the United States, Laughlin also saw in it the opportunity to propagandize on behalf of his pet writers. It was this aspect of the venture that he emphasized to William Carlos Williams in early 1952. "I would like very much to give you a good hard plug in this first issue," he wrote the *New Directions* author, "As you know, it has always irritated me furiously that your work is not better known abroad, particularly in England."⁷³ From an even more pragmatic point of view, such institutional patronage was appealing because it promised a much needed financial boon to writers accustomed to receiving little or no monetary recompense for their contributions to little magazines. The grant from the Ford Foundation enabled *Perspectives* to pay its contributors and guest editors tantalizingly high rates, such as \$2.50 per line of original verse, with a minimum payment of \$25.00 to any poet appearing in the magazine.⁷⁴ Finally, the institutional

⁷¹ Ezra Pound, "Patria Mia," in *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: New Directions, 1973).

⁷² In the unpublished essay, "The Neglected Artist" Williams devises a vision in which national institutions would help support the arts. He also sees the arts as one of the few means of global harmony, describing it as "a ground, perhaps the only one, one which, putting aside violence, we may rebuild a decent living in the world (, so that a code of freedom and broad tolerance—such as the arts only afford will spread and take root elsewhere in our harassed and sometimes needlessly brutalized existence)." Williams, "A Recognizable Image," 96.

⁷³ James Laughlin to William Carlos Williams, February 14, 1952, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁷⁴ In June of 1953, the rates of pay Laughlin outlined to guest editor Irwin Edman were roughly 7.5¢ per word for reprint prose, 12¢ per word for original prose, \$1.75 per line for reprint poetry, and \$2.50 for new poetry, with a minimum fee of \$25 to any one poet appearing in the magazine. James Laughlin to Irwin Edman, June 12, 1953, Box 36. These rates were intended to help support the American writers it published. As *Perspectives* wound down, Laughlin would cite IPI's financial support of American artists as one of its most important contributions. In a February 16, 1956 letter to Ford Foundation trustee Charles Wyzanski, Laughlin would write,

credentials derived from *Perspectives*' diplomatic mission and its association with the Ford Foundation helped to imbue the writing it published with a certain authority, offering a validation of the arts' sense of self-importance. Though stopping considerably short of gratifying certain modernist aspirations for a society in which the insights of the artist would help guide national policy, *Perspectives* nonetheless presented a pedagogical pulpit from which literature could participate in, however obliquely, issues of state. Such privileges, of course, came at a price.

IV. Shifting Paradigms

At the IPI Director's meeting on October 13, 1954, the board passed two major editorial changes: "the replacement of the system of guest-editorship and the broadening of the magazine's content to include material which would give a wider representation to all phases of contemporary American culture in place of its hitherto predominantly literary and artistic content."⁷⁵ Though the minutes indicate that Laughlin, as President of the Board, had submitted these changes to his fellow Directors, a letter he wrote the next day to publisher John Cowles evinces the strain between him, the Board, and the Foundation. In his typically diplomatic tone, Laughlin explained,

[...]You will see that we are reducing emphasis on the purely literary and artistic in order to get into such fields as economics, law, city planning, industrial design and various branches of social and political science. This policy responds somewhat more to recommendations of Foundation consultants than to the views of our readers abroad as expressed in answers to a questionnaire we sent (please see pages 187-189 of *Perspectives* 9), but our Directors believe that it will bring in a more diversified readership and thus increase the magazine's impact.⁷⁶

But I keep thinking that it is all wrong that you [the Foundation] do so little to stimulate the creative life of the country. One of the things that I like best about what we have accomplished at Intercultural is the fact that we have gotten a certain amount of money through to the good, serious writers who need it so desperately. But that, and what Omnibus gets to its writers, some of whom are worth helping, is only a drop in the bucket. There should be a program of fellowships for creative people along the lines of the Guggenheim. I am sure I don't need to tell you how impossible it is for a poet to live by poetry in this country, or how thin are the pickings for a serious novelist who doesn't happen to write in the vein which is popular at the moment.

James Laughlin to Charles Wyzanski, February 16, 1956, Box 30, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁷⁵ Minutes [Director's Meeting], October 13, 1954, Box 32, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁷⁶ James Laughlin to John Cowles, October 14, 1954, Box 30, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University. Parenthesis Laughlin's.

Thus, by the ninth issue, the Ford Foundation had decided that modernist art, and art in general, was not the most effective tool for targeting international policy-makers. The utopian dream of institutional sponsorship of modern art was showing its inherent flaws. Rather than winning institutions over to modernism, modernist work was being tempered by institutional oversight. A divide had emerged in the nebulous group of so-called “elites” that had been the magazine’s target audience, and the Foundation had decided that the intellectual/avant-garde elite was not the same as the solidly-thinking political elite. The words “literature art music,” which had formerly adorned the magazine’s abstract art covers, were as of Issue 9 permanently removed, and, beginning with Issue 13, the magazine switched to a plain cover design featuring a list the number’s contents (*see* Figures 4.2-4.5).⁷⁷ Issues compiled by slated guest editors Selden Rodman and Kenneth Rexroth were judged unsuitable for publication (too heavily weighted in favor of art and literature, too limited and idiosyncratic in their appeal) and were abandoned, though some of their contents were cannibalized.

While modernism was never entirely abandoned as one of the governing aesthetics for the magazine (contributions from Kenneth Patchen, Wallace Stevens, William Faulkner, Kenneth Rexroth, Archibald MacLeish, Clement Greenberg, W.H. Auden, and Ezra Pound, as well as articles on modernists across the arts appeared in the second half of the magazine’s sixteen issue run), *Perspectives USA*’s later issues effected a more generalist and ‘middlebrow’ turn. Alongside contributions by and about modernists were articles such as Christopher Tunnard’s city planning piece, “The American Townscape” and Calvin B. Hoover’s “The American Organizational Economy” (No. 10), Stephen B. Jones’s “Geographical Thought in the United States” and Reuel Denney and David Riesman’s “Football in America” (No.13), and James Thurber’s humor piece on holiday cards, “And a Happy New Year” (No. 14). *Perspectives* was still enacting a form of aesthetic consolidation, just not in the stratifying fashion Laughlin had at first envisioned. Prior to the

⁷⁷ This second change was multiply motivated. In addition to reflecting the shift to a less avant-garde, more generalist focus, the abandonment of the abstract art covers was also a cost-cutting measure at a time when the magazine was trying to make the most of its terminal grant from the Ford Foundation. The listing of the contents on the cover was a publicity decision implemented to draw more readers.

magazine's debut issue, Laughlin had complained to prospective guest editor Selden Rodman about the quotidian nature of the contributions he had solicited. "Perhaps you have not really understood what PERSPECTIVES is about," IPI's President wrote, "We are not trying to put out a catchy and popular magazine to compete with the *New Yorker*. We are trying to establish a solid set of books which will make available on the shelves a representative selection of the best in American high level culture to-day."⁷⁸ A half dozen issues later a number of the contributions were in fact reprinted from the *New Yorker* and Laughlin was making allusions to the "sedate pages of Saturday Evening Perspectives."⁷⁹ Moreover, without the unifying principle of a guest editor and the organizational framework that his introduction offered, readers were left to make sense of the at times incongruent pieces on their own. Ironically, this more eclectic and dissonant incarnation of the magazine bore out the claim with which Trilling had sparked such controversy at the Foundation—that America's national culture, like any national culture, was "a mess—a confusion, a disappointment, a competitive struggle."⁸⁰

Though the institutional support of the Ford Foundation offers tangible proof of modernism's increasingly hegemonic status, the continued friction between the *Perspectives*' contributors, editorial staff, and patrons over the place of modernist-influenced aesthetics suggests just how contingent and precarious that status still was. Cast differently, these same conflicts also suggest how deeply entrenched some of modernism's countercultural tendencies had remained despite its gradual ascent to respectability. One of the clearest cases of the chafing of approaches between the quarterly's contributors, editors, and Ford Foundation patrons was in these camps'

⁷⁸ James Laughlin to Selden Rodman, June 28, 1952, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁷⁹ James Laughlin to Paul Goodman, December 21, 1955, Box 33, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University. This moniker sardonically likens *Perspectives* to the *Saturday Evening Post*, a popular weekly magazine that was the object of many a modernist's scorn for the 'middlebrow' and stylistically conservative literature it published. Whereas the first three issues of *Perspectives USA* contained no pieces reprinted from the *New Yorker*, beginning with the fourth issue, which was to represent more mainstream and "conservative" tendencies in American culture, all but four of the remaining twelve issues reprinted at least one item from the *New Yorker*. This shift is especially significant given that in these later issues *Perspectives USA* was using less reprint material and more pieces commissioned specifically for the magazine.

⁸⁰ Trilling, "Editor's Commentary," 10.

differing approaches to the role of critique in cultural exposition. As little magazines from *Blast* to *transition* demonstrate, one of the principal modes of modernist engagement was the interrogation of one's own social and cultural institutions. This ranged in form from criticism of the literary status quo to criticism of the functioning of Western capitalism (articulated alternately from the varying political viewpoints of figures like Pound, Williams, and Louis Zukofsky). For the writers associated with the literary revolutions of the early twentieth century, cultural critique was the evidence and emblem of intellectual vigor. Thus when critic Gilbert Highet, in a review of *Perspectives'* first issue for *Harper's Magazine*, rebuked the quarterly for publishing Henry Steiner's short story "Rice," Laughlin and project administrator Hayden Carruth mobilized a prototypically modernist defense on behalf of the contribution.

"Rice" tells the story of how, through cultural chauvinism and misunderstanding, an American GI kills an elderly Korean civilian from whom he had been sent to buy rice.⁸¹ Though the piece itself is written in the realist tradition, Laughlin and Carruth's justification for publishing it turns on modernist-influenced ideas about elite readership and cultural critique. In response to Highet's charge that the story undermines the ambassadorial function of the magazine because it reinforces the stereotype of the American as an arrogant bully, Carruth and Laughlin countered that *Perspectives USA's* audience of sophisticated readers would not fall prey to such stereotypes. Highet's criticism might stand if the magazine were directed at a general foreign audience, they argue, but it is expressly directed at the "intellectual elements of foreign populations," an audience that "exerts a strong influence on the national attitudes of the rest of the world and is at the same time the audience most likely to have been offended by the more commercial aspects of America's 'Cultural exploitation' overseas." Critique, they insist, is more likely to garner these intellectuals' friendship than a nationalistic show-and-tell:

We do not believe that these are people for whom we need to provide blinkers, or that they would respect us and want to read PERSPECTIVES if we did. We think we can gain their confidence most readily and convince them we are not a propaganda organ—a kind of privately endowed wing of the State Department—if we give them an uncensored selection

⁸¹ Henry Steiner, "Rice," *Perspectives USA*, no. 1 (1952).

of the best American writing, whether or not it takes the U.S.A. in a rosy light. We go on the theory that if Democracy is really any good it can stand a little self-criticism, and further that the intellectuals abroad who are most likely to be valuable friends for Democracy are those who will appreciate the maturity which self-criticism implies.⁸²

Interestingly, it is not that Laughlin and Carruth are indifferent to the responses of their audience, but rather that they contend that the most effective strategy for winning over their elite readership is to appear frank and rigorous as opposed to promotional—to solicit favor by not appearing solicitous. Key voices at the Foundation and on the IPI Board, however, were in agreement with Highet and wanted a more direct correlation between cultural diplomacy and cultural cheerleading.

For IPI Board member William J. Casey, *Perspectives'* willingness to publish penetrating self-criticism was more of a liability than a selling point. In a letter to the quarterly's associate editor Ronald Frelander, Casey faulted an article (then under consideration) by J.K. Galbraith for its academic and critical rather than promotional approach to the topic of the American businessman. "It seems to me that the Galbraith article is typical of a weakness which I find in many of the issues of 'Perspectives,'" Casey complained,

We explain American life and mores to the rest of the world by apologizing for it. We seem to be trying to win friends by saying that we, too, are capable of discerning the emptiness and contradictions in American society. I would like to see some more forthright presentation of the positive values which can reasonably be asserted for American life and culture. Rather than have Galbraith, from ivory tower perch, apologize for the American businessman, I would like to see a [Richard] Weil [one of Casey's fellow IPI Directors], or some such articulate businessman, present the case for the American businessman and his philosophic contribution to the world, its progress, and its ability to make a free society function."⁸³

Contrasting Casey's letter with Laughlin and Carruth's defense of Steiner's short story crystallizes the two parties' fundamental methodological differences. Both ultimately sought to generate abroad a favorable response to American culture; however, they differed on the most effective means of

⁸² Hayden Carruth, Letter Draft, ca. February 16, 1953, Box 37, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University. Laughlin drafted a letter to Gilbert Highet in response to Highet's review in the January 1953 *Harper's Magazine*. Laughlin then sent this draft to Carruth for feedback. The quotations cited above come from Carruth's redrafting of one of Laughlin's paragraphs. It is unclear from the IPI Archive whether or not Laughlin and Carruth actually sent this letter to Highet. What is important for my purposes is that this is the logic that Carruth and Laughlin were considering presenting as their justification for publishing Steiner's "Rice."

⁸³ William J. Casey to Ronald Frelander, July 1, 1954, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

procuring that response. In the end, it was money that would break the stalemate. Given IPI's financial reliance on the Ford Foundation, Laughlin felt that he could not afford to flout either their or their emissaries' wishes. Thus paradoxically—though not entirely unexpectedly—*Perspectives USA*, a magazine that sought in part to showcase the intellectual freedom of American culture, fell into restricting that freedom. Laughlin set about policing language and ideas he feared might either antagonize the Ford Foundation hierarchy, offend the sensibilities of European audiences, or provide fodder for Communist anti-American propaganda, and he did so even as he proclaimed *Perspectives*' pages to be “free of propaganda or political pressure.”⁸⁴

In one exchange with guest editor Malcolm Cowley, Laughlin argued against the inclusion of an article on the American theater by Harold Clurman:

You see, there are just dozens of Communist critics waiting to pick up something like that and splash all over the headlines of their literary papers, making capital out of the fact that an American writer has admitted in an American magazine for circulation abroad that the American theatre suffers terribly from American materialism. I can just see what they would make of it now, and the hot water we would be in with the Trustees when report of it got home. [...] I am sorry to say that I have had to bring up the same point with a very fine article on mass culture which Dwight MacDonald had prepared for Selden Rodman's issue.⁸⁵

Cowley was “deeply disturbed” by Laughlin's intervention and asked the publisher to reconsider. In a formulation that recalls Laughlin and Carruth's own subsequent defense of “Rice”, Cowley argued that he had always gone on the principle that “the truth, even if painful, is in the long run the best argument for our side.”⁸⁶ The IPI archive attests to many such exchanges over potentially divisive articles and sentences between Laughlin and his guest editors.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Laughlin, “The Function of This Magazine,” 8.

⁸⁵ James Laughlin to Malcolm Cowley, December 8, 1952, Box 58.

⁸⁶ Malcolm Cowley to James Laughlin, December 13, 1952, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁸⁷ Laughlin, for example, asked Edman to reconsider the sentence, “America, for better or worse, to the eyes of the rest of the world, is the future,” in his editorial, arguing, “if this were pulled out of context by Communists who wanted to attack us in their press they could twist it greatly to our disadvantage. [...] I am very hopeful, therefore, that you will want to rephrase this part of the piece with the possibility of “pulling out of context” in mind.” James Laughlin to Irwin Edman, January 11, 1954, Box 58.. Another series of letters between Selden Rodman and Laughlin contains a negotiation over the suppression of pieces by James Agee. On February 6, 1953, Laughlin first expresses his disappointment at not being able to accept the Agee piece that Rodman had selected because the “Public Relations office” felt “it might prove very offensive in several different quarters,” and he advises that Rodman make a selection from *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* instead. Laughlin then writes again on April 17, 1953, reporting that “there may

However, Laughlin was not the only one to internalize the public relations oversight. In the same letter in which Cowley protests Laughlin's suppression of the Clurman article, the writer-critic reveals that he had already "dropped some stories and articles from consideration because of the impression they might give in Europe."⁸⁸ In an earlier letter, Cowley himself had flagged a potential problem in a review of Steinbeck's *East of Eden* he had solicited from French critic Claude-Edmonde Magny. Writing to Laughlin in September of 1952, he explained, "When you read the French draft you'll note a somewhat anti-American crack in the next-to-last sentence of the article. I think it should stand in French, to satisfy the author and to give French readers the notion that *Perspectives* isn't a propaganda magazine, but I'm wondering whether I shouldn't delete it from the English version (from which the German and Italian versions should be made)—I'll ponder that question after [Edouard] Roditi [then *Perspectives*' translation supervisor] has made the English translation"⁸⁹ When by December of the same year Laughlin had not responded to this query, Cowley wrote again, "I was worried by the next-to-last sentence and wish you would think about it (though my feeling is that it can very well stand, in the French, as evidence that we don't censor European writers)."⁹⁰ Then, betraying his own equivocation on this point, Cowley notes that Magny's final paragraph will not be a problem in the Varèse-Cowley English translation, as it takes "all the sting out of it, and I asked that the German and Italian versions should be based on the English, not the French."⁹¹

be some difficulty in clearing a selection from "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men" with our public relations watchdogs because of the rather negative picture which it gives of social conditions in the South. // But several people have spoken highly of the text on Lincoln which he has prepared for Omnibus. They think that part of these might do well in PERSPECTIVES, because the writing is so good." James Laughlin to Selden Rodman, February 6, 1953, Box 58; James Laughlin to Selden Rodman, April 17, 1953, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁸⁸ Malcolm Cowley to James Laughlin. December 13, 1952.

⁸⁹ Malcolm Cowley to James Laughlin, September 10, 1952, Box 58, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁹⁰ Malcolm Cowley to James Laughlin. December 13, 1952.

⁹¹ Ibid. In the original *Profils* version Magny's last two sentences read as follows:

Le refuge dans l'idylle (je songe au domestique chinois d'*A l'est de l'Eden*, de Bibliothèque Rose) est le signe de cette situation en porte-à-faux des écrivains américains: on dirait qu'avec eux, à travers leur oeuvre, c'est le pays tout entier qui n'accepte pas de se faire conscience. Manquant malgré eux à leur devoir d'état, force leur est de s'aliéner dans la Légende.

The Varèse-Cowley English translation softens Magny's quip about the entire country's refusal to make moral judgments.

Cowley's participation in such acts of censorship illustrates the extent to which the magazine's ambassadorial function elicited complex combinations of resistance and compliance from those involved. Thus despite a professed reluctance to engage in censorship, Laughlin regularly—and sometimes preemptively—asked contributors to recast or omit potentially controversial sentences.⁹² The prognostication of readers' responses, which at times included parsing out separate national audiences, influenced editorial decisions in a manner that broke significantly with the practices of the little magazine.⁹³ Whereas modernist publications often thumbed their noses at or at least adopted poses of indifference toward their readers, the Cold War mission of *Perspectives* necessitated that it

This escape into the idyllic—I am thinking of the Chinese servant in *East of Eden*, who belongs in a romantic story for adolescents—is a sign of the unstable position of American novelists. Their work might tempt us to believe that the whole country was refusing to achieve a full consciousness of good and evil. Meeting with failure in their efforts to carry out their professional duty, they have no recourse but to lose themselves in Legend.

Claude-Edmonde Magny, review of *East of Eden*, by John Steinbeck, *Profils*, no. 5 (1953): 163; Claude-Edmonde Magny, review of *East of Eden*, by John Steinbeck, trans. Louise Varèse, *Perspectives USA*, no. 5 (1953): 152.

⁹² In his memoir of Laughlin, *Beside the Shadblow Tree*, Hayden Carruth, who worked closely with Laughlin at Intercultural Publications overseeing a number of the in-house issues of *Perspectives*, reflects upon Laughlin's reluctance to publish controversial material as editor of New Directions press. "Why did New Directions not publish the forbidden books of Henry Miller or Nabokov's *Lolita*?" Carruth asks, "These and plenty of other such books were available to [Laughlin]. He read them and admired them. But he was unwilling to risk the legal and judicial consequences that would ensue if he violated the laws governing censorship and public decency, perhaps because he didn't wish to see his family name bruited about in the press in connection with such a scandal [...] but actually, I think, he had more subtle and personal reasons" (67). Carruth goes on to suggest that Laughlin abstained because he would have been mortified to "find himself in a courtroom being asked questions about his sexual proclivities. This didn't keep him from uttering the ordinary indecent innuendos in ordinary conversation; as long as they were dressed up with style and wit, they were acceptable. But in a courtroom? In any public place? No. Hence the job of publishing *Tropic of Cancer* and *Lolita* went to Barney Rosset of Grove Press, who was willing to endure the legal hassles" (68). Hayden Carruth, *Beside the Shadblow Tree: A Memoir of James Laughlin* (Port Townsend, Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 1999). Though Carruth's comments here address the issue of sexually explicit material, and though, as publisher of Pound, Laughlin was certainly no stranger to controversy, the accumulation of these misgivings suggest a temperamental uneasiness on Laughlin's part with explicit transgressions. It was more in Laughlin's manner to finesse matters in order to achieve what he desired than to make a dogmatic stand. It is telling of Laughlin's avoidance of unpleasantness that he invented the alias "William Candlewood" to sign rejection letters and serve as a general whipping boy. Laughlin would later recall that "[i]f something was fouled up at New Directions it was always blamed on Candlewood. The apology letters said he would be fired immediately." James Laughlin, Peter Glassgold, and Griselda Ohannessian, eds., *New Directions in Prose and Poetry 50* (New York: New Directions, 1986), 77.

⁹³ In a typically acerbic March 5, 1952 letter, Kenneth Rexroth accused Laughlin of undue diffidence and warned him against practicing such defensive editing: "I will not stand for any cutting [of the issue of *Perspectives* that he was to edit] which I feel to be ideological or political," Rexroth asserted, "You must realize that I consider your board a bunch of clerical neofascists—but nowhere near as timid as you are scared of them." Rexroth and Laughlin, *Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin: selected letters*, 176.

assume a more ingratiating stance. Though the little magazine had served as an important model in Laughlin's original 1948 conception of *Perspectives USA*, its ethos had proved difficult to import into the Ford Foundation's institutional setting.

From the outset, some of the magazine's contributors had questioned the ultimate ideological compatibility of institutional authority and modernist iconoclasm. Though critical articles by academics like Trilling and Tate could offer an air of learned respectability to the modernist texts they discussed, many modernist authors themselves were not so easily made "respectable." It was this point that Kenneth Rexroth made to Laughlin in late 1952. Though Rexroth himself had agreed to serve as a guest editor for *Perspectives*, and though he eventually would contribute material to four separate issues, the politically radical poet was suspicious of Laughlin's association with the Ford Foundation, challenging him not to renounce his controversial authors in favor of institutional authority. "I really think you should quit the F[ord] F[oundation] *right now*," Rexroth wrote in October of 1952,

I believe it is destroying you. You have, socially, become the instrument of a Right Wing Plan Marshall—intellectually, you are the captive of the Gestapo of New York cocktail fascism. The peculiar thing is—you think you're just becoming 'respectable.' [...] But it is sickening to see you ditch your former friends [with] such expedient embarrassment. Listen kiddo, you didn't get where you are via the literary quarterlies & the Drop the Bomb Now poetasters. Neither Elizabeth Hardwick nor John Crowe Ransom 'made' *New Directions*, but people named Miller, Patchen, Williams, Pound, Goodman, Roditi, Rexroth, etc.—*shameful people*.⁹⁴

Though Rexroth's claim that he, Williams, and others remained "*shameful people*" is perhaps a little exaggerated, it is certainly true that not all of the magazine's modernist contributors could be aestheticized into innocuousness. If, at times, *Perspectives USA* evinces the institutional taming of

⁹⁴ Ibid., 181-182. Emphasis Rexroth's. The four pieces by Kenneth Rexroth that *Perspectives USA* published were the poems "Poem" (At sixteen I came West) (*PUSA* #1) and "Time is the Mercy of Eternity" (*PUSA* #11), an article "The Visionary Painting of Morris Graves" (*PUSA* #10), and a review of the American Indian Songs available in the United States Bureau of Ethnology Collection (*PUSA* #16). On the topic of his radical politics, Rexroth once boasted to Laughlin, "Do you realize that I am one of the very few intellectuals in the USA who has never been an actual member of the Communist Party—and this because I started out life considerably to the left of the Bolsheviks." Rexroth and Laughlin, *Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin : selected letters*, 174.

modernism on behalf of a nationalist foreign agenda, the magazine also attests to the ways in which modernist texts resist such domestication.

V. Ezra Pound: A Case Study in Clashing Cultures

The type of literary consolidation that *Perspectives USA* enacted at the behest of American ‘cultural diplomacy’ is one that constantly threatened to expose as incompatible those elements—national institutional authority and modernist-influenced ‘elite’ culture—that it sought to amalgamate. On the one hand, the magazine’s dissemination of modernist texts did in fact help to instill them with an institutional authority. This authority was derived not only from their association with the Ford Foundation—one of the nation’s foremost philanthropic institutions—but by virtue of the fact that they had been entrusted (however begrudgingly in private) with the mission of representing the nation in the cultural Cold War. On the other hand, the instability and incongruity of both the magazine’s contents and its methodology suggest the very real cultural conflicts that simultaneously impeded this institutionalization. It is perhaps a little too facile to argue, as Gregory Barnhisel has, that the modernism of *Perspectives* was one “deracinated from its avant-garde or revolutionary heritage, comfortable with capitalism and establishment power, making a compromise between cutting critique of the bourgeois order and mass (or ‘middlebrow’) culture and its ultimate choice ‘of the West,’ [...]”⁹⁵ To be sure, *Perspectives*’ modernist texts were often (and intentionally) couched in this fashion, as Barnhisel has demonstrated, but their assimilation to this goal was incomplete. Moreover, at times the magazine’s deployment of modernism erupted glaring contradictions in aesthetic and political ideology on the page.⁹⁶ Perhaps nowhere are the tensions incumbent in

⁹⁵ Barnhisel, “*Perspectives USA* and the Cultural Cold War: Modernism in Service of the State,” 731.

⁹⁶ Though Barnhisel admits to the contradictions inherent in the project in passing, he does not actually engage them other than glancingly, as in the following paragraph, “The project was not without contradictions. In its self-presentation, *Perspectives USA* vigilantly policed what Andreas Huyssen has called the ‘great divide’ between highbrow modernism and mass taste, but this was in the service of a larger argument for the superiority of American egalitarianism and meritocracy. Like modernism itself, *Perspectives* maintained its high-modernist withdrawal from the capitalist economy and presented an argument for liberal capitalism. Finally, Laughlin’s journal implicated modernism—a movement defined within its own pages as the creation of rebel individuals who rejected the commercialized mass taste of

Perspectives USA's mainstreaming of modernism more pronounced than in the magazine's publication of Ezra Pound in its sixteenth and final issue.

In certain senses, Pound epitomizes modernism's transnationalism. His investment in translation, his invocations of multiple languages and cultures in his writing, his expatriate lifestyle, and his many relationships with artists of various nationalities put him at the center of aesthetic cultural exchange during the first half of the twentieth century. However, his anti-Semitism, his interwar and wartime support of Italian fascism, his opposition to the American war effort, and his often highly critical stance toward American culture and politics made him a potentially disastrous national representative. As such, Pound's publication by *Perspectives USA* arguably stood at cross-purposes to the diplomatic and propagandistic mission the Ford Foundation hierarchy imagined for the magazine. By one logic, printing Pound could serve as evidence of American intellectual freedom since it would demonstrate that even a figure as controversial as Pound could be offered a voice in an institutionally sponsored journal for distribution abroad. Yet by another logic, the mere presence of Pound, a poet who at the time of his publication was incarcerated in Saint Elizabeth's mental hospital and remained under the threat of prosecution for treason, would necessarily disrupt the magazine's implied argument for the United States as a bastion of free speech and intellectual freedom. As distasteful and hate-filled as Pound's political views were, his arrest *had* stemmed from a speech act—his wartime broadcasts on Radio Rome.

The publication of Pound, therefore, offers a concrete instance in which the quarterly's participation in the consolidation of an American 'High Modernist' canon came into direct conflict with its instrumentalization of modernism for nationalist ends. Though committed as both a

dominant society—in collaboration between intellectuals, universities, foundations, the business world, the publishing industry, and the national-security state." Ibid. By expanding upon such contradictions and others, what I hope to demonstrate is that in its mobilization of modernism, *Perspectives USA* was torn in disparate directions by its various ideological and aesthetic commitments. The overall goal of the publication was undeniably to garner favor with intellectuals abroad and to pull them into a sympathetic alliance with, if not the American government, then at least elements of American Culture hitherto overlooked or ignored. However, its editorial problems reflect the clashing of the modernist-influenced methodologies with those of many of its Ford Foundation sponsors. The resultant magazine, I contend, is one that is far less of a piece and far less consistent in its vision of American cultural life than Barnhisel allows.

longtime friend and publisher of Pound, Laughlin was nonetheless keenly aware of the difficulties that the poet's inclusion might entail. Internal IPI correspondence between Laughlin, Hayden Carruth, and associate publisher Ronald Freeland documents that the magazine intentionally postponed its publication of Pound until its final issue in order to limit the effect of negative fallout at the Foundation or from readers.⁹⁷ Moreover, in warning the IPI Board of the decision to include "material by and about a 'controversial' figure—Ezra Pound," Laughlin resorted to claims about the American canon, asserting, "I did not feel that we could terminate without representing a writer of such importance."⁹⁸ Indeed, Laughlin's carefully argued entreaty to the Board of Directors suggests just how precarious a move the decision to publish Pound was:

You may recall that when we conducted our questionnaire among PERSPECTIVES readers abroad, Pound was one of the American writers most frequently requested. The Pound poems included in Number 16 are strictly literary, and the essay on him by our freelance associate editor Hayden Carruth—which is, I think, the best short critique ever written on Pound—has been carefully prepared to report various points of view about the situation without committing us editorially. I imagine that we will get some letters of protest, but the essay is so temperate and judicious that I think we are fairly well protected against large-scale embarrassment.⁹⁹

In addition to his personal investment in Pound, Laughlin also perceived a tactical benefit to printing him—though one that might ruffle the feathers of Foundation higher-ups. Pound's inclusion constituted, if not a move away from the staid "Saturday Evening Perspectives" guise the magazine had by this time adopted, then at least a harkening back to the magazine's earlier appeals to a European cultural elite. Laughlin wrote to Carruth that though it would be improper for the magazine to protest Pound's incarceration in an official manner, "certainly we can report that others

⁹⁷Laughlin raised the issue of printing Pound with Freeland in a letter dictated from Madras in June of 1955: "How would you feel about using some Ezra Pound for the poetry [in Issue 14]? I think we have certainly got to do him sometime before we wind up, and I had been thinking of doing it in the last number, to avoid more repercussions than necessary, but perhaps we could risk it sooner. What do you think?" James Laughlin to Ronald Freeland, June 14, 1955, dictated June 4, 1955, Box 67, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University. In the end, the magazine decided to hold off until Issue 16, which would allow them the time needed to orchestrate his inclusion with care. A little under a year out from the publication of the final issue, Laughlin wrote to Hayden Carruth, inquiring as to whether he would be willing to make a selection of Pound's poetry and pen an original essay on the poet that might help influence reception, explaining, "I think we ought to start preparing for it now, because it will be difficult." James Laughlin to Hayden Carruth, October 11, 1955, Box 67.

⁹⁸ Report Draft, April 27, 1956, Box 31, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

protest it.”¹⁰⁰ By recording the “grave concern which so many leading American literary figures feel” the magazine would be able to distance American intellectuals from the government’s position without explicitly criticizing it.¹⁰¹ Laughlin saw this move as important given European intellectuals’ rising objections to Pound’s continued imprisonment, which he wrote to Carruth was “being built up into a kind of international cause célèbre,” since “quite apart from the merits of the case, it plays in with the continuing desire of Europeans to demonstrate that Americans are unfeeling boobs who do not appreciate culture or their great cultural men.”¹⁰² Laughlin thus advised Carruth to “speak of this, as it is certainly doing us harm abroad to keep him locked up.”¹⁰³

The article and the poetry selection devoted to Pound illustrate the difficulty of depoliticizing certain elements of modernism so as to bring it in line with modern capitalist democracy. Though Hayden Carruth’s thirty-page essay does speak at length about Pound’s poetic technique—paying particular attention to his formal movement from imagism to the personae to the ideogrammic method—it would be inaccurate to characterize it as an aestheticization (or even necessarily a de-clawing) of Pound. Carruth devotes roughly a third of his essay to the range of social and political issues surrounding Pound, including Pound’s insistence on the political import of his poetry, his obsession with economics, his wartime radio broadcasts and subsequent arrest, his trial’s deferral due to his being judged of “unsound mind,” and the principle camps of opinion concerning his case (the government’s, Pound’s, and American intellectuals’). Carruth’s essay does entail a number of evasions—for example, though it acknowledges Pound’s “acceptance of certain aspects of the Fascist corporate state” and his “savage and absurd attacks on the United States and England” during the war, it conspicuously avoids discussion of Pound’s anti-Semitism. This said, Carruth also concedes that the political and economic thrust of *The Cantos* was not merely a late development. In speaking of Pound’s obsession with economics, he explains,

¹⁰⁰ James Laughlin to Hayden Carruth. October 11, 1955.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² James Laughlin to Hayden Carruth, March 13, 1956, Box 67, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

the main point for the reader of the *Cantos* to remember is that, for Pound, his excursion into economics was primarily an extension and substantiation of the cultural war he had been carrying on since his youth, giving him a foothold, so to speak, in the camp of the materialist enemy. Usury, Pound's anathema, became the chief symptom of our anticultural society, the chief disease to be combated by the artists and the other goods-producers who labor for the real welfare of the community.¹⁰⁴

Similarly, when reflecting upon Pound's earlier writing, Carruth notes that "no one should mistake his attitude toward craftsmanship for any aspect of the art-for-art's sake dogma," but rather recognize it as a function of his belief that without linguistic vigor and clarity, "the whole machinery of social and individual thought and order goes to pot."¹⁰⁵ Though Carruth defuses Pound's criticisms of the United States somewhat by alluding to his "individual and quite unorthodox beliefs," his "paranoid state," and the possibility that "the poet's vision of humanity failed completely" during WWII, Pound's critiques are not themselves brushed under a rug.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, Carruth's article was "hot" enough that Elisabeth Mann Borgese, *Perspectives USA's* Italian editor (and the daughter of Thomas Mann), wrote to Laughlin requesting permission to cut it by thirty percent, adding, "it would be much wiser to take out the economico-political stuff. It is true that Pound as a literary figure is still very much alive here, but, on the other hand, many ears are still buzzing with his unfortunate phrases (some of which are even quoted in this essay) of the Fascist era. [...] why go into this matter? Can't we just stick to his poetry?"¹⁰⁷ Laughlin, however, balked at the excision of the political sections, responding, "If you want to tone down the phrase that you don't like on page 43, I suppose that is all right. But otherwise I would let things stand."¹⁰⁸

The selection of Pound's poetry itself also suggests the manner in which his texts resist assimilation to the magazine's more cozy relationship with Western capitalist society. Despite Laughlin's assurances to the IPI Board that the texts selected would be "strictly literary," the poems' political and economic critiques cannot simply be emptied out. In assigning Carruth the task of

¹⁰⁴ Hayden Carruth, "The Poetry of Ezra Pound," *Perspectives USA*, no. 16 (1956): 152-153.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*: 140, qtd. 140.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*: 152, 158.

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth Mann Borgese to James Laughlin, April 18, 1956, Box 63.

¹⁰⁸ James Laughlin to Elizabeth Mann Borgese, May 2, 1956, Box 63, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

compiling the selection of Pound's poetry, Laughlin had advised him to "present [Pound] in the round, even if it means devoting as much as ten pages to his poetry."¹⁰⁹ The final sampling of poems—"De Aegypto," "Alba" (from *Langue D'Oe*), the Li Po translation "Taking Leave of a Friend", section VII of *Homage to Sextus Propertius*, Section III from *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, Canto III, Canto XLV (With *Usura*), and the "Pull Down thy vanity" passage from Canto LXXXI—represents most phases in Pound's literary career. Though the selection does not depict Pound at his most vitriolic, it amply showcases his criticisms of the commercial priorities of Western culture. The selection from *Mauberley* is one which advances a claim about the decline of civilization from an antiquity vital in its religion, government, and culture to a contemporary society dominated by a "tawdry cheapness." The passage includes not only a critique of capitalism's commodification of the aesthetic ("We see τὸ καλὸν [the beautiful]/ Decreed in the market place,") but also a skepticism about the improvement that democracy constitutes over despotism. "Free of Pisistratus,"—an Athenian Tyrant, but also, importantly for Pound, a patron of the arts— "We choose a knave or an eunuch / To rule over us," the poem's speaker declares.¹¹⁰ The next selection, Canto III, reprises elements of Pound's economic critique through allusions to Pound's own poverty as a young artist, to El Cid's trickery of the pawnbrokers, and to the decay of renaissance art. As Carroll F. Terrell notes, this is the first canto to introduce the usury theme that would consume so much of the text. Canto XLV, with its incantatory repetition of "with usura," offers perhaps Pound's most aesthetically presented and intelligible indictment of usury as an impediment to aesthetic and artisanal production. Read in succession, these three poems highlight the persistence of Pound's economic critiques across time, a continuity further underlined by *Perspectives*' decision to print each poem with its date of composition. In this anthological format, the mitigating effect of persona (most evident in the original context of *Mauberley*) is diminished as the recurrence of the economic theme wedds itself to Pound's poetic voice. Though the selection from the Pisan Cantos, positioned as it is as the final

¹⁰⁹ James Laughlin to Hayden Carruth, October 16, 1955, Box 67, Intercultural Publications Mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University.

¹¹⁰ Ezra Pound, "From *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* [III]," *Perspectives USA*, no. 16 (1956): 124-125.

poem in the group, would seem to offer an apology for the poet's political and economic excesses ("How mean thy hates, / Fostered in falsity, / Pull down thy vanity [...]"), the reader knows from Carruth's essay that Pound remains unrepentant.¹¹¹ Rather than recanting such criticisms, Carruth explains, "Pound is thoroughly convinced that he is one of the few genuine patriots left in the country; the rest, those who pretend to be patriots, are in reality busy betraying America to the international bankers and/or the dialectical materialists."¹¹²

In arguing against the banking system on which Western capitalism is based and by presenting it as inimical to aesthetic creation, Pound's poetry stands in an uneasy relation both to the mission of the magazine and to those articles within its pages that present a more optimistic view of the relationship between aesthetic and business interests. For example, the final issue of *Perspectives* also featured an article by Victor Gruen titled "The City in the Automobile Age." Though the article discusses how the automobile has had a pernicious effect on the American city by rendering its downtowns "ugly and inefficient," it remains optimistic about the potential for a "free society" to implement urban planning projects, which, through cooperation between concerned citizens, 'enlightened businessmen,' and the federal government, can help revitalize American cities. It is doubtful, however, that Pound would be appeased by Gruen's example of Detroit's Northland Shopping Center. Here Gruen cites the project as one offering hope with its blending of aesthetic and business considerations—noting that the attention paid to the "order and attractiveness of environment" there has ultimately also benefited merchants.¹¹³

To be sure, the case of Pound is an extreme one. However, in its extremity it magnifies those conflicts which, though less glaring, were nonetheless present throughout *Perspectives*'

¹¹¹ Ezra Pound, "From Canto LXXXI," *Perspectives USA*, no. 16 (1956): 128. The French and Italian editions follow the same ordering as the American one listed above. The German differs in that it places the usury canto, Canto XLV, as the final poem, out of chronological order, following the excerpt from Canto LXXXI. In the American, French, and German editions, the excerpt from Canto LXXXI begins with the line, "The ant's a centaur in his dragon world," and ends with "Rathe to destroy, niggard in charity, / Pull down thy vanity, / I say pull down." The selection in the Italian edition is slightly longer and extends through to the canto's final line, "All in the diffidence that faltered." Interestingly, the inclusion of these additional lines shows the speaker's penitence is incomplete since the stanza is a qualifying one: "But to have done instead of not doing / this is not vanity [...]."

¹¹² Carruth, "The Poetry of Ezra Pound," 157.

¹¹³ Victor Gruen, "The City in the Automobile Age," *Perspectives USA*, no. 16 (1956): 52.

institutionalization and instrumentation of modernism. Animated by contradictory impulses, *Perspectives USA* becomes yet another manifestation of a late modernist (or, in this case, liminally modernist) community that, like modernist memoir, threatens to dissolve the very structures it sets out to erect. Yet despite this, or perhaps precisely because of it, it offers a particularly rich nexus of communal negotiations between 'elite' and 'mainstream' culture, national and international alliances, individual and group interests—negotiations that bear upon not only modernist literary consolidation, but also aesthetic culture in general.

PERSPEKTIVEN

Heft 1, Oktober 1952

Ich lehne es ab an den Untergang des Menschen zu glauben	9	<i>William Faulkner</i>
ERZÄHLUNG		
Reis	76	<i>Henry Steiner</i>
Grabstein eines Lustspiels	28	<i>William Carlos Williams</i>
GEDICHTE		
Gedichte	130	<i>Marianne Moore</i>
Irkalla's weiße Höhlen	174	<i>Kenneth Patchen</i>
Gedicht	204	<i>Kenneth Rexroth</i>
Ein Feld des Lichtes	170	<i>Theodore Roethke</i>
Das Kreuz	128	<i>Allen Tate</i>
Zehn Gedichte	22	<i>William Carlos Williams</i>
Gedichte	38	<i>William Carlos Williams</i>
GESCHICHTE		
Die Zerstörung der Stadt Tenochtitlan	11	<i>William Carlos Williams</i>
Demokratie und Macht: die Rolle des Einwanderers im politischen Leben Amerikas	107	<i>Oscar Handlin</i>
KUNST		
Malerei Amerikas: Ben Shahn	87	<i>Selden Rodman</i>
Bildwiedergaben	96	<i>Ben Shahn</i>
Über ein Bild van Goghs	157	<i>Meyer Schapiro</i>
LITERARISCHE KRITIK		
Goethe und die Weltliteratur	97	<i>Thornton Wilder</i>
MUSIK		
Aaron Coplands Musik	178	<i>Arthur Berger</i>

Figure 4.1 Part of the table of contents for the first issue of *Perspektiven*, *Perspective USA's* German language edition.

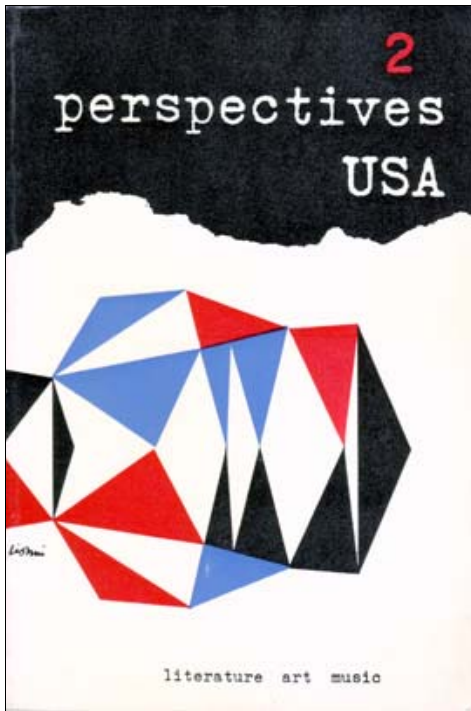


Figure 4.2. The cover of the American edition of *Perspectives USA*, No. 2 (Winter 1953). The abstract cover design signals its modernist pedigree, while the footer, “literature art music” advertises its aesthetic focus.

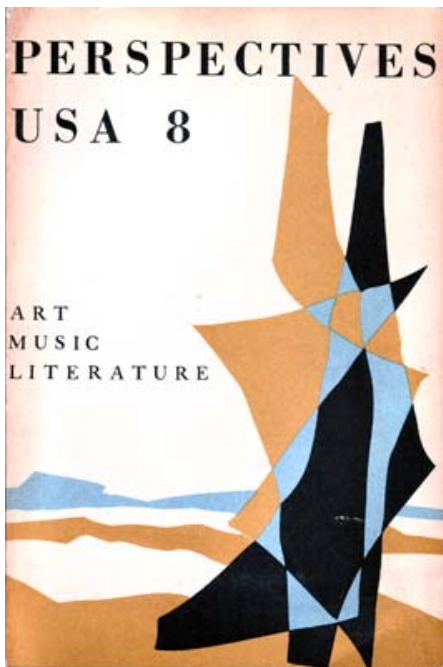


Figure 4.3. *Perspectives USA*, No. 8 (Summer 1954) was the last issue to feature the words “art music literature” on the cover.

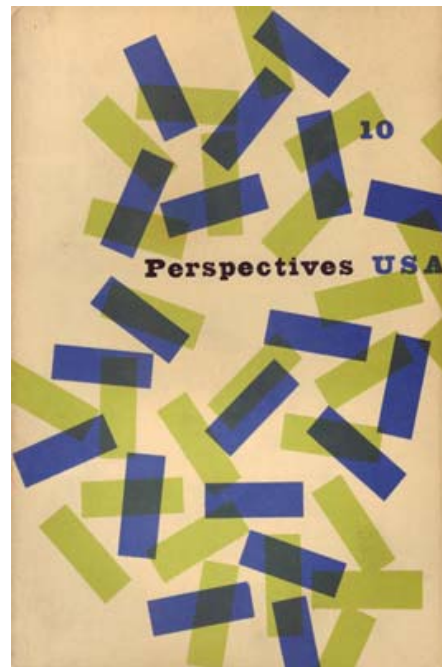


Figure 4.4 The cover for *Perspectives USA*, No. 10 (Winter 1955). It featured an abstract design but the magazine’s title was the only text. The change Reflected the magazine’s more generalist turn.

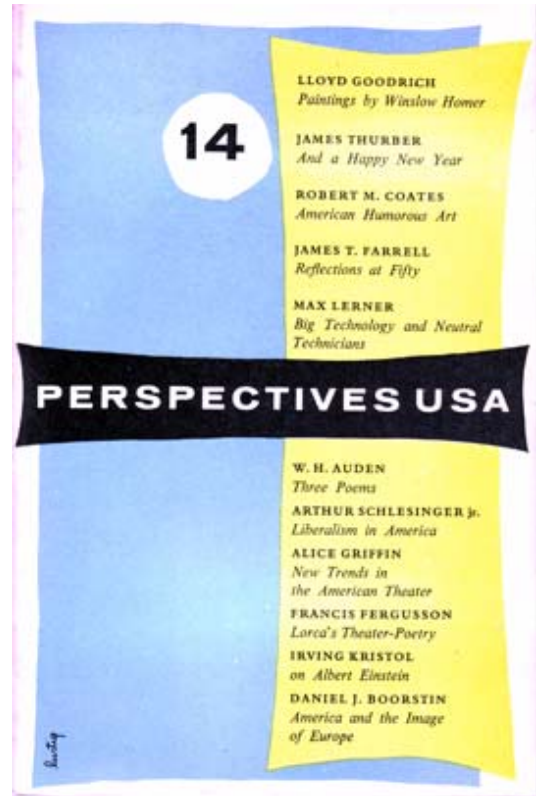
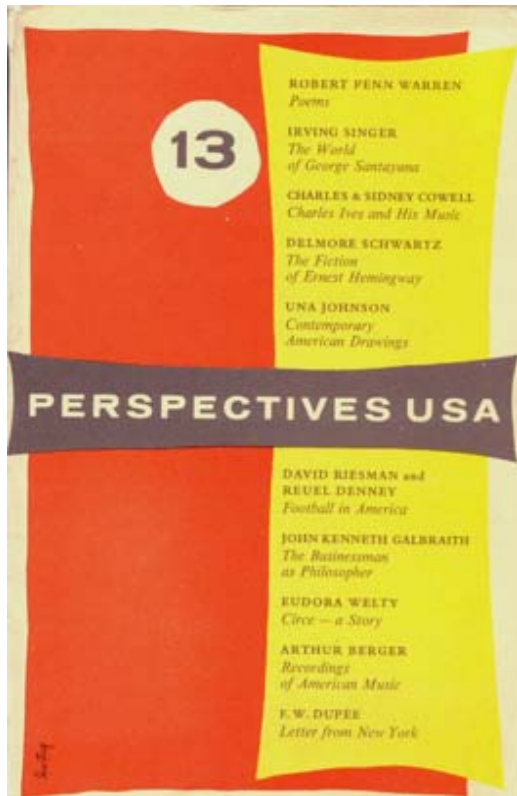


Figure 4.5 The covers of *Perspectives USA*, No. 13 and 14. Beginning with No. 13, *Perspectives USA* used a more conventional cover design that listed the issue's contents. The color scheme varied from one issue to the next, but the design scheme remained the same.

Conclusion: Modernist Redux

I close *Writing Communities* with a seemingly inconspicuous exchange between two poet-publishers, yet one that nonetheless turns on the concerns that have directed my investigations throughout this project. In June of 1947, Eugene Jolas sent James Laughlin a transatlantic cable:

=AIRMAILING MANUSCRIT [sic] TWELVE PAGES QUOTE ATLANTICA
UNQUOTE FOR SPEARHEAD STOP AM NEWJERSEY BORN AMERICAN
CITIZEN AND PROUD OF IT STOP BEST WISHES = JOLAS¹

The one-time *transition* editor mailed a lengthier explanation the next day. “I was rather disquiet about the fact that even you should not know that I was a native-born American citizen,” Jolas laments as he delineates his American credentials, “The technical facts are as follows: I was born in Union City, N.J., en face des gratteciels de New York. Unfortunately my parents returned to Europe when I was 2 years old and so I did not see America again until I was 16 years old.”² Jolas’s remarks and the situation that occasions them recall for us the shifting (inter)national currents and codifying impulses that characterize late modernism.

The confusion surrounding Jolas’s citizenship highlights how the cosmopolitanism of modernist communities offers a nexus of associations that by turns reifies and transcends the nation. In Jolas’s case, his longtime residence in France, his trilingual (German, French, English) upbringing in Lorraine, and his championing of an internationalist, multilingual aesthetic in *transition* combine to overshadow his American birth. As Jolas’s chagrined “even you” suggests, Laughlin was far from the first of his literary peers to overlook his New World provenance.

¹ Eugene Jolas to James Laughlin. June 13, 1947, Eugène Jolas Correspondence Folder, Records, New Directions Publishing Corp., Houghton Library, Harvard University. It is worth noting that these ambiguities of identity are reflected in how Jolas’s correspondence folder is labeled in the New Directions Publishing Corp. archive. There he is recorded as “Eugène” with a French *accent grave*. The appearance and disappearance of this accent in Jolas’s name offers a concrete emblem of his national and linguistic mutability.

² Eugene Jolas to James Laughlin. June 14, 1947, Eugène Jolas Correspondence Folder, Records, New Directions Publishing Corp., Houghton Library, Harvard University.

This said, Jolas's remarks speak to more than just the sometimes murky status of the nation in modernism's cosmopolitan circles; they also hint at the ways in which the ties of national aesthetic community could be (and often were) strategically adopted or discarded in response to different contexts. In this fashion, we might read Jolas's impatience to ally himself with American experimental writers as symptomatic of a post World War II re-centering of aesthetic energy and allegiance—a phenomenon, for example, that I have shown at work in *Perspectives USA's* invocation of modernism in its Cold War performance of American aesthetic and intellectual communities. However, Jolas's remarks should also be read in relation to yet another phenomenon: the late modernist practices of literary consolidation that lie at the core of my project. There is little question that Jolas's eagerness to clarify his citizenship stems as much from his desire to be represented in the *Spearhead* anthology as it does from any patriotic sentiment. The New Directions collection promised, as its subtitle announces, a distillation of "10 years' Experimental Writing in America." Accordingly, it afforded Jolas the opportunity to advance his literary reputation and solidify his ties to and relative position within the communities of the American avant-garde, that is, to take his place in what a promotional ad touted as "literary history in the making."³

In short, in Jolas's comments we see the potent convergence of the communal and consolidating concerns so fundamental to many late modernist ventures. By juxtaposing chapters on the genre of modernist memoir, the later writings of William Carlos Williams, New Directions press, and *Perspectives USA*, this dissertation has sought to illustrate how late modernism served as a vital site for the contestation and codification of the aesthetic and political legacies—both past and contemporaneous—of modernist communities. As writers, publishers, and patrons confronted the socio-political exigencies of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s on the one hand, and their mounting sense of modernism's historicity on the other, they turned to a variety of discursive and representational strategies to revise concepts central to early twentieth century aesthetic production. Employing an analytic that draws on both text and context, this dissertation has traced how issues like the

³ *Spearhead* Advertisement, *The Nation* 165, no. 21 (Nov. 29, 1947): 593.

imbrication of the literary in commodity culture, the relation of the aesthetic to the quotidian, the notion of the “New,” the (inter)nationalization of art, and the political function imagined for literature were recast as a result of, in resistance to, and on behalf of modernism’s transition from a movement critical of mainstream culture to one increasingly located within it.

In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Stein’s “Alice” describes her early years in Paris as being “like a kaleidoscope slowly turning.”⁴ Not only does this simile capture the revolving composition of the groups that assembled at Stein’s salon, but it also proffers an apt figure for the overlapping communal constructions and reconstructions that characterize late modernism. In place of viewing the 1930s as a terminus for modernism, I have argued that we might more productively re-envision these years as ushering in a period of sustained recalibration in which new, though not always optimistic, articulations of modernism emerged (and, in fact, continue to emerge) in conversation with shifting aesthetic and political currents.

To explore community is to recognize how much any nexus of affiliation is the product of constant rearticulation by a variety of individual, collective, and institutional acts of imagining. One of this study’s most important “imagers” has been James Laughlin. As founder and editor of *New Directions*, he evolved a publication program that guarded the communities of experimental writing against cultural obsolescence by redrawing the temporal, political, and (inter)national dimensions of the modernist ‘New.’ As editor of *Perspectives USA*, Laughlin attempted to mobilize modernism’s status as an intellectual *lingua franca* in order to advance American national interests in the cultural Cold War. In executing these enterprises, Laughlin embodies the complex conjunction of institutional and anti-institutional impulses animating late modernism. Accordingly, this project seeks to recover and resituate his pivotal influence on modernist literary consolidation.

Despite his centrality to late modernist literary community, the translation of modern literatures into English, and the promotion of postwar experimental writing from John Hawkes to Susan Howe, Laughlin has received little sustained scholarly consideration, save for the work of Greg

⁴ Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933; New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 89.

Barnhisel. His belated entrance on the modernist stage and his role primarily as a facilitator, rather than a creator, of modern literature have contributed to this neglect. Some might argue that in redirecting our critical attention to James Laughlin and to sites of late modernist community and consolidation my project asks us to work at one order of remove from literature itself. It has, however, been an objective of this dissertation to expose the false dichotomy underpinning this type of critique. What I identified at the outset as late modernism's ethnographic turn is in fact a phenomenon contiguous to the aesthetic experiments of early twentieth century literary production. That is to say, these ethnographic projects constitute an extension of modernism's famed self-reflexivity. John Fletcher and Malcolm Bradbury's early essay, "The Introverted Novel," argues that modernist fiction is characterized by "an internal crisis of presentation" that results in, among other things, "a penchant for forms which, by turning in upon themselves, show the process of the novel's making and dramatize the means by which the narration is itself achieved."⁵ I would suggest that an analogous phenomenon transpires in late modernism. Here, however, the self-reflexive inward turn exposes not the only the process of composition, but also the processes by which modernism itself, as a literary construct, is fashioned. It is perhaps fitting then that Gertrude Stein, whose experiments with repetition and syntax thematized the writer's manipulation of language, was again at the forefront of this second inward turn with the publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in 1933.

My investigations have shown that to write about late modernist literary community is to write also, perhaps even primarily, about late modernist literary consolidation. If this project began with an attempt to reframe how community might be appropriated as a fruitful category of inquiry,

⁵ John Fletcher and Malcolm Bradbury, "The Introverted Novel" in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (1976; London: Penguin Books, 1991), 395. Without accepting the arguments of Fletcher and Bradbury's essay wholesale, I would like to adopt elements of the schema they use to distinguish between earlier instances of novelistic introversion (such as those found in *Tristram Shandy*) and those of modernism. They suggest that while the earlier devices tend to "draw attention to the autonomy of the narrator," modernist techniques "drew attention to the autonomy of the fictive structure itself" (395-6). I would like to suggest that late modernism brings about an analogous resetting of the frame, drawing attention not simply to the constructed status of the modernist text, but to that of modernism itself.

then it ends with a call for critics to attend more closely to the range of activities that inform literary consolidation. One of the challenges in writing this study has been to develop a conceptual lexicon for discussing these allied but varyingly manifested consolidating practices. That is, methodologically, *Writing Communities* asks how we might develop an epistemological and semantic tool kit that permits us to put into conversation the constitutions of community that an individual writer like William Carlos Williams undertakes in *Paterson* and in his *Autobiography* with those animating a collaborative venture like the magazine *Perspectives USA*. My provisional solution has been to speak of *sites for the constitution of community* and the *mechanisms of literary consolidation*. Still, part of what this dissertation has identified is the need for modernist studies (in particular) and literary studies (in general) to develop a set of terms flexible enough to accommodate the diverse processes through which the codification of literary communities transpires, yet also cohesive and evocative enough to capture the important continuities between what might, from another perspective, look like disparate projects. Over the past ten years, studies such as Lawrence Rainey's *Institutions of Modernism* and Aaron Jaffe's *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* have drawn much needed scholarly attention to the conscious interventions of writers, publishers, editors, and patrons into cultivating the reception of modernist literature. However, the conceptual framework for analyzing the intersection and interaction of different practices of consolidation is still in its nascent stage. It is this framework that I now urge us to develop, not simply because doing so would help demystify how literary paradigms and canons take hold, but also, and more importantly, because doing so highlights the ways in which acts of aesthetic creation are intimately interwoven with the acts of contextualization that render them legible.

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