

RE-CASTING THE MIDWIVES OF MODERNISM:  
AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF AMERICAN EXPATRIATE WOMEN  
PUBLISHERS AND EDITORS.

By

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RE-CASTING THE MIDWIVES OF MODERNISM

## Abstract

The expatriate literary community in interwar Paris included a number of women whose private presses and little magazines stimulated the creation of experimental literature by printing works certain to be rejected by mainstream publishing houses. These publishers and editors have traditionally been cast as the midwives of modernism. Literary histories relegate them to traditional female roles — or ignore them altogether. Feminist scholarship has recently begun to uncover the full extent of the women's influence; however, the body of self-representational literature they produced continues to be neglected or misread. This thesis examines Sylvia Beach's *Shakespeare and Company*, Caresse Crosby's *The Passionate Years*, and Margaret Anderson's *My Thirty Years' War*.

Conscious that her adoption of an autobiographical voice breaches cultural scripts of self-effacing womanhood, Sylvia Beach downplays her role as bookseller, librarian and publisher to foreground instead a more conventional, maternal role. Details of her literary labours, particularly those arising from her publication of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, are selectively interspersed amidst accounts of personal favours performed for her clientele. Invoking a domestic discourse to represent Shakespeare

and Company, Beach disguises her bid to establish the bookstore as a landmark of modernism.

Like Beach, Caresse Crosby revises standard (male) histories of expatriate Paris by situating her autobiography within a domestic realm and not the public space of Left Bank cafés. *The Passionate Years* highlights Crosby's status as a glittering society hostess whose parties attract international attention. The depiction of her social preeminence comprehends claims of her artistic influence: Crosby's guests at her Moulin de Soleil include writers and artists whose works she published at her Black Sun Press.

Margaret Anderson too collapses the distinction between home and workplace. *My Thirty Years' War* depicts how she edits the *Little Review* at her kitchen table; furthermore, her journal and domestic space are upheld as equally valid vehicles of creative self-expression. Anderson's credo of "life-as-an-art" encapsulates the integration of everyday life and artistic concerns common to all three autobiographies: an integration which mutes the authors' claims of literary authority but also, more fundamentally, reflects their experiences as women. These autobiographers, then, challenge androcentric models of modernist autonomy as they reposition themselves as the mothers, not midwives, of modernism.

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For my parents,  
with love and gratitude

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## Chapter 1

### Literary Midwifery, Motherhood and Modernism:

#### The Women Editors and Publishers of Interwar Paris

As remarkable as it may seem, in those years in Montparnasse it was the women among us who shaped and directed and nourished the social and artistic and literary life of the young (under thirty) and vibrant Anglo-American art colony. Without them, the colony would have had neither the historical richness nor the cultural significance that has made it for years such an absorbing subject. Resourceful, vital, resolute, and blessed with immense talent, the women left their mark on all they encountered. (Cody, *The Women of Montparnasse* 11)

For over half a century the “women of Montparnasse” have captured the popular and scholarly imagination. Sylvia Beach’s generosity, Gertrude Stein’s arrogance, and Natalie Barney’s Sapphic gatherings are represented alongside Hemingway’s machismo and Fitzgerald’s excesses in countless recreations of expatriate Paris. Literary histories proffer appraisals of the women’s contributions to modernism, appraisals all too often influenced by enduring legends and androcentric biases. Most recently, feminist theorists have begun to direct serious critical inquiry towards long-overlooked women modernists, thereby profoundly reconfiguring the contours of the entire movement. Throughout six decades of scholarly and not-so-scholarly

investigation, however, too little attention has been paid to the women's *own* constructions of their lives and work. This thesis examines the neglected autobiographies of Sylvia Beach, Caresse Crosby, and Margaret Anderson, three of the most influential — and mythologized — of the era's editors and publishers.

## II

In *The Heart to Artemis*, the English writer and editor Bryher recounts the energy that permeated Left Bank artistic circles during the early 1920s. It was, she writes,

the moment of glory for little reviews. Printing was cheap, whoever had fifty dollars or its equivalent started a magazine for himself and one or two carefully selected friends. Funds failed or there was the inevitable quarrel and the paper died. I pulled a pile of them out of a cupboard a few weeks ago. They were full of misprints, the covers were faded, but the contents blazed with vitality. There were the now famous names besides those of whom nothing more was heard. (205)

The little magazines Bryher describes, like the private presses which proliferated almost as rapidly during those pre-Depression years, acquired an artistic importance which belied their often ignominious births and premature deaths. Providing a forum for works rejected, or likely to be rejected, by mainstream publishing houses, these magazines and presses were instrumental in stimulating the production of experimental literature. Harriet Monroe's account of the inception of her *Poetry* journal in Chicago in 1912 exemplifies the spirit of revolt that motivated these

pioneering publishers:

For years it had become increasingly evident that the present-day poets needed stirring up. Most of them were doing the same old thing in the same old academic way ... The well of American poetry seemed to be thinning out and drying up, and the worst of it was that nobody seemed to care. It was this indifference that I started out to combat, this dry conservatism that I wished to refresh with living waters from a new spring. (*A Poet's Life* 249–50)

Harriet Monroe and her counterparts throughout the United States and Europe did more than refresh the “well of American poetry”: they altered the very landscape of modernist literature. Hoffman, Allan and Ulrich estimate that little magazines like *Poetry* were the first publishers of approximately eighty percent of the most important post-1912 writers and critics, including Hemingway, H.D., William Carlos Williams, and Marianne Moore. Additionally, these magazines “introduced and sponsored every noteworthy literary movement or school” that appeared in America during the early decades of the century (Hoffman *et al* 1–2). Because the “two-way traffic between literary periodicals and book publishing” was far more common at the time than today, appearances in the little magazines frequently led to subsequent publication in book form (Hanscombe and Smyers 199). Sections of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, for instance, were serialized by Harriet Weaver’s *Egoist* and Margaret Anderson’s *Little Review* prior to Sylvia Beach’s publication of the novel in its entirety in 1922. Accounts of early responses to Joyce’s masterpiece vividly remind us how far the little magazines and private presses challenged literary

convention in their promotion of the new writing. In *My Thirty Years' War*, Anderson describes how she and co-editor Jane Heap were inundated with a flood of "the most insulting, the most offensive, the most vulgar letters telling us exactly what the public thought of James Joyce" (212). Sylvia Beach recounts flocks of writers descending upon her little bookshop with manuscripts of erotica; among those she declined to publish were Frank Harris' *My Lives and Loves* and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

If private presses such as Beach's Shakespeare and Company offered would-be authors at least the possibility of publication, these presses "did more than operate as welcome outlets for unwanted books" (Ford, "Forward" vii-viii). Equally important, "the fact of their existence symbolized the protest of a whole contingent of writers who opposed what they considered the overcommercialization of the established publishing houses." The presses shared with the little magazines a commitment to quality which overrode financial concerns; like the journals, they were "noncommercial by intent, for their altruistic ideal usually rule[d] out the hope of financial profit" (Hoffman *et al* 2).<sup>1</sup> As Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace remark, "the 'consecration' of avant-garde art depends to an enormous degree on its apparent

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<sup>1</sup>This altruistic impulse is exemplified by Harriet Monroe's remarks in a notice circulated to announce *Poetry's* inauguration: "this magazine is not intended as a money-maker but as a public-spirited effort to gather together and enlarge the poet's public and to increase his earnings" (qtd. Monroe, *A Poet's Life* 252).

disinterestedness, its *distance* from a profit motive” (126).<sup>2</sup> The tension between artistic integrity and what a character in Hemingway’s memoir of expatriate Paris delicately terms “the problem of sustenance” (*A Moveable Feast* 106) is subtly expressed in Beach’s *Shakespeare and Company*. When Beach, whose efforts on Joyce’s behalf repeatedly bring her to the brink of personal as well as professional

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<sup>2</sup> Because of the confusion which frequently issues from usage of the words “modernist” and “avant-garde,” a brief discussion of these terms may be of value here. Many scholars, including Peter Bürger as well as Elliott and Wallace, employ “avant-garde” to refer to the artistic experimentation of a specific historical period; however, Susan Suleiman broadly defines the term to encompass the innovations of modernism and postmodernism in addition to those of the historical avant-garde. Other theorists conflate distinct categories: Bürger notes that Renato Poggioli typifies the Anglo-American tradition “in his tendency to equate modernism and the avant-garde — and to subsume both under the label “modernism”(xiv). Frederick Karl voices a popular perception when he asserts that “the *avant-garde* is out front” on the cutting edge of modernism; eventually, he argues, the avant-garde becomes “corrupted and assimilated” into something more familiar, at which point it ceases to warrant the label (3). Astradur Eysteinnsson, on the other hand, “upholds a dynamic reciprocity” between the concepts of avant-garde and modernism (4). He points out that “[t]he weakness of the split between them becomes apparent when we wish to bring them, as theoretical constructs, to bear upon the products of writers who do not easily fit into either one,” for example, e.e. cummings and Gertrude Stein (147).

While debate over the relationship between the two terms continues, theorists generally agree that the avant-garde challenged what it regarded as the polarization of life and art advocated by high modernism. To quote Bürger, “[t]he avant-gardistes view its dissociation from the praxis of life as the dominant characteristic of art in bourgeois society” (49). Suleiman points out that another important difference between modernism and contemporaneous avant-garde groups was the degree of female participation. While women played an important role in modernism — as we shall see, their effacement came only with the mid-century erection of the modernist canon — women writers were from the beginning excluded from the avant-garde (28). Indeed, “between 1924 and 1933, during the most dynamic and ‘ascendant’ period of the [Surrealist] movement, not a single woman was included as an official member” (Suleiman 29). Nonetheless, women made vital contributions to the avant-garde in other ways. For example, Nancy Cunard provided financial support, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap generated publicity through their *Little Review*, and Caresse Crosby published avant-garde work at her Black Sun Press.

bankruptcy, learns that *Calendar* will publish *Finnegan's Wake* only without a passage which printers refuse to set on grounds of its alleged obscenity, she is obliged to report "very reluctantly" to its editor that Joyce "could not discuss any alteration of his text" (169). In *My Thirty Years' War*, Margaret Anderson expresses the tension between professional ethics and personal survival in different terms. "As the *Little Review* became more articulate, more interesting," she writes, "its subscription list became less impressive. It is much easier to find a public for ideals than for ideas. The subscriptions dwindled during the whole of the L.R.'s best period." The result: "From this time (1917) until 1923 there was almost never a week when the morning coffee was assured" (146).<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the commitment to quality and disregard for

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<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in the autobiography, Anderson exhibits an uncharacteristic bitterness in her condemnation of the commercialization of mainstream publishing. She describes an encounter with F. Scott Fitzgerald during which she reports to the young writer the contents of the forthcoming inaugural issue of *Little Review*. Anderson writes, "Scott regretted with blushes that his stuff was too popular to be solicited by a magazine of the new prose. When I next saw him two years later he was still blushing because he was receiving checks from *Harper's Bazaar*, while good writers like Djuna Barnes had to give their stories to the *Little Review* for nothing" (43-44). Immediately afterwards, she refutes Gertrude Stein's claim that it is not "good principle" for the *Little Review* not to pay its contributors:

Well, neither do I consider it good principle for the artist to remain unpaid — it's a little better than for him to remain unprinted, that's all. Practically everything the *Little Review* published during its first years was material that would have been accepted by no other magazine in the world at the moment. Later all the art magazines wanted to print our contributors and, besides, pay them ... If they [contributors] had something we especially wanted they gave it to us before the *Dial* was permitted to see it — and pay. The best European writers and painters did the same. (44-45)

Compare this passage with Harriet Monroe's vehement exposition of *Poetry's* insistence upon paying

profit which characterized these small literary enterprises exacted considerable personal sacrifice from their founders.

As the preceding pages suggest, those founders included a substantial number of women. Many of the women editors and publishers spent part or all of their professional lives in Paris, for a number of reasons which we shall examine shortly. Sylvia Beach's bookstore, home to seven successive editions of *Ulysses*, was a fixture on the Left Bank for two decades. Not far off, Caresse Crosby and — for the first few years — her husband Harry produced exquisitely bound books at the Black Sun Press, the longest lived and most prolific of the private presses. Margaret Anderson and co-editor Jane Heap brought the *Little Review* to the French capital for two years at the height of the American invasion: here, as in the States, the review was alternately celebrated and reviled for “[i]ts irreverent tone, its eclectic selections, and the idiosyncratic opinions of its editors” (Marek 101). One of the Black Sun's chief rivals for prolificacy and workmanship was Nancy Cunard's Hours Press, which published twenty-four books between 1928 and 1931. Cunard's repudiation of her ultra-conservative and monied heritage — her grandfather was the founder of the shipping company — was exemplified by her cultivation of close personal and professional ties with Surrealist leaders. Other modernist women followed the Crosbys in launching small presses initially as a means of seeing their own writing its contributors in *A Poet's Life*, page 363.

into print. Faced with ongoing rejection from established publishers, Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas finally began releasing the former's works under the Plain Editions imprint. Later, Anaïs Nin's Siana Editions released her *House of Incest*; the operation was eventually co-opted by a small group of men, Henry Miller among them, who were primarily interested in using it as a publication vehicle for their own literary output.

Other women were present as more tangential, though no less crucial, players in the publishing world of interwar Paris. Kay Boyle aided Ernest Walsh with the editing of *This Quarter* — a journal co-founded and financed by the Scottish woman Ethel Moorhead — and similarly assisted Eugene Jolas with *transition*. (Maria Jolas, his wife, acted as typist, copy editor, and business manager for *transition*, and also translated French and German texts.) Barbara Harrison financed the Harrison press, which operated under the supervision of Monroe Wheeler. Bryher, born Winifred Ellerman, provided Robert McAlmon's Contact Editions with money and important connections and contributed financial support and editorial assistance to Harriet Weaver's Egoist Press in London. Later, she launched the film journal *Close Up*, founded a publishing house, and bought and supported the journal *Life and Letters Today*.

While Paris was the undisputed centre of artistic innovation at this time, women

were active elsewhere as well. Weaver established the Egoist Press in an attempt to publish *Ulysses* in England — her *Egoist* journal had previously serialized *Portrait of the Artist* — and though the attempt failed, the press went on to publish works by the likes of Marianne Moore, H.D. and Robert McAlmon. It was in London too that Virginia Woolf operated The Hogarth Press with her husband, Leonard. As in the cases of Stein and Nin, Woolf's press “gave her full control over the production and distribution of her work [and] enabled her to experiment freely in her creative and polemical writing” (Elliott and Wallace 18). In addition to Woolf's own work, Hogarth published that of T.S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, E.M. Forster, and Gertrude Stein, and issued new translations of work by Rilke, Chekhov and Freud. Last but not least were the women editors on the other side of the Atlantic. For over a decade Harriet Monroe issued her *Poetry* journal from Chicago, the birthplace as well of Anderson's *Little Review*.

Through their determination to provide an outlet for the forms being introduced during the early twentieth century, the women whose names comprise this international list stimulated the artistic experimentation we have come to identify with modernism. It has been observed that no circle of writers since the sixteenth century depended more heavily upon private patronage than did the modernists, and that during both eras a set of powerful women played a key role in subsidizing and/or

publicizing the literature produced (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land* 1: 147). Even Robert McAlmon, not generally known for chivalrous pronouncements, gruffly remarked in his memoir that it was “some kind of commentary” on his time that James Joyce’s publishers were women, not men (74). The tremendous influence wielded by the modernist women is underscored by the web of professional connections which bound them together. This web is imaged most vividly, perhaps, in the operations of Beach’s little bookshop on the rue de l’Odéon. On any given day, the windows of Shakespeare and Company might display the most recent publications of Crosby’s Black Sun Press alongside those of Nancy Cunard’s Hours Press and Stein’s Plain Editions. Inside, the visitor could browse through the latest issue of *Poetry* or share Anderson’s newest literary discovery in the *Little Review*.<sup>4</sup>

The commitment of this network of women to artistic experimentalism finds an analogue in their exploration of non-traditional lifestyles. As Jayne Marek observes, many “enacted [modernism’s] most radical tenets” in their personal lives as they did in their work (27). The discontinuity between literary history and the “new” art posited by modernist doctrine is loosely mirrored in the renunciation of family

<sup>4</sup> Numerous other examples of interconnections between these women exist, some of which were mentioned earlier in the chapter. In many cases, the women developed close personal as well as professional relationships. For instance, Crosby, who like Beach published selections of Joyce’s work, retained in her records business letters exchanged between herself and the proprietor of Shakespeare and Company; present too is a telegram in which Beach warmly offers her condolences following Harry Crosby’s death. (“Love and deepest sympathy.” Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 31, Folder 8. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.)

histories common to many of these women. Most came from the sort of conservative, comfortably middle-class background that Anderson derisively describes in *My Thirty Years' War* as a “magazine-cover existence” (73). Some, notably Cunard and Bryher, were born into enormous wealth, and Crosby married into it. For all, the initiation into artistic spheres — and the all-too-often concomitant initiation into financial hardship — constituted a considerable departure from their early lives. And for many of the women, that departure ultimately expressed itself in a Paris arrival.

### III

In an unpublished segment of *Shakespeare and Company*, Sylvia Beach outlines her reasons for leaving her native Princeton. There, she writes, “we had censorship, and we resented interference with what we read, thought Dreiser harmless, Cabbell baby-food, and liked Joyce. So there was nothing to do but to emigrate.”<sup>5</sup> In aligning the French capital with untrammelled artistic expression, Beach voices sentiments shared by many of her compatriots during the early part of the century. Kay Boyle’s comment in *Being Geniuses Together* highlights the contrasting climates of the two cultures. “Publishers in America had no interest in our work,” she writes. “Even Joyce and Gertrude Stein had to rely on the small presses of Paris for their

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<sup>5</sup> Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 167, Folder 4. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.

revolutionary writing” (336).

Thus, the artistic liberation Paris promised drew the modernist women to the city as it did their male counterparts. It is important to recognize, however, that the women’s reasons for, and experiences of, expatriation deviated in important ways from the androcentric models presented in numerous histories of the era.<sup>6</sup> The women who migrated to Paris during the interwar period did so largely as a way of escaping the narrowly circumscribed gender roles which still shaped American culture. In particular, many of these women felt oppressed by the institution of family, “especially as it polarized (and paralyzed) the masculine and feminine. For these women the flight to freedom often meant a flight from the implicit expectation of marriage and motherhood; very often it meant a journey toward a sexual orientation other than heterosexual” (Benstock, “Expatriate Modernism” 23). At least on the surface, the Paris expatriate colony — as a “place on the margins of American life” (Morse 17) — offered the women refuge from unwelcome restrictions imposed upon them in their homeland. Moreover, because American women remained always marginal to French culture, they were not expected to adhere to its restraints

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<sup>6</sup> Shari Benstock summarizes the three major historical factors typically cited as the cause for American expatriation thus: “the crisis of faith in social values that was a primary effect of World War I; the reinforcement of powerful puritanic values in American life following the war (Prohibition, renewed religious fervour, and cultural bankruptcy that wrote itself in isolationism and provincialism); and the economic advantages offered by countries whose currency had been devalued as a result of the war” (“Expatriate Modernism” 21).

(Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 78). It was in a kind of cultural no man's land, then, that the women expatriates conjoined their inquiries into new artistic possibilities with explorations of unconventional models of living.

For a number of the expatriates, as Shari Benstock notes above, non-traditional signified non-heterosexual. From the turn of the century onwards Paris' international reputation as the capital of lesbianism had attracted those drawn by the promise of greater sexual self-determination (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 47). All too often, however, the modernist women found the promised freedom to be illusory. Lesbians did avoid the fate of those heterosexual women — Caresse Crosby to name but one — who became eclipsed by their male partners. Further, “[t]he status of ‘expatriate’ and ‘artist’ allowed women the right to privacy and idiosyncratic dress and behaviour” (Benstock, “Paris Lesbianism” 334). Nonetheless, “in life and art, lesbian choices had to be disguised” (334). Only Natalie Barney, leader of the lesbian community and hostess for many years of a sort of personal and professional support group for lesbians, openly flaunted her sexuality and promiscuity. Barney devoted her life to revising the images of disease and perversion associated with lesbianism by the heterosexual community and, often, by the lesbians themselves (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 10).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Lillian Faderman cites Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier, Margaret Anderson and Georgette Leblanc, and H.D. and Bryher as “women who generally gave little credence to the absurd images of what lesbians were supposed to be, and made their own lives” (*Surpassing the Love of Men* 373). The

One can conclude then, as Patricia Morse does, that while the status of those expatriates marginalized by gender, race, and/or sexuality was sometimes precarious, their lives in Paris were on the whole preferable to those they had left behind (35). Evidence of this lies in the fact that many modernist women remained in Paris long after the reverberations of the Wall Street crash had sent the majority of American men scurrying hurriedly homewards.<sup>8</sup> But while they may have found “fewer restrictions and social pressures” in their adopted country, the women “did not necessarily find greater feminist awareness” on the part of male colleagues (Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 169). Revisionist scholarship by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Shari Benstock and others has drawn attention to modernism’s conservative, reactionary strain, demonstrating how the movement’s ethos worked to reinforce social norms even as it challenged literary convention. As we shall see, many of the same men who invoked the language of revolt to define their artistic project responded with trepidation and even open hostility to the dramatic changes which signalled women’s changing status in society.

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three volumes of Anderson’s autobiography provide an increasingly candid and uncomplicated treatment of her lesbianism. .

<sup>8</sup> Clearly, those women who remained in Europe experienced their expatriation in a very different way than did the men who spent at most a few years in Paris at the height of the Roaring Twenties. As Shari Benstock has noted, “female Modernists were expatriated (if this term is even applicable) differently than their male counterparts” (“Expatriate Modernism” 22). Benstock’s parenthetical waiver is substantiated by comments made by Margaret Anderson, who lived in France until her death in 1973: “I was never an expatriate — the word had no meaning for me. I felt that I had been born in Paris and that I could never, willingly or wonderfully, live anywhere else” (*The Fiery Fountains* 37).

## IV

In the first volume of their exhaustive investigation of twentieth-century women's literature, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar introduce the metaphor of no man's land to describe the zone contested by male and female writers in the "battle of the sexes" which ensued from "women's unprecedented invasion of the public sphere" (*No Man's Land* 1: 4). What emerges from their detailed analysis of this battle is a modernism "constructed not just against the grain of Victorian male precursors, not just in the shadow of a shattered God, but as an integral part of a complex response to *female* precursors and contemporaries" (156). Indeed, Gilbert and Gubar argue that it is "possible to hypothesize that a reaction formation against the rise of literary women became not just a theme in modernist writing but a motive for modernism" (156). This reaction was triggered in part by uneasiness over women's expanding role in literary production but also, as importantly, by men's discomfort at finding themselves economically dependent upon female colleagues (147). That final point finds substantiation in Noel Riley Fitch's comments regarding James Joyce's attitude towards the long list of women who assisted him in his career. Fitch reports that Joyce's protracted dependence on these women combined with financial pressures and health concerns to generate "frequent tirades" against the female sex. She

describes one outburst in which he declared, “I hate women who know anything,” and quotes a verse he wrote immediately afterwards that incident about “‘poor Joyce Saint James’ and seven ‘extravagant dames’ with bees in their bonnets and bats in their belfries” (*Sylvia Beach* 309). Misgivings over female economic clout similarly underlie Wyndham Lewis’ unwarranted accusation that Sylvia Beach possessed “a monopoly of the English bookselling trade in Paris” (qtd. Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 247).

Male modernists expressed anxiety over changing gender relations in both their art and daily lives. On paper and canvas, they commonly represented women as passive and violated or, alternatively, as the aggressive predators of emasculated men (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s Land* 1: 35–43).<sup>9</sup> Strategies deployed to defuse anxiety over working relationships with female colleagues included

mythologizing women to align them with dread prototypes; fictionalizing them to dramatize their destructive influence; slandering them in essays, memoirs and poems; prescribing alternative ambitions for them; appropriating their words in order to usurp or trivialize their language; and ignoring or evading their achievements in critical texts. (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s Land* 1: 149)

Many of the prejudicial attitudes encountered by female modernists were ones which continue to plague professional women today. Then, as now, there was a tendency to regard women’s careers as mere diversions, experimental flights from

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<sup>9</sup> Pamelyn Nance Dane points to the contrast between the representations of women in, for example, T.S. Eliot’s poem *The Wasteland* or Alberto Giacometti’s sculpture *Women with her Throat Cut* and in the autobiographies of modernist women (48).

boredom or unfulfilling domesticity. Shari Benstock refers to the “underlying assumption that women of a certain social class and economic background discovered in the expatriate experience a means of open rebellion against their families and a method of killing time” (*Women of the Left Bank* 393). Furthermore, women who “assert[ed] themselves, or who openly flaunted male expectations” were regarded as “intimidating, pushy, or ‘flighty’” (Marek 25). The best known example is of course Gertrude Stein, whose status in artistic circles was a highly problematic one:

Considered the *doyenne* of literary Paris, Stein was a formidable presence in the expatriate community. But she was also a laughingstock, the butt of jokes that mocked her looks, her lifestyle, her relationships with her brother and with Alice B. Toklas, even her art collection; the term *doyenne*, one suspects, was as often applied in disparagement as in praise. (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 20)

Rather than risk such derision, some women — Sylvia Beach, for example — seemingly effaced their own ambitions to devote their efforts instead to the careers of men around them. In fact, as Jane Marek points out, this self-silencing enabled the women to pursue their own aspirations without attracting criticism (24, 27).

The patriarchal biases which frequently influenced male modernists’ interactions with female colleagues are exemplified by the behaviour of Ezra Pound. As one of the primary proponents of the new literature, Pound worked closely with many of the little magazines and private presses in England, America and Paris. So central have his contributions been deemed to the evolution of modernism that his name has

been permanently affixed to the movement: Hugh Kenner entitled his influential history *The Pound Era*.

Recent scholarship has demonstrated, however, that Pound's actions were motivated as much by a quest for personal aggrandizement as by artistic interest. Relations with women publishers and editors in particular were frequently marred by his domineering manner and arrogance. Ronald Bush acknowledges Pound's efforts on behalf of a number of female modernists, but notes that "there is no question that his work flaunted machismo, and that he frequently characterized both modernist style and culture itself as masculine achievements" (354). Worse, Bush adds, "there is something genuine in the argument that Pound's energetic sponsorship of women was one more expression of his will to power." Shari Benstock and Jayne Marek, among others, have examined in detail Pound's attempts to usurp various literary enterprises from the women who operated them.<sup>10</sup> These scholars document how, following his appointment as "European" or "foreign" editor at *Poetry*, the *Little Review* and the *Egoist*, Pound "quickly moved to change or solidify the literary directions of these publications" (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 22). Furthermore, Marek observes, "even as he depended on some [women] to provide outlets for his literary promotions, he fought with them and derided their tastes and

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<sup>10</sup> See Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank* and chapter six of Marek's dissertation about the women editors of little magazines.

accomplishments with language that is noticeably gender-inflected” (23).<sup>11</sup> The record of Pound’s relations with literary women speaks volumes. Between 1916 and 1923, Pound broke with Amy Lowell, Harriet Monroe, Harriet Weaver, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap “presumably for the same reason — they all lacked literary judgement. Rather, they did not always agree with his literary judgement” (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 363).

Pound’s opinions, so central to modernist thought, have coloured our perceptions of these and other women. In addition, scholarly analysis has frequently credited him with the successes of the women-run magazines, and sought, for instance, to tie Pound’s withdrawal from the *Little Review* to a deterioration in that journal’s standards. Most telling of all, perhaps, is the fact that while Pound’s promotion of new writers has been deemed integral to the development of modernism, the women editors and publishers who performed services very similar to his have been persistently overlooked (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 21). In some cases, they have been entirely effaced from the historical canvas, as this passage from the influential *The Little Magazines: A History and Bibliography* demonstrates:

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<sup>11</sup> Numerous examples exist in Pound’s letters to and about the modernist women. This letter written to Caresse Crosby displays his domineering style: “Anything I could say as a blurb depends wholly and utterly on whether the few books I want to see printed are going to be included ... There it is/very hard not to be made a damn fool of by feminine charm. However; will try to keep my sense of literary values immune” (qtd. Conover, *Fzra Pound and the Crosby Continental Editions* 114). Following Crosby’s receipt of this letter, relations between the two ceased abruptly, though not permanently.

Among the men active in literary protest, a few may be called the patron saints of the modern little magazine movement. They supported with money, encouragement, and contributions dozens of little magazines, and were associated in some capacity or other with nearly every advance guard movement of the past forty years. (44)

Although the passage clearly applies equally to the women editors, their important presence remains unacknowledged. Similarly, Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, another cornerstone of modernist criticism, refers to the *Little Review* on three separate occasions but makes no mention of Margaret Anderson, its founder and editor (Dane 3).

When the women editors and publishers are acknowledged, they rarely receive the respect accorded their male counterparts. Their magazines have typically been read as "vessels" for the "creations" of male writers — an extension of the belief that women's importance rests in 'serving men'" (Marek 13–14). While the men are heralded as "patron saints," the women have typically been cast as the midwives of modernism: nonessential attendants to an inexorable creative process.<sup>12</sup> The recently undertaken task of restoring them to their rightful place in the genealogy of modernism has been intricately bound up with attempts to understand the operations which stripped them of their authority in the first place. Central to this effort has

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<sup>12</sup> Shari Benstock writes, "These women are viewed as the midwives to the birth of Modernism, women who served traditional female roles in aiding this literary *accouchement*" (*Women of the Left Bank* 20). In an article entitled "Publishing in Paris," High Ford describes "a group of women editors and publishers who for a few years in the twenties and thirties made literary midwifery a career" (65).

been the work of Shari Benstock, who argues that “[w]omen’s contributions to the Modernist literary movement have been doubly suppressed by history, either forgotten by the standard literary histories of the time or rendered inconsequential by memoirs and literary biographies” (*Women of the Left Bank* 19).

The names of many of the modernist women will be instantly recognizable to anyone familiar with the plethora of biographical and autobiographical material regarding interwar Paris. They constitute part of “the Crowd,” that list of “background names which authenticates the memoirist’s claim to participation in expatriate modernism” (Elliott and Wallace 123). Indeed, Bridget Elliott’s and Jo-Ann Wallace’s comment that writer Djuna Barnes and painter Nina Hammett “may be more familiar to many of today’s readers as bit players in the modernist pageant than as artists in their own right” (123) applies equally to many of the editors and publishers we have been discussing.

The ubiquitous presence of these women in memoirs and biographies is largely attributable to a phenomenon Elliott and Wallace term the “cult of personality” (38). From the beginning, there was a tendency to “sensationalize the biography of women writers rather than to explore their works with care” (Scott 11). This tendency is evident even in recent, female-authored studies of the modernist women. Anne Conover opens *Caresse Crosby* by describing how Crosby’s “well-rounded

derrière” attracted some two hundred lovers (xi, xii). The blurb on the cover of Anne Chisholm’s biography of Nancy Cunard is worthy of a Harlequin romance: “like a shooting star, she was beautiful, rebellious — and doomed.”<sup>13</sup> Elliott and Wallace remark that the “aestheticizing” of Natalie Barney’s life “seems to have lowered rather than raised the value of [her] creative work, perhaps because this conflation of life and art runs counter to the ‘kind of Platonism’ espoused by modernist critics” (38). Again, the comment can be extended to cover other modernist women as well. It was of course precisely this “aestheticizing” of women’s lives that Gertrude Stein exploited when she wrote the autobiography which would at last garner her writing international attention. To varying degrees, Caresse Crosby, Margaret Anderson and Sylvia Beach similarly exploited the “cult of personality” in their bid to write themselves into modernism. This brings us to the central paradox surrounding the autobiographies. The only way the women could sell — literally and figuratively — their autobiographies to readers and thus generate awareness of their professional achievements was by flaunting their public personae. The above discussion demonstrates, however, that by sustaining the mythology they involuntarily perpetuated the devaluation of those same achievements.

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<sup>13</sup> The sensationalization of Cunard’s life is ironic in light of Merrill Cody’s observation regarding her memoir, *These Were the Hours*: “Always opposed to books that romanticized the period in Paris between the wars, she made sure that the account avoided gossip and sometimes even literary anecdotes” (97).

Modernism has been further “unconsciously gendered masculine” (Scott 2) by standard literary histories, identified by Benstock as the second major factor in the women’s neglect. The authors of these texts rendered modernism monolithic by focusing upon “a small set of its male participants” who were subsequently “quoted, anthologized, taught, and consecrated as geniuses” (Scott 2). There are, for instance, no women among the eight “representative figures” (vii) surveyed in Malcolm Cowley’s *A Second Flowering*, “a fact being that the admired writers of the generation were men in the great majority” (240). Recent scholarship has shown the writers selected by Cowley to be representative of *a* modernism, has taught us that the diversity existing within the movement precludes totalizing statements regarding *the* modernism. Contrary to Cowley’s claim, a substantial number of the most admired writers of the period were women; however, because their work often did not conform to the general model promoted by Cowley and other mid-century scholars, it was excluded from the evolving modernist canon.

A brief analysis of some key tenets underpinning this model demonstrates how the movement’s “disciplinary function” (Elliott and Wallace 15) operated to “selectively [hail] some radical visions as ‘modern’ while completely ignoring others” (165). The twin pillars of impersonality and tradition, grounded in T.S. Eliot’s manifesto “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” bar the way for many female

writers, including those committed to a thoroughly “modern” aesthetic. Women’s literature has typically foregrounded and affirmed personal experience, a subject to which we shall return later in this chapter.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the obvious response to the question, “Would the notion of a tradition mean the same thing to women writers, most of whose literary foremothers consisted of the now disparaged nineteenth-century novelists and poets[?]” (Elliott and Wallace 69) is, well, no.

The emphasis on the 1914–1918 war in conventional studies of modernism has further perpetuated the marginalization of women writers. When Paul Fussell claims, “I am saying that there seems to be one dominating form of modern understanding; that it is essentially ironic; and that it originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War” (35), he overlooks the fact that women modernists experienced those events very differently. His argument carries the implicit assumption that because women were absent from the front lines they can not be certified as “true” modernists — a fact borne out by the exclusion of women writers from his study. Significantly, the literary records of women who did join the war effort were discredited by male critics as the products of a primarily “spectatorial,” as distinct from participatory, role (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 27). In all events, the images of alienation, fragmentation, and angst which

<sup>14</sup> A comment by Andreas Huyssen is also of relevance here: “The male [writer], after all, can easily deny his own subjectivity for the benefit of a higher aesthetic goal, as long as he can take it for granted at an experiential level in everyday life” (46)

are so often invoked to characterize post-war writing — and which form the basis for Fussell's argument for irony — grossly misrepresent much of the literature produced during this period.

A further barrier to women writers has been modernist scholarship's preoccupation with the *logos*. As Shari Benstock points out, “[w]omen's relation to the Word differed from that of men,” not least because “women's educational patterns were radically different from those of men in these years” (“Expatriate Modernism” 23). The linguistic experiments of Joyce, Pound, Eliot et al — their usage of allusion, foreign languages, archaic terminology, and so forth — attest to a level of education far superior to the generally erratic and cursory schooling endured by their female counterparts.<sup>15</sup> While those men all obtained university degrees, Caresse Crosby summarizes her educational history as “[f]our years at Miss Chapin's in New York and a few at finishing schools dotted across Europe,”<sup>16</sup> and Sylvia Beach remarks that a rather Dickensian institution in Lausanne provided her with

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<sup>15</sup> To quote Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar:

the linguistic innovation associated with the avant-garde — the use of puns, allusions, phrases in foreign languages, arcane and fractured forms — functions to occult language so that only an initiated elite can participate in the community of high culture. A few women like Gertrude Stein and Djuna Barnes did intermittently join such a community, but by and large it remained (and may have been unconsciously designed as) a men's club” (*No Man's Land* 1: 156)

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from *Who in the World*, the unpublished sequel to *The Passionate Years* (Caresse Crosby Collection, Box 4, Folder 6, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale).

“the few months of schooling I ever had” (6). Clearly aware that the lack of formal education jeopardizes their literary credibility, a number of modernist women compensate by drawing attention to their self-education. Crosby enthuses in *The Passionate Years* that the “most exciting” event of her life occurred when she taught herself to read and stresses her voracious appetite for books (24). Margaret Anderson — who did attend college, though the experience was intended by her family merely as a prelude to a life dedicated to the “higher joys of country clubs and bridge” (*My Thirty Years’ War* 9) — captures her entire childhood in just two anecdotes, both of which concern writing. Later she repeats a literary editor’s remark that “I had read more than anyone of my age she’d ever known” (17).

Conventional literary histories, then, effaced the multiplicitous facets of modernism by ignoring writings not consonant with certain fundamental tenets. However, over the past decade the combined efforts of “poststructuralists, semioticians, social historians, and theorists of mass culture” have resulted in a reappraisal of conventional models of modernism and of the modernist canon (Benstock, “Expatriate Sapphic Modernism” 184). Exposing the politics veiled by ostensibly apolitical aesthetic principles, scholars have identified the movement’s strategies of exclusion and enriched modernist studies by reintroducing long

forgotten works and writers.<sup>17</sup>

This project of revision and excavation has drawn heavily upon the findings of feminist theorists, some of which have been discussed in the preceding pages. Surveying this scholarship, Elliott and Wallace distinguish between “recuperative” and “synthetic” approaches.<sup>18</sup> The former category includes Shari Benstock’s definitive study of the female expatriates, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris 1900-1940*. In this and more recent work, Benstock contextualizes biographical and literary analysis of individual modernist women with broader discussion of the cultural forces shaping their lives and art. “Recuperative” work describes too Gillian Hanscombe’s and Virginia L. Smyers’ *Writing for their Lives: The Modernist Women, 1910-1940*. By highlighting the personal and professional interrelations among women publishers as well as writers, these authors have “expand[ed] our understanding of ‘modernism’ as a cultural field” (Elliott and Wallace 12).

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<sup>17</sup> “Within the past decade, there has emerged a second generation of ‘modernist’ critics which has been far less interested in sketching in the broad outlines of a modernist movement; instead, they want to expose the diversity *within* ‘modernism’ and to explore ‘modernism’s’ institutional alliances and strategies” (Elliott and Wallace 6).

In a recent conference paper, Susan Stanford Friedman warned that pluralistic approaches to modernism, if wielded carelessly, can result in flawed and reductive constructions of the movement. She noted that reading different modernisms in isolation from each other carries the risk of suppressing connections between them. Furthermore, totalizing categories such as “women modernists” fail to acknowledge the impact of other axes of identity (eg. class, sexuality, race) upon literary creation. Friedman concluded with a call for “interactive,” rather than “segregative,” approaches to modernist studies.

<sup>18</sup> Elliott and Wallace, pages 12 to 14.

*No Man's Land: The Place of the Women Writer in the Twentieth Century*, by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, exemplifies the “synthetic” strain of feminist modernist criticism. This three-volume work explores thematic similarities in literature by and about women to conflate “individual literary narratives” into “one possible metastory” (1: xiv) — unfortunately often obscuring essential differences in the progress. The most recent feminist scholarship has extended investigation of the modernist women into more complex fields of inquiry. Suzanne Clark, we shall see shortly, analyzes women’s responses to high modernism’s repudiation of the “sentimental” discourses historically associated with their sex. Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace provide a richly interdisciplinary view of modernism by examining women artists alongside their literary counterparts.

In summary, then, feminist scholarship has rescued from literary oblivion an entire network of women writers, artists, editors, publishers and others, and alerted us to the political implications of their work. This scholarship has, however, short-changed its efforts to reappraise the women’s complex relationship to modernism by its continued neglect of the self-representational literature they produced. In *Women of the Left Bank*, Shari Benstock observes that “[t]he collective stories of these women map the cracks and divisions of the Modernist façade, exposing the ways in which the individual contributions to this eclectic movement have been effaced in the effort to

render Modernism monolithic" (xi). For reasons we shall examine shortly, the most obvious source of these "stories" — women's life-writing — has remained largely untapped.<sup>19</sup> I intend to apply the insights of the theorists discussed above to the autobiographies of Sylvia Beach, Caresse Crosby and Margaret Anderson, three women whose writing has suffered particular neglect.<sup>20</sup> My choice of these overlooked works was guided in part by Foucauldian feminist Nancy Hartstock's observation that the key to dismantling existing power relations is

to build an account of the world as seen from the margins, an account which

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<sup>19</sup> Besides Beach, Crosby and Anderson, modernist women who wrote autobiographies in English included Bryher, Nancy Cunard and Harriet Monroe. Kay Boyle, editor of Robert McAlmon's *Being Geniuses Together*, alternated his chapters with chapters of her own memoir. Edith Wharton, foremother to the women expatriates, recounted her experiences in *A Backward Glance*. Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* has, of course, been widely studied since its publication in 1933, making it an important exception to the pattern of neglect.

Shari Benstock's disregard for these autobiographies is particularly noteworthy given her germinal work in the field of women's autobiographical theory.

<sup>20</sup> Beach's *Shakespeare and Company* and Crosby's *The Passionate Years* have not been studied at all; Pamelyn Nance Dane's doctoral dissertation examines Anderson's *My Thirty Years' War* in relation to Peggy Guggenheim's *Out of this Century* and *Being Geniuses Together*, by Kay Boyle (with Robert McAlmon).

Shari Benstock has remarked that literature produced by women who "explored more than one artistic world" — she specifically cites the founders of private presses and little magazines — has been especially overlooked by literary historians (*Women of the Left Bank* 387). Benstock suggests that these women were found difficult to classify, "a suggestion perhaps that such diversification signalled indecision, an inability to persevere in a single endeavour, or a lack of genuine talent." Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace offer another explanation for the neglect of women editors' and publishers' writing. They characterize these women as "mediator[s] or liminal figure[s]," as "object[s] of exchange" (151) between two disparate cultures — the "(male) modernist practitioner[s]," isolated from the contaminating influences of commercial transaction, and the reading public (124). The "more 'serious' work" of these female "apologists," they argue, suffered "critical neglect as a result of its association with 'the popular'" (125).

can expose the falseness of the view from the top and can transform the margins as well as the centre. The point is to develop an account of the world which treats [marginal] perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of a different world. (171)

By heeding voices from the margins of modernism, I hope to contribute to the decentring of falsely representative models of the movement and, with luck, leave a few marks on the emerging map of female modernism's "different world."

## V

During the past decade or so, an explosion of interest in self-representational literature has resulted in intensive re-examination of the canonized autobiographies — those of Rousseau, St. Augustine, Benjamin Franklin and so forth — and in an increasingly sophisticated body of theory around life-writing by women, racial minorities, and other traditionally silenced peoples. Absent from this scholarship, however, is the modernist autobiography, a fact noted only recently. Furthermore, as Olav Severijnen points out, most studies of twentieth-century autobiography fail even to probe the reasons for this omission (41).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Folkenflik (p.10) and Olav Severijnen (p.41) comment upon the absence of autobiography from studies of modernism. As mentioned earlier, Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* has been subject to much scholarly attention and is thus the obvious exception to this trend.

Although promisingly entitled "The Renaissance of a Genre: Modernism and Autobiography," Severijnen's article makes no attempt to explore the relationship between the two terms. Instead, Severijnen applies semiotics and speech act theory to a number of self-representational texts by modernist thinkers.

One of the few scholars to broach the subject is Laura Marcus, who suggests that the invisibility of modernist autobiography may be indirectly attributable to critics' tendency to conflate autobiography *qua* autobiography and autobiographical fiction:

The autobiographical novels and *Bildungsromane* of certain modernist writers are presented as the culminating point of the autobiographical tradition and any distinction between 'autobiography' and autobiographical' is effaced or elided. One result of this move is a definition of autobiography as akin to the *Künstlerroman* — the story of the development of the artist — thus confirming the essential 'literariness' both of autobiographical form and of the identity of the autobiographer. (239)

By reading "pure" autobiography through the same formalist, text-based, lens as they do autobiographical fiction, critics obscure the referentiality of the genre. William Spengemann likewise sees a dilution of the term "autobiography," which he explains thus: "The modernist movement away from representational discourse toward self-enacting, self-reflexive verbal structures and the critical studies that have been devised to explain this movement conspire to make the very idea of literary modernism seem synonymous with autobiography" (13). Though provocative, Spengemann's remarks, like Marcus', fail to adequately explain why autobiographies — as distinct from autobiographical literature, such as Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* — seem to have no place within modernism. For an answer to this question, one is obliged to rely upon clues provided by extant scholarship about the movement as a whole.

A useful place to begin is Andreas Huyssen's statement that the paradigmatic modernist work is "autonomous and separate from the realms of mass culture and everyday life" (53).<sup>22</sup> Huyssen describes in some detail how the "volatile relationship between high art and mass culture" which had characterized the culture of modernity since the middle of the nineteenth century reached its zenith during the early decades of the twentieth (vii). The burgeoning "culture industry" of that period was widely regarded by modernist artists as "trivial and banal on the one hand, monstrous and devouring on the other" (Berry 169). Ellen Berry's choice of adjectives, words historically assigned to women and women's projects, points to the gendered conception of the high art / mass culture dichotomy. Political, psychological, and aesthetic discourses designated mass culture and its consumers as feminine and high culture as masculine (Huyssen 47). As modernism's feminized, contaminated Other, mass culture was scorned for lacking the intellectual purity of its higher-born sibling. At the same time, its apparent innocuousness was felt to pose its own menace, the art

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<sup>22</sup> Needless to say, "paradigmatic" is the operative term here because the characterization is a reductive one, as Huyssen himself acknowledges. We have seen how revisionist theorists have disproved the concept of a monolithic modernism by demonstrating that claims such as Huyssen's fail to adequately describe much literature of the period. Even in standard literary histories "the theory of aesthetic autonomy frequently appears to coexist with that of cultural subversion, or a questioning of the very foundations of the reigning social order" (Eysteinnsson 16). Huyssen's statement is further problematized by his own admission that the dichotomy between high art and mass culture was challenged from within the movement; he cites the cubist collages as one example (vii). In short, one must bear in mind that Huyssen's description relates specifically to the aesthetic project of such "high modernists" as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

of the feminine masses threatening to consume the art of the masculine élite in an act of cultural fratricide.

High modernism's struggle to fortify its defenses against the onslaught of a powerful mass culture — its "anxiety of contamination" (Huyssen vii) — manifested itself in part in the doctrines of impersonality and autonomy propounded most vocally by T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Clearly, the highly personal, referential and, generally speaking, vernacular genre of autobiography was destined to come down on the wrong side of what Huyssen terms the "Great Divide" (viii). (Indeed, Huyssen specifically cites life writing as an example of the "forms and genres of mass culture and the culture of everyday life" (59).) As Robert Folkenflik has noted,

If we think of the importance of Eliot to the movement, and of his dictum that poetry is "an escape from personality," we may see one of the ways in which the New Critics were inimical to autobiography (as well as biography). It is one of the ironies of literary history that we can now see how implicated Eliot was in hiding autobiography between the lines in so 'impersonal' a poem as *The Wasteland*. (10)<sup>23</sup>

Other tenets of high modernism similarly functioned to discredit the genre of autobiography. Pound's call to "make it new," for example, attests to a valorization of

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<sup>23</sup> My argument that modernism's dismissal of autobiography was based in part upon the doctrine of impersonality seems at odds with William Spengemann's claim, quoted earlier, that literary modernism has often been regarded as synonymous with autobiography because of its subjectivist orientation. This aporia points to a important paradox underlying modernist studies: on the one hand, "it seems that modernism is built on highly subjectivist premises," and on the other, the movement "is often held to draw its legitimacy primarily from writing based on highly antisubjectivist or impersonal politics" (Fysteinsson 27).

originality over the derivativeness identified with mass culture. This original/derivative opposition was also cast as a conflict between authorship and translation: authorship was instilled with authority as a productive function while translation — in its various metaphorical guises — was understood broadly as “a relation of re-production” (Elliott and Wallace 35). Considered in these terms, autobiography, as the translation of lived experience, becomes a derivative form of artistic expression.<sup>24</sup>

Autobiography was further tainted by suspicions of dishonourable intent. As we saw earlier in this chapter, one of the ways by which high modernism defined itself against less illustrious artistic forms was through its deliberately anticommercial cast. Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace remark that the interwar period witnessed “a sometimes contested and much-defended hierarchization and gendering of literary and visual genres” (70). The devaluation of genres expressing “a more overt association with professionalism (writing for money)” — the portrait, for example, and, to a lesser degree, the novel — coincided with “the privileging of more seemingly disinterested genres, such as abstract painting and avant-garde poetry.”

Autobiography has long suffered “an overt association with professionalism.” Indeed,

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<sup>24</sup> Analyzing critical response to Romaine Brooks’ portraits, Elliott and Wallace read into one scholar’s argument the implication that Brooks was merely “translating her lived experience rather than creatively imagining new forms” (45). The phrase might be applied equally to (discredit) literary autobiography.

Laura Marcus points out that in nineteenth-century discussions, “attacks on commercial publishing and the literary marketplace are closely linked with vilifications of ‘commercial’ autobiographies” (4).

If autobiography as a genre is excluded from the modernist canon on the basis of alleged mercenary impulses, how much more disreputable than the histories of twenties’ Paris which began climbing bestseller charts in the aftermath of the Wall Street crash. Capitalizing upon the 1950s’ renewed interest in the Jazz Age, the texts of Sylvia Beach and Caresse Crosby flagrantly align themselves with the commercial mass culture industry. The dust jacket of the Dial edition of *The Passionate Years* announces, “Whether read for a glimpse of New York and Boston society at its richest and most conservative peak or the international set at work or at play, this is an unforgettable picture of the twentieth century and it is a fascinating story.”

Crosby’s collected papers contain a memo from editor Malcolm Cowley in which he reminds her that the reader of her work in progress will not be “literary”: “he hasn’t read a whole book by James Joyce or D.H. Lawrence,” hasn’t heard of Kay Boyle, and just knows “a few stereotypes” about F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hemingway and the Lost Generation.<sup>25</sup> Sylvia Beach’s revelation in a suppressed portion of *Shakespeare and Company* that it was only the promise of “some nice hard dollars” which induced

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<sup>25</sup> Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 4, Folder 5. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

her to publish her memoirs further attests to the genre's commercial imperatives.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, a variety of factors conspired to exclude autobiography in general and the twenties memoir in particular from the modernist canon. Pound himself "always said that if a man wrote his meemoirs [sic] that was a sign he was finished" (Laughlin xxi). But life writing by women stood thrice condemned. While the genre of male autobiography can point to a long and distinguished genealogy, its female counterpart bears a history of neglect and derision which predates by far the literary developments of the early- to mid-twentieth century. Sidonie Smith points out that, affixed to women's texts, the adjective 'autobiographical' has traditionally assumed the pejorative sense of "the spontaneous [and] natural" (*Poetics* 16). Employed in the context of male writing, however, the same term carries overtones of the "selfconsciously 'crafted and aesthetic'." Malcolm Cowley's oft-cited *Exile's Return* offers an instructive example of this last point. Ignoring the referential instability of the self-representational genre — its complex interplay of fact and fiction — scholars have treated the text as an authoritative, perhaps even definitive, history of the interwar era: "although filled with anecdotes and gossip, [it] is considered an

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<sup>26</sup> Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 169, Folder 1. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collection. Princeton University Library.

The broad appeal of *Shakespeare and Company* is reflected in the fact that it was translated into French, German, and Italian. In *The Fiery Fountains*, the second volume of her autobiography, Margaret Anderson explains that the royalties from *My Thirty Years' War* enabled her to purchase a Citroën automobile (95).

important analytical view of the way that modernist culture and modernist writing [were] created” (Dane 89). No one could make that claim for the texts I study.

The stigma attached to “women’s autobiography” has its roots in the inherent contradiction of the phrase itself. Self-representation is, after all, essentially an act of self-promotion: the autobiographer assumes a public voice to assert “his” uniqueness and influence. But patriarchal scripts equate femininity with the qualities of self-effacement and passivity. In other words, the woman who recounts her life story un.masks what Sidonie Smith terms a “transgressive desire for cultural and literary authority” (*Poetics* 50). Such a woman exposes herself, as Gertrude Stein did, to accusations of “egocentric deformations” (Jolas, “Testimony Against Gertrude Stein” 2).<sup>27</sup>

Keenly aware of the threat of public censure, female autobiographers have commonly sought to minimize their transgression by adhering to, or at the very least acknowledging, cultural prescriptions of femininity. Carolyn Heilbrun’s discussion of Jill Conway’s study of accomplished nineteenth-century women illustrates this point. Heilbrun notes that Conway was struck by the “narrative flatness” of the women’s

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<sup>27</sup> Stein’s *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in fact surmounted the twin liabilities of gender and genre to become a reputable member of the modernist canon — even as it allied itself with the realm of mass culture by becoming an instant bestseller. As Carolyn Heilbrun remarks, its critical success is attributable largely to “its indirect mode of discourse [which]... provided a comfortable and ‘literary’ angle from which to approach it” (“Non-Autobiographies of Privileged Women” 67).

autobiographies: “Their letters and diaries are usually different, reflecting ambitions and struggles in the public sphere; in their published autobiographies, however, they portray themselves as intuitive, nurturing, passive, but never — in spite of the contrary evidence of their accomplishments — managerial” (*Writing a Woman’s Life* 24).

Heilbrun’s comments apply neatly to the writing of Beach and Crosby; Anderson, as we shall see, notably defies this paradigm. The contrast between unpublished and published self-representation is evident, for example, in two very different responses to British writer Ford Madox Ford by Sylvia Beach. Following her discovery in 1924 that Ford intended to establish a rival bookstore, Beach wrote an indignant letter to her mother complaining that “I’ve worked for all that crowd and the only bookseller in Paris who had their books and boomed them at that and made them known to the public and what would they have done without me if I do say it” (qtd. Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 179). She subsequently describes how she retaliated by stripping her walls of her clients’ photographs and even removing their books from her shelves. Amidst the ensuing consternation, Beach notes gleefully, Ford was forced to capitulate (180). No allusion to this successful preservation of her business interests appears in the published *Shakespeare and Company*. Instead the author recounts dancing barefoot with Ford and pays tribute to his culinary skills; it is only when she describes the

somnolence induced by his poetry reading that the careful reader may detect a trace of rancour.

Leigh Gilmore has noted recently that “even in the narrowest and most ambivalent sense, writing an autobiography can be a political act because it asserts a right to speak rather than to be spoken for” (40). The act is no less political — no less radical — if the voices speak in muted tones. As another scholar points out,

the very covertness of power, the nature and degree of its disguise, the very omission of overt reference are of the greatest interest, for subversion, indirection and disguise are natural tactics of the resisting weak, are social strategies for managing the most intense and the most compelling rebellions. (Newton 9)

When Beach so innocuously depicts herself in the role of Ford Madox Ford’s dancing partner or dinner guest, she seeks to inscribe herself into literary modernism, to rewrite history with herself as protagonist. She resists the patriarchal power structure’s dismissal of her existence and achievements as ephemeral, negligible, dispensable. Jane Marcus’ comments regarding several prominent late Victorian and early Edwardian women are equally true of the autobiographers I study: “They were famous women, in the public eye. They left their signatures on public discourse. But they anticipated obscurity because of their gender, and they wrote their memoirs as a hedge against certain deflation of their reputations”

(119).<sup>28</sup>

Only within the past decade and a half have scholars become attuned to the political underpinnings of women's literary self-representation. Invoking the insights of feminism, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis as well as conventional theories of autobiography, these scholars have analyzed the texts of a wide range of women, including those previously silenced by race, class, and sexuality. Much of this work has been indispensable for my own project. What follows is an overview of some pertinent characteristics and/or strategies of female self-representation as discussed by theorists of the genre.

## VI

In *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith examines the manoeuvres available to the woman autobiographer who seeks to counter cultural fictions of the female subject with a narrative of her own construction. Smith isolates a variety of discursive positions, exploring the imperatives and implications of each. Thus she

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<sup>28</sup> A brief note here on the terms "autobiography" and "memoir," the definitions of which have been widely debated by theorists of self-representational literature. Laura Marcus summarizes the results of this scholarship thus: "The distinction most frequently made is that between autobiography as the evocation of a life as a totality, and 'memoirs' which offer only an anecdotal depiction of people and events" (3). Clearly the distinction is by no means absolute; for this reason, and because the theories of female self-representation I discuss apply equally to women's memoir and women's autobiography, I tend to use the two terms interchangeably to refer to the texts of Beach, Crosby, and Anderson.

argues that the autobiographer who adheres to a “maternal narrative” assumes a “self-effacing speaking posture characterizing ... ideal womanhood,” one which “conceals all faults, including the fault of ambition inherent in the presumption of writing her story at all” (54). As I will show, this posture is the one adopted by Sylvia Beach, who employs it to reinforce her persona of the self-abnegating mother figure in *Shakespeare and Company*. Paradoxically, the same attribute of the “maternal narrative” that enables the autobiographer to speak without censure — her self-effacing femininity — may ultimately condemn her to silence, “literally as she gives the world a book it will not bother to read and symbolically as she reenacts woman’s role as the mediator of man’s life, a passive sign to be passed around in patriarchal fictions” (55). The political thrust of her autobiographical act becomes hopelessly obscured, her message misconstrued by even the most sympathetic of readers.<sup>29</sup>

The “paternal narrative” offers one alternative to this ignominious fate. The female autobiographer who commits to the “patrilineal contract” embraces “the ideology of individualism—with its myth of presence and originary authority” (52).

“Tracing or discovering a pattern of progressive stages,” she

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<sup>29</sup> In *Women of the Left Bank*, Shari Benstock dismisses *Shakespeare and Company* as unsatisfactory because it foregrounds the bookstore rather than the woman behind it: “Little more than a catalogue of anecdotes about the now famous writers who frequented the bookshop, Beach’s memoir is disappointing most particularly because it is so self-effacing that we are left with little sense of the woman who played such a pivotal role in Modernism (211). Shortly afterwards, Benstock complains that Beach “is present in this story only as a *raconteuse*” (223).

suggests how she has become who she is: the childhood that moved her toward some vocation, her educational and intellectual experiences, her entrance into the public arena, her successes and failures, her reflection on that achievement in later years. In so doing she reproduces the prevailing ideology of male selfhood, affirming that the individual, no matter how fiercely “he” is besieged by society around him and no matter how compromised “he” is by the struggle, can lay legitimate claim to an autonomous identity that most fully realizes “his” unique potentiality. She ... reassur[es] her reader that women, and this woman in particular, can aspire to and achieve full ‘human-beingness.’ (52)

*The Passionate Years*, which repeatedly affirms Caresse Crosby’s exceptionalism as it records her metamorphosis into a leading international socialite, conforms to this paradigm. No autobiographer, however, has more fully realized the power of the paternal narrative than Gertrude Stein. And no autobiographer is more familiar with its effects. Statements such as “She realizes that in English literature in her time she is the only one. She has always known it and now she says it” (85) granted Stein a notoriety which has scarcely subsided over six decades. The history of critical and popular response to *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* forcefully corroborates Smith’s thesis that, “read through cultural fictions of woman’s natural subordination to man, the self-assertion, self-absorption, and self-exposure manifest in the paternal narrative of the ‘manly’ woman become equated with the cultural story of woman’s ‘natural’ narcissism” (54).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Accusations of narcissism met the publication of Crosby’s autobiography as they did Stein’s. Burton Rascoe’s scathing review described *The Passionate Years* as “arrogant, vapid, and delinquent”(Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 4, Folder 5. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale).

Sidonie Smith argues that maternal and paternal narratives are — notwithstanding their applicability to the texts I study — characteristic primarily of autobiographies written prior to the twentieth century. From “the ambiguities and confusions of modernism” new configurations emerge, as the female autobiographer “begins to grapple self-consciously with her identity as a woman in patriarchal culture and with her problematic relationship to engendered figures of selfhood” (56). Now the autobiographer explores linguistic structures for hidden passages of access and exclusion; she examines the operations by which language renders her story “unrepresentable.” Alienated by “cultural ventriloquism, a gesture of impersonation that requires the autobiographer to speak like a man,” she might

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In selecting *Shakespeare and Company*, *The Passionate Years* and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* as exemplars of Smith’s “maternal” and “paternal” narratives, I do not mean to suggest that the texts conform wholly to those paradigms. Smith herself points out that her constructs should be read as “broadly suggestive hypotheses rather than narrowly emphatic descriptions,” and notes that simply designating a female self-representative text as one or the other denies the rich intricacy of the text (52). As we shall see, Beach’s tone of self-effacing modesty is punctuated by claims of authority typical of the paternal, rather than the maternal, voice. Furthermore, her history is not “like every other female life story” (54), most notably because the heterosexual model Smith describes is displaced in *Shakespeare and Company* by a lesbian subtext. Similarly, *The Passionate Years* departs in important ways from Smith’s description of the paternal narrative. The identity Crosby cultivates can hardly be termed “autonomous,” given the central position accorded her husband Harry in the text. She definitely does not reject “the locus of all that is domesticated and disempowered culturally” (53) and even more certainly does not portray herself as a “manly” woman (54). In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Gertrude Stein offers a highly fragmented, not linear, record of her life journey, and her usage of the displaced narrator enables her to efface herself from the text at will. According to Sidonie Smith, the interplay of the maternal and paternal narratives we see in these three texts is typical of female self-representational literature: “The voices of man and woman, of Adam and Eve, vie with one another, displace one another, subvert one another in the constant play of uneasy appropriation or reconciliation and daring rejection” (51).

experiment with a language more appropriate to her experience (57). Smith cites as one model the semiotic rhythms addressed by French feminism: Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine*, Julia Kristeva's *jouissance*, Luce Irigaray's *womanspeak*. Elements of the latter manifest themselves in Margaret Anderson's *My Thirty Years' War*, as we shall see. In her refusal to submit to the inflexible compartments imposed by patriarchal discourse, Anderson anticipates Irigaray's playfully provocative exhortations.

The range of speaking postures outlined above attests to the diversity among the texts I examine. Obscured by that discussion are the commonalities uniting the autobiographies, most notably perhaps their privileging of interpersonal relations. As Pamela Nance Dane comments of modernist women's memoirs in general, "the self is often created in conjunction with the others in the community. Instead of the alienated (male) artist developed in much of modernist literature, we find groups of people living and working together" (14). All three autobiographers I study explicitly attribute their satisfaction with their work to the pleasures of human contact. In *Shakespeare and Company* and *The Passionate Years* in particular, the author's avowed interest in human nature functions to validate both the anecdotal structure of the text and her own position at the heart of a web of relationships.

In part, the relational structure of these texts bespeaks a practical reality of the

women's existences. Much material published by the smaller literary operations was acquired informally through acquaintances of the publishers and editors; "consequently publishing was linking to personal relations, and was affected by internecine plays for power and literary influence, and private affections" (Marek 2). More broadly, however, that structure reveals a characteristic of the genre. Scholars since Estelle Jelinek have commented upon the attention to relationships in female self-representational texts. Susan Stanford Friedman, for example, eloquently remarks upon the inapplicability of individualistic models of autobiography to women's writing in a reversal of Georges Gusdorf's argument: "This [female] autobiographical self often does not oppose herself to all others, does not feel herself to exist outside of others, and still less against others, but very much *with* others in an interdependent existence that asserts its rhythms everywhere in the community" (56).

Sidonie Smith traces this foregrounding of communal relations to cultural constructions of femininity:

Since the ideology of gender makes of woman's life script a nonstory, a silent space, a gap in patriarchal culture, the ideal woman is self-effacing rather than self-promoting, and her 'natural' story shapes itself not around the public, heroic life but around the fluid, circumstantial, contingent responsiveness to others that, according to patriarchal ideology, characterizes the life of woman but not autobiography (*Poetics* 50).

Smith's argument underlies an oft-cited model of female self-representation introduced by Mary Grimley Mason. Mason posits that women commonly create an

autobiographical identity by exploring the self in relation to a fully realized Other:

The self-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some 'other.' This recognition of another consciousness — and I emphasize recognition of rather than deference to — this grounding of identity through relation to the chosen other, seems ... to enable women to write openly about themselves. ("The Other Voice" 22)

Mason emphasizes that the Other enhances rather than imperils the autobiographer's capacity for self-definition: what the text projects is a "double focus," not a focus which has become displaced (*Journeys* xiii).

This "evolution and delineation of an identity by way of alterity" can, according to Mason, proceed along a number of different lines ("The Other Voice" 41). Most commonly, the autobiographer represents her relation to "another autonomous being." Other possibilities include "one single, transcendent other" (God, in Julian of Norwich's text), "two others," "a multiple collectivity, a many-in-one," and "an overwhelming model or ideal that has to be confronted in order that the author's identity be realized" (as Freudian theory is in H.D.'s autobiography) ("The Other Voice" 41-42). The plausibility of Mason's thesis is undermined somewhat by its sheer scope: the categories outlined above are, taken in concert, so inclusive as to presumably describe many male autobiographies as well. However, the prototype of the single other "autonomous being" offers a useful approach to *Shakespeare and Company*, *The Passionate Years* and *My Thirty Years' War*. We shall see that the author

of each text foregrounds a particular character — James Joyce, Harry Crosby, and Jane Heap respectively — who has a profound effect upon her, both personally and professionally. The initial encounter with the “Other” is heralded as a climactic event, one destined to alter the course of the autobiographer’s existence and thus, naturally, of the autobiography as well.

In *My Thirty Years' War*, the representation of the Other — Jane Heap, Anderson’s co-editor and lover — supports contemporary theories of lesbian writing as a fluid and mutual exchange. The exchange is, granted, not so overt as in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, where the displaced narrator “deproprietaryizes the autobiographical subject” to function as a “[gift] circulating within a lesbian ‘economy’” (Gilmore 215). Nonetheless, Anderson clearly destabilizes the authority of the autobiographical “I” by including fragments of dialogue, notes and even cartoons penned by her lover. Not all texts, however, so readily substantiate Sandra Gilbert’s and Susan Gubar’s claim that lesbian modernist writers invoked a “dynamic of collaboration” (*No Man’s Land 2*: 256). In a passage of particular relevance here, Biddy Martin warns of the dangers of easy generalization:

To write *about* lesbian autobiography or even lesbian autobiographies as if such a totalizable, intelligible object or its multiplication simply existed would be to beg a number of questions, for example, what a lesbian life is, what autobiography is, and what the relation between them could possibly be ... Any attempt to give a definitive or singular answer to these three questions must be rendered suspect. (77)

A perfunctory comparison of *Shakespeare and Company* and *My Thirty Years' War* suffices to confirm the validity of Martin's argument. While the Anderson / Heap relationship constitutes the — admittedly encoded — foundation of that text, Beach's longstanding liaison with Adrienne Monnier manifests itself only as a gap in narration. Indeed, Beach appears to deliberately distance herself from the lesbian community and even, on occasion, from female colleagues and clients in general.

A valuable means of approaching this problematic marginalization of the modernist women lies in Susan Stanford Friedman's analysis of the "collective and relational identities" intrinsic to female self-representational literature ("Women's Autobiographical Selves" 35). Drawing heavily upon the work of the Marxist feminist Sheila Rowbotham, Friedman posits that a woman is unable to "experience herself as an entirely unique entity because she is always aware of how she is being defined *as woman*, that is, as a member of a group whose identity has been defined by the dominant male culture" (38). Still paraphrasing Rowbotham, Friedman goes on to argue that women in patriarchy develop a dual consciousness — paralleling that identified by W.E.B. Du Bois for blacks living in white culture — of the self as both "culturally defined and ... as different from cultural prescription" (39).

Applying Rowbotham's ideas to woman's autobiographical theory, Friedman suggests that the female autobiographer documents an identity that is neither purely

collective nor purely individualistic, but which “merges the shared and the unique” (40). She observes, “Instead of seeing themselves as solely unique, women often explore their sense of shared identity with other women, an aspect of identity that exists in tension with a sense of their own uniqueness” (44). In the self-representational texts Friedman chooses to test her thesis — those of Anaïs Nin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Maxine Hong Kingston, among others — the collective identity, though initially alienating, ultimately becomes a source of emancipatory transformation. Solidarity provides the means by which to convert a group identity that is historically imposed to one predicated upon collective experience.

Applied to the texts I study, Friedman’s model of the collective versus unique identities is transcribed as a conflict between the autobiographer’s acknowledgment of the modernist women’s common struggles within a patriarchal and heterosexist literary culture and a simultaneous desire to isolate her own particular efforts and achievements as unique. The tension generated by this conflict is especially evident in the various portraits of Gertrude Stein, the only female modernist prominent enough to “assume a central place in the literary hierarchy of the Paris community” (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 193). Sections of *Shakespeare and Company*, for example, are underlain by a subtle power struggle between Stein and Beach,

revealing the latter's need to assert her individuality against the woman who claimed sovereignty over Left Bank artistic circles. At the same time, the portrait is softened somewhat by the depiction of Stein's pleasure at Sherwood Anderson's admiration for her work. Beach's observation that the woman who responded to derision of her work with a public air of defiant indifference was "visibly touched" (31) by Anderson's praise constitutes an acknowledgment of the isolation and even hostility that were Stein's — and occasionally Beach's — penalty for professional achievement.

However if, as this example suggests, solidarity among members of a marginalized group is predicated upon a common experience of oppression, or at best a collective resistance to that oppression, then solidarity must pose a profound threat to individual efforts at liberatory self-definition. As we have seen, the collective identity imposed upon the women publishers and editors was that of the literary midwife. Subordinated to male colleagues by that label, the group thus defined vividly illustrates Nina Auerbach's point that a "community of women may suggest less the honor of fellowship than an antisociety, an austere banishment from both social power and biological rewards" (3). For each of these women, the delineation of a unique identity requires the suppression of the collective identity: only by distinguishing herself from the lowly sisterhood of midwives can she hope to

achieve credibility as a serious literary force. The subjects of my study most commonly accomplish this by aligning themselves with male members of the artistic community. What I am arguing, then, is that the autobiographer profits, not from the transformation of her collective identity through solidarity, as in the cases Friedman examines, but rather from the reinforcement of that identity. She perpetuates the subordination of other modernist women in order to focus upon, and bask in the refracted glory of, powerful male colleagues. One thinks of Malcolm Cowley's advice to Caresse Crosby, cited earlier, that her readers will be familiar with Fitzgerald and Hemingway, but not with Kay Boyle.

Thus Crosby omits entirely from her memoirs less prestigious, though nonetheless important, modernist figures like Nancy Cunard, Mina Loy, and Djuna Barnes; she foregrounds instead her friendships with such celebrated men as Hart Crane, Salvador Dali, and Max Ernst. Similarly, Sylvia Beach disingenuously entitles various sections of *Shakespeare and Company* "My Best Customer" (referring to Hemingway), "Our Friend Stuart Gilbert," "Notre Cher Gide," and "My Friend Paul Valéry." Of the memoirs' seventy-five sections a mere five are devoted to women. (Even fewer, for the segment entitled "Saint Harriet" foregrounds Joyce's financial difficulties and refers only briefly to Harriet Weaver's intervention, while the portrait of Raymonde Linossier abruptly gives way to a detailed description of Erik

Satie.) The marginalization of female colleagues is not as pronounced in *My Thirty Years' War*, partly because that text is less collective in orientation than the other two: Anderson's interactions with other characters are presented primarily as a gauge of her personal development. Nonetheless, Anderson parallels Beach and Crosby in highlighting her relationships with the most renowned of the male modernists, James Joyce and Ezra Pound. In all three texts, descriptions of private readings of as-yet unpublished works — Margaret Anderson's account of being read sections of *Work in Progress* by Joyce, for instance — constitute one popular means of conveying the author's intimacy with those men of genius.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Autobiographies by other modernist women similarly depict the author at the heart of a male community. The chapters of Nancy Cunard's *These Were the Hours* are all, with one exception, named after men whose work she published. Robert McAlmon is only one of many men acknowledged as an important influence in Kay Boyle's sections of *Being Geniuses Together*. And of course scholars have explored at length the various narrative strategies deployed by Stein to align herself with preeminent male modernists such as Picasso and Matisse. In *Women of the Left Bank*, Shari Benstock explains Stein's motivations in terms which support my argument regarding the modernist women's attempts to suppress their collective identity:

Stein differed from many other women of the Paris community by publicly refusing to be marginalized. Survival in this environment meant that Stein had to deny any suspicion that on the basis of gender alone she might be refused the fruits of her artistic efforts. In short, she had to renounce her womanhood in order to acknowledge a genius that was *grounded* in her womanhood" (*Women of the Left Bank* 188)

This Stein accomplished, not only by aligning herself with male peers, but also by "adopting a male persona against the feminine weakness to which her womanhood had apparently assigned her" (19). Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace note further that "much of [Stein's] self-construction as genius in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* is predicated on her difference from the women, 'the wives,' who attend her salon" (100).

Needless to say, this discussion raises troubling theoretical issues, particularly in light of the fact

To so closely align oneself with the (male) giants of modernism bespeaks a most “unwomanly,” since “immodest,” desire for authority. The autobiographers I study disguise their transgressive bid for entry into the “masculine” arena of professional achievement in part by foregrounding the “feminine” realm of the domestic. For them, as for the nineteenth-century women writers of domestic literature Ann Douglas surveys in *The Feminization of American Culture*, the home serves to “sanction rather than limit traditionally undomestic activities” (78).

## VII

The distinction between “masculine” and “feminine” arenas which underlies our code of gender-specific behaviour has its roots in nineteenth-century discourses.

Billie Melman describes the origins of domestic ideology thus:

In mainstream Victorian thought and literature the relations between the sexes were perceived and described in *terms of space*, or “spheres.” And that perception was particularly manifest in the notion of the male and the female as “separate spheres,” complementary opposites, biologically, mentally, and intellectually poles apart. The differences between the sexes, according to that notion, are nature- or God-ordained and are, therefore, unalterable and determine the moral and cultural “spheres” that the men and the women inhabit. (4)

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that many modernist women — including Anderson, Beach, and Crosby — actively supported the early feminist movement. After all, Sidonie Smith’s comments regarding the political implications of the paternal narrative are relevant too in this context: the autobiographer who “accept[s] tacitly the fictions of women, including the story of her cultural inferiority, [who] accept[s] the fiction of man as the more valued ideal toward which to strive ... perpetuates the political, social, and textual disempowerment of mothers and daughters” (*Poetics* 53).

With this radical polarization of the sexes came a clearly defined gendering of physical space. The “home” or “hearth” becomes the “aesthetic and socialised locus of the female”; in Victorian literature it is presided over by the “Angel in the House,” who incarnates its alleged virtues of civility, morality, and pious serenity. This domestic realm functions as “a buffer against the corrupting influences” of the external world, a masculinized space figured as “economic, destructively competitive and political” (4).

Recent scholarship has problematized the issue of the influence invested in the Victorian woman and her domain. Feminist theorists have exposed the ways in which domestic ideology operated to contain nineteenth-century women’s aspirations and ambitions.<sup>32</sup> Nancy Cott and others have analyzed how the glorification of the “women’s” or “private” sphere coexisted with its devaluation (62). Even as the home was declared an uncontaminated refuge from a harsh and unforgiving world, it was denigrated as an inferior realm: tedious and mundane, isolated from the stage of public endeavour and, as such, offering no stimulus for individual development.

In our own time, the exaltation of the home is perpetuated by advertisers for cleaning products and by “family values” oriented politicians. In the main, however, it has been the second, pejorative view of domesticity which has dominated

<sup>32</sup> For instance, Judith Newton contends that the emphasis upon women’s influence as a civilizing force was largely an attempt to “keep the lid on middle-class women by assuring them that they *did* have work, power and status after all” (19)

twentieth-century cultural discourses. The high modernist project of such men as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound was particularly vehement in its repudiation of the domestic as scene of the “trivialities and banalities of everyday life” (Huysen 47). One need only think, for instance, of Eliot’s scathing representation of the speaker’s discussion with Lil about false teeth and abortions in *The Wasteland*.

Feminist theorist Suzanne Clark has studied modernism’s “adversarial relationship to domestic culture” (1) within the broader context of the movement’s rejection of a tradition of “sentimental” literature. Extrapolating from Andreas Huysen’s thesis, Clark argues that modernism deployed an aesthetic of antisentimentality against the incursions of a feminized mass culture (5).<sup>33</sup> Clearly this turn against the sentimental, against the foundations of “women’s emotional and communal life” (29), posed a dilemma for the modernist women. They could hope to attain the authority accorded “serious” members of the artistic community only by

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<sup>33</sup> Clark aligns sentimental literature with discourses of not only domesticity but also emotion, community, and morality: in short, “the term *sentimental* makes a shorthand for everything modernism would exclude” (9).

Clark contends that, in fact, “modernism rejected the sentimental, because modernism *was* sentimental.” She points out that “by its reversal against the sentimental past, modernism denied its own reproduction of the internal, the debates of heart and mind — of individual consciousness — that had been valued by domestic fiction and reappear as the self-consciousness of, say, Prufrock” (7). Her deconstruction of the high modernism/sentimental literature dichotomy is loosely analogous to Huysen’s conflation of the high art/mass culture binary. Huysen postulates that the two terms’ “much heralded mutual exclusiveness is really a sign of their secret independence” (16) and notes, “mass culture has always been the hidden subtext of the modernist project” (47). A more extensive comparison of Huysen’s and Clark’s arguments, unfortunately beyond the scope of this dissertation, would offer a fruitful field of inquiry.

relinquishing the “traditions of emotional identity” that nurtured them (13).

Examining the “sentimental modernism” of such writers as Kay Boyle and Edna St. Vincent Millay for the effects of this conflict, and for their “strategies for recovering bonds of emotional identity,” Clark concludes that the “effects of modernism ... included not only denial but also recuperation” (13).

The integration of artistic and domestic themes in the autobiographies I study exemplifies the “recuperation” of female experience Clark describes. Certainly Beach, Crosby and Anderson are able to shield themselves from accusations of “unwomanly” conduct by contextualizing accounts of their professional ventures with comfortably “feminine” details. However, to argue that the domestic inhabits the texts merely to validate the author’s literary activities is to risk oversimplifying or even distorting transcriptions of female experience. Most fundamentally, these depictions of domesticity remind us that women’s aspirations have typically been framed by, and embedded in, the private, domestic sphere. Traditionally, it has been the rituals of domestic existence which have given women’s lives form. It is not surprising, then, that when the autobiographer records her deviation from the conventional path of female experience, here via incursions into the androcentric world of modernist publishing and editing, these rituals continue to provide her with a means by which to structure and understand her world. Male modernists may

decree a rupture between art and everyday life, constructing the latter as “inferior and feminine” (Huyssen 54); however, their female colleagues have neither the leisure nor the inclination to dismiss the trivialities comprising ordinary existence as insignificant. Thus, in a dramatic act of self-affirmation, each of the women I study challenges the androcentric paradigm of an autonomous modernism — firmly established already by the time Beach and Crosby wrote — with a version which better reflects her female reality. Even Gertrude Stein, author of an autobiography esteemed by modernist scholars for its erudite narrative and linguistic experiments, devotes attention to such mundane matters as Mabel Dodge’s missing pearls, and gleefully recounts her detective-like ability to predict the Picassos’ reconciliation through the clue of the missing earrings.

Like *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, set almost entirely at Stein’s famous atelier/home, the memoirs of Beach, Crosby and Anderson are situated firmly within the private realm. *My Thirty Years’ War* and *The Passionate Years* are each structured around a succession of residences, ranging from Anderson’s unpretentious lodgings at the Chicago Y.W.C.A to Crosby’s eighteenth century hôtel in the “*gratin gratin*” Faubourg St. Germain (123). Beach’s life story, on the other hand, unfolds not in the home but in the English-language bookstore she made famous. Nonetheless, the little shop is portrayed in a highly domesticized fashion, obscuring her censorship of

a personal realm distinct from the store. Pertinent in regard to this foregrounding of a domestic(ized) domain are Bridget Elliott's and Jo-Ann Wallace's remarks about the different spatial configurations of male and female modernism. They note that while men's modernism "has traditionally been represented as an international and cosmopolitan field of competing movements," its female counterpart "has been either invisible (hidden away in drawing-rooms and nurseries) or defined as local and vernacular" (160). The invisible, the local, the vernacular — herein lies the implicit response to the question central to Elliott's and Wallace's investigation: "which spaces were enabling for women artists and writers?" (156). Traditionally the site of women's authority, drawing-rooms and nurseries have always been where female voices sound loudest.

In situating their stories within that enabling domestic space, rather than in the public, masculinized space of Left Bank cafés, the women I study create an alternate history of expatriate Paris. Not for them the drinking holes commemorated by countless male memoirists: the Gypsy Bar where Robert McAlmon recounts carousing until dawn with Wyndham Lewis and James Joyce (*Being Geniuses Together* 28) or the Closerie de Lilas, where an aspiring young writer named Ernest Hemingway struggles with words and unwelcome interruptions (*A Moveable Feast* 70). Instead, even the visits to expatriate artists and writers described in the brief

Paris section of *My Thirty Years' War* occur in the privacy of apartments and studios. All three women expressly distance themselves from the roving Lost Generation of popular mythology. Beach explains that her long days at the bookstore prevent her from frequenting night clubs with "the Crowd" (112). In *The Passionate Years*, Crosby asserts, "Harry and I never had seen very much of the Americans in Paris, nor did we frequent the Dome and the Rotonde ... most often we stayed at home and after Harry's death, I went out even less than before" (292). (We shall see that Crosby's claim is undermined by depictions of a vibrant social life.) In *My Thirty Years' War*, Anderson explains that she and Jane Heap puzzled the New York "literati" by preferring the "hearthstone" to the "haunts of the intellectually gregarious" (155-6).

To say that the hearth is a more empowering space for these women than the café or coffeehouse is by no means to declare it any less rich in intellectual stimulation. In fact, the three autobiographers collapse the distinction between home and workplace to render personal space as the site of professional achievement. In Anderson's California ranch house, the *Little Review* editors peruse incoming manuscripts at the same kitchen table where they consume homemade lunch biscuits. Caresse Crosby caters to her colleagues' social and artistic needs at her magnificently renovated mill outside Paris. Sylvia Beach depicts her bookstore as home to herself and her extended "family" of writers.

Anticipating recent developments in feminist theory, these women contest the conventional public sphere/ private sphere dichotomy with its devalued second term. Underpinning this challenge is their awareness that, as Nancy Cott reminds us, the domestic or “woman’s” sphere has traditionally integrated labour with life (62). This integration defines the experience of the homemaker, of course; in a different sense it also shapes the reality of the female writer. Virginia Woolf acknowledges this coupling of (literary) labour and (domestic) life when she observes, “George Eliot left her work to nurse her father. Charlotte Brontë put down her pen to pick the eyes out of the potatoes” (“Women and Fiction” 46). Indeed, Woolf herself had first-hand experience of the interpenetration of the artistic and domestic. The main administrative office of Woolf’s Hogarth Press was housed in a basement room which had once been the kitchen, while in the lavatory, “old galley proofs served as toilet paper” (King 342). Often circumstances dictated that she attend to press matters clad only in “some sort of housecoat” (343). Not for nothing did Woolf recognize the value to the woman writer of a “room of her own.”<sup>34</sup>

Even as they acknowledge the, sometimes onerous, inescapabilities of female experience, the autobiographers suggest revisions to conventional scripts of domesticity. Analyzing the migration of modernist artists and writers to and within

<sup>34</sup> Ann Douglas remarks that nineteenth-century women writers “obsessively reminded their readers of the incessant flow of interruptions which was their daily lot: a just reminder of the obstacles they faced and overcame, yet also a hint of the multitudinous nature of their indispensability” (77).

metropolitan centres, Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace posit that many of the women discovered “the freedom to reorganize their domestic lives in ways that enabled them to find time to work and room to live experimentally” (163). These “new domestic relations” were, the authors argue, “frequently featured in their work.” Earlier in this chapter, we saw that many of the American women who joined the exodus to Paris did so in part to escape oppressive familial structures and/or expectations. Removed from traditional domestic settings, they explored decidedly non-traditional alternatives: alternatives the subjects of my study candidly document in their autobiographies.

Thus the family Sylvia Beach mothers in *Shakespeare and Company* comprises a motley crew of starving artists. Caresse Crosby’s attempts to chronicle conventional marriage and motherhood strain under the weight of a competing narrative which casts her as glamorous *femme fatale* and socialite; the tension thus generated manifests itself in a highly sexualized domesticity, flavoured with a subtle madonna/whore motif. (This domesticity is rendered all the more exotic by displays of Harry’s and Caresse’s extravagances and excesses: no stark garret for these young writers.) The housewife persona Margaret Anderson adopts in *My Thirty Years’ War* takes a decidedly avant-garde approach to domestic duties.

Pamelyn Nance Dane argues in her doctoral dissertation that the treatment of

domestic themes in the memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim, Kay Boyle and Margaret Anderson reveals those women's inability to resist culturally prescribed narratives of femininity (51–2). I hope to have demonstrated that such a reading belies, certainly in Anderson's case, the rich complexity of the text, not least by denying the author the agency to shape her self-representation. Far from being subjugated to cultural scripts of gender, the autobiographers I study subtly manipulate those scripts, alternately reinforcing and subverting them as it suits their purposes.

Metaphorically, the stereotypically feminine roles Beach, Crosby and Anderson adopt — mother, socialite, and housewife respectively — enact their vital contributions to the modernist movement. But to read these roles as no more than metaphors is to overlook the ways the authors inscribe into their autobiographies their experiences as *women* as well as as *modernists*. Like women everywhere, they occasionally bow under the weight of the domestic life they depict. Thus Anderson's imminent withdrawal from the review is signalled by complaints that literary and domestic editing have become equally oppressive: "For a long time I had wanted freedom from household drudgery, from publishing drudgery" (231). Sylvia Beach becomes increasingly resentful of the demands made upon her by her favourite "son," James Joyce. Yet the autobiographers demonstrate too the veracity of Terry Lovell's claim that "it is simply not plausible to present domesticity as always and

uniformly an oppressive imposition upon women" (91). Foregrounding the home — or, in Beach's case, the home-like shop — as the site of their literary authority, they reconfigure the power women have traditionally exercised within the domestic sphere. With rare exceptions, all three represent the work performed between four walls not as tiresome duty but as an expression of creativity and influence. Their insistence that they are merely dilettantes in their chosen field is in part, of course, a nod to ideals of "feminine" modesty; at the same time, their claim that they do what they do for "fun," unhampered by the guidelines governing conventional publishing operations, amounts to an declaration of self-determination. In their hands, the clichéd characterization of "women's work" as a "labour of love" is transformed from a shallow prop of domestic ideology to an affirmation of choice.

Several years ago, Celeste Schenck posed the following question to the academic community:

if, as both Lukács and feminist critics have demonstrated, the radical poetics of Modernism often masks a deeply conservative politics, might it also possibly be true that the seemingly genteel, conservative poetics of women poets whose obscurity even feminists have overlooked might pitch a more radical politics than we had considered possible? (231)

I would like to suggest, first, that Schenck's question is as applicable to the women autobiographers as it is to the women poets, and, second, that the affirmative response implicit in her query holds true when that substitution is effected. Sylvia

Beach, Caresse Crosby, and Margaret Anderson find in domestic discourse a tool of resistance to masculinist, modernist authority. Exploiting the public's fascination with the Roaring Twenties, they subversively employ that devalued discourse to position their literary contributions amidst those of more celebrated male colleagues. As exemplars of "sentimental modernism," their autobiographies firmly corroborate Suzanne Clark's thesis that this corpus of women's writing produced in defiance of the high modernist tenets of impersonality and autonomy constitutes a site of "transgression, resistance, [and] progressive cultural change" (4). With the transition from a monolithic to a pluralistic model of modernism stimulating investigation of works long deemed external to the movement, the political thrust of that writing is at last becoming dramatically apparent. And all of modernist studies is richer as a result.

## Chapter 2

### Sylvia Beach and Company

Those small bookstores run by those who love books, that spring up in the waste places to exist a while before the building is abandoned or torn down, those magazines founded by young authors and their friends to last three issues, the unpublished manuscript no big publisher will touch, and the small publishers look down on, published privately by the owner or someone who believes in the work — of all these she is the guardian and avenging angel. (Katz 85)

Few of the locales frequented by the expatriates in interwar Paris have become as inextricably associated with the era as Shakespeare and Company, Sylvia Beach's little bookstore on the Left Bank. Described as "the most famous American cultural landmark in pre-World War II Paris — and for nearly twenty years the best known bookshop in the world (Ford, *Published in Paris* 3), Shakespeare and Company did far more than merely provide English-language reading material for its clientele.

Numerous social and literary histories of the period attest to the shop's multifaceted role as not only bookstore, library and reading room, but also informal post office, bank, general meeting place. So bound has it become in the popular imagination to the glamour of twenties' Paris that a completely reconstructed Shakespeare and Company continues to draw countless sightseers each year.

Though most studies of modernism fail to acknowledge the fact, Sylvia Beach's significance as a literary figure extends well beyond her attentiveness to the intellectual, financial and postal needs of the expatriate writers; it extends even beyond her publication of one of the masterpieces of twentieth-century literature, Joyce's *Ulysses*. Her biographer, Noel Riley Fitch, describes the range of Beach's responsibilities thus:

Although she was hostess, publisher, booklender, and bookseller, her greatest achievement was as a "pump-primer" who provided access to current and experimental literature; made American works available to the French for reading, translation, and criticism; brought artist and public together; and united artists from a dozen countries. She encouraged young writers to write critical essays, influenced their reading, found them printers and translators, rooms, and protectors, received their mail, lent them money, collected money due them, and solicited funds for their support. The line between personal and professional aid was never drawn. In addition to giving exhibitions and readings, she was an agent for the little magazines and publishing firms, and was herself a translator and publisher. (*Sylvia Beach* 17)

Specific examples of how Beach helped to disseminate modernist literature across national borders abound. In 1921, she introduced a young Ernest Hemingway to Adrienne Monnier, her lover and the proprietor of a French bookshop across the street; when Monnier subsequently published a translation of his short story "The Undeafed" in her review, Hemingway's writing became for the first time accessible to French readers. Beach's translation, with Monnier, of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was the first complete rendering into French of an Eliot poem, while her

transcription of Paul Valéry's "Littérature" introduced anglophone readers to that essay. In a tribute to her after her death, the French writer André Chamson summarized her international importance with these words: "Sylvia carried pollen like a bee. She cross-fertilized those writers. She did more to link England, the United States, Ireland and France than four great ambassadors combined" (trans. Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 275-76).

During her lifetime, Beach acquired something like celebrity status in literary and non-literary circles alike. By the early 1920s, newspaper articles about Shakespeare and Company were appearing in France and the United States; one piece in the *Paris Tribune* was headlined "American Girl Conducts Novel Bookstore Here" and described Beach as "an attractive as well as a successful pioneer" (qtd. Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 84). Several years later, the literary critic Eugene Jolas named Beach "probably the best known woman in Paris" (qtd. Ford, *Published in Paris* 3). She is featured in numerous memoirs of the expatriate era, almost invariably as the subject of fond gratitude. During the 1950s, a heightened interest in the twenties further enhanced her renown, culminating in a number of awards, distinctions and public appearances (Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 412-13).

Beach's popularity as one of the most recognizable of the modernist women has overwhelmed, and no doubt diminished, her status as a legitimate literary force. Her

accomplishments “have been judged to be practical and personal rather than intellectual or artistic” (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 200); cast in the feminized role of postmistress and bankteller, she is perceived to have benefited modernism primarily by tending to the material needs of the male thinkers, thereby leaving them free to think. While descriptions of her are seldom gendered as overtly as in the *Tribune* article cited above, Beach is commonly portrayed through language which evokes a “feminine” devotion and selflessness. Sometimes this language takes the form of religious metaphor, as in Hugh Ford’s assertion that “Miss Beach had come to occupy the place of high priestess among Joyce cultists” (*Published in Paris* 33), or in Fitch’s remark that she “served the muses religiously” (*Sylvia Beach* 17). Many other commentators invoke maternal imagery. Carlos Baker notes in a blurb on the back of Fitch’s biography that Beach “served as cheerful den-mother to hundreds of writers, artists, and composers.” In one of the few unflattering portraits of Beach, Morley Callaghan, author of *That Summer in Paris*, uses the same term pejoratively to attack what he regards as her excessive zeal in protecting Hemingway from admirers (90). Hemingway himself recalls her motherly concern for his diet in *A Moveable Feast* (54). In her own memoir, Beach cultivates a maternal persona which encodes claims of her matriarchal relationship to modernism.

## II

In 1935, a full decade before she began work on *Shakespeare and Company*, Beach received a visit from Alfred Knopf, who expressed interest in publishing her memoir. Fitch describes the letter in which Beach notified her sister of the offer: “Sylvia informed Holly that when Knopf ‘said he would probably bring them out provided [she] didn’t bring in too much about Joyce and the French and Gertrude Stein and talked mostly about [herself],’ she replied that she ‘couldn’t guarantee to please him at all and they had better just let the matter drop’” (*Sylvia Beach* 352). Indeed, the memoir that Beach did eventually write featured Joyce, the French, and Gertrude Stein in prominent roles but provided little insight into the author. Sidonie Smith, we have seen, argues that the female autobiographer may elect to conceal “all faults, including the fault of ambition inherent in the presumption of writing her story at all” through the self-effacing speaking posture of the “maternal narrative” (*Poetics* 54). Adopting this posture in *Shakespeare and Company*, Beach so effectively engineers her disguise that she is able to fool even so astute a critic as Shari Benstock into the belief that she “is present in this story only as a *raconteuse*” (*Women of the Left Bank* 223). Her habitual tone of unassuming modesty masks the fact that, far from merely narrating the work, she meticulously orders, edits, and censors its contents as it suits her purposes.

One means by which Beach effaces herself from her memoir is by limiting and screening disclosures of a personal nature. Beach's explanation at the beginning of chapter twelve that she "liked to be left alone in a corner to dream and read and meditate" (104) constitutes a rare instance of self-revelation; generally *Shakespeare and Company* thwarts the reader's desire for easy facts about the woman behind the bookstore. Thus, Beach neglects to explain the cause of her amusement at George Bernard Shaw's description of her as "a young barbarian beglamoured by the excitements and enthusiasms that art stirs up in passionate material" (53). The reader can only infer from evidence which emerges indirectly in the course of the work that it is because hers is a nature more pragmatic than passionate. Her account of recommending Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* to the lascivious Frank Harris suggests a sense of humour which would have stood her in good stead during the endless difficulties with *Ulysses*; likewise, her determination to remain in German-occupied Paris — with a Jewish shop assistant, no less — bespeaks the same courageous spirit that moved her to found Shakespeare and Company in the first place. In the absence of more overt divulgences, however, the reader is restricted to mere speculation.

Another self-effacing strategy Beach employs is to condense or even altogether omit substantial portions of her life story. This she is able to do by framing her own

history within that of her bookstore. In other words, Shakespeare and Company fulfills a function analogous to Alice B. Toklas in Gertrude Stein's autobiography: just as Stein structures her text around her lover's life as a means of camouflaging the gaps in her self-portrait, Beach deflects attention away from herself by focusing upon Shakespeare and Company and its clientele. The memoir opens, for all intents and purposes, with the inception of the little shop — her childhood and adolescence having been passed over in a scant eleven pages — and concludes with the war which would force its closure. The intervening chapters, treating the day-to-day existence of the bookstore and the personalities who frequent it, make no reference to a number of key aspects of Beach's private life, notably her mother's suicide, Adrienne Monnier's affair and suicide, and her own debilitating migraines. The narrative is propelled forward through a quick succession of sketches of writers and artists, which, adhering only loosely to linear chronology, papers over the fissures in Beach's portrait.

A statement from an unpublished draft of the memoir at once justifies Beach's abbreviated treatment of her formative years and stakes out the "off-limits" zones of her narrative: "this is a history of a bookstore, so I won't go back into its background."<sup>1</sup> What little we do learn about Beach's pre-Shakespeare and

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 168, Folder 1. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.

Company existence indicates that her upbringing was, like so many of the female modernists', a conservative one. The memoir opens:

My father, the Reverend Sylvester Woodbridge Beach, D.D., was a Presbyterian minister who for seventeen years was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey.

According to an article in *Munsey's Magazine* on curious family trees in America, the Woodbridges, Father's maternal ancestors, were clergymen from father to son for some twelve or thirteen generations. My sister Holly, who prefers the truth at all costs, has gone onto and, alas, debunked the story. She has reduced the ministers to nine, and we have to be content with that.

(3)

Details of the author's genealogy provide a routine enough introduction to an autobiographical work. Nonetheless, this particular genealogy, even taking into account the reduced number of ministers, is clearly not what one would expect of the woman whose daring publication of *Ulysses* gave her a (false) reputation as a purveyor of erotica. One commentator has observed that the nine ministers "added a tantalizing piquancy to her character" and notes, "what Miss Beach was, and what to many she may have seemed to be, created complications and confusion from the start" (Ford, *Published in Paris* 6). The inability to reconcile such apparent incongruities fed the "cult of personality" (Elliott and Wallace 38) which enveloped her, and ultimately inhibited serious consideration of her contributions to modernism.

Beach somewhat reduces the disparity between her background and later

experiences by offering clues to suggest that those experiences were not entirely unheralded. She notes that her father's congregation counted among its members "history-makers, past and future: the Grover Clevelands, the James Garfields, and the Woodrow Wilsons" (7); Sylvester Beach left his modest mark on American history by performing the marriages of two of Wilson's daughters and later officiating at the president's funeral. Sylvia's early contact with these illustrious figures anticipates her interactions in Paris with a very different type of history-makers. The few details provided about Sylvia's mother, Eleanor Orbison Beach — most notably her enjoyment of the artists' company at the Students' Atelier Reunions in Paris and, later, her willingness to contribute all her savings to the opening of the bookshop — suggest her as the principle source of Sylvia's love for France and the arts.

It is these twin passions which set Beach on the route that would eventually lead to Shakespeare and Company. Leaving Princeton and the parsonage behind, she travels to Paris because, she explains, "[f]or some time, I had had a particular interest in French writing. Now I wanted to pursue my studies at the source" (9). Pursue them she does: following her discovery of Adrienne Monnier's bookshop, she regularly attends readings there of unpublished manuscripts by Paul Valéry, André Gide, Valéry Larbaud, and other aspiring French writers. Her assertion that "I

believe that I was the only American to discover the rue de l'Odéon and participate in its exciting literary life at that time" (14) highlights her great fortune in acquiring an education more current than any obtained by the university educated. (Later in the memoir, Beach more explicitly dismisses the benefits of a formal education, implying that Hemingway went "a great deal farther and faster than any of the young writers [she] knew" because he had acquired his knowledge "first hand, not in universities" (79).)<sup>2</sup> Beach's claim regarding her discovery of the rue de l'Odéon is followed immediately by a modest acknowledgment: "I owe a great deal of the success of my bookshop to the help of all those French friends I made at Adrienne Monnier's" (14). These French friends, absent from so many American memoirs of twenties' Paris, appear throughout *Shakespeare and Company*, underscoring the fact that Beach's literary interests — and influence — recognize no national boundaries.<sup>3</sup>

Of her family's frequent travels to Paris during the Princeton years, Beach

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<sup>2</sup> In an unpublished manuscript of *Shakespeare and Company*, Beach asserts that her lack of formal education may have enhanced, rather than impeded, her understanding of literature: "I had more intuition and appreciation than learning: much more. A self-taught freelance reader, perhaps that was why I could enjoy 'Ulysses' so thoroughly" (Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 166, Folder 1. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.) Elsewhere she notes, "There were readers with intellectual as well as puritan inhibitions and it was almost worse; their understanding was hopelessly jammed" (168/1). We shall see that Margaret Anderson expresses very similar sentiments in *My 'Thirty Years' War*.

<sup>3</sup> By contrast, Beach refers to Gertrude Stein in a suppressed portion of the memoirs as an "eternal tourist" in Paris and claims never to have seen anyone French at the rue de Fleurus (qtd. Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 56).

remarks, "We had a veritable passion for France" (8). By announcing her early love for, and familiarity with, that country, Beach distinguishes herself from the waves of expatriates who arrived in Paris throughout the twenties to take up brief residency there. Permanently settling in the French capital in 1917, she watches as the first "pilgrims" (23) begin arriving from the United States several years later; she is still there during the Second World War, when so few Americans remain that their names can be recorded in one constantly misplaced scrapbook at the Commissary office. Her wartime experiences include observing desperate refugees stream through Paris, narrowly escaping German machine-gun fire, and imprisonment in an internment camp. Clearly, Beach's experience of expatriation differed enormously from that of, say, Fitzgerald or Robert McAlmon. In opposition to most members of "the Crowd," who value Paris primarily for its cafés and nightlife and who flee when the going gets tough, she is represented as an enduring fixture of the artistic community. A longtime observer of the modernist revolution she helped fuel, she is able to remark that "[r]eviews had come and gone" (140), and to offer a final requiem for Ford Madox Ford's *Transatlantic Review*: "It was much missed by its readers and by the many writers whose manuscripts were available abroad in those years" (138).

The story of how Beach came to attain this privileged position occupies the early chapters of *Shakespeare and Company*. Chapter three begins, "I had long wanted a

bookshop, and by now it had become an obsession” (15); more specific details are available only from an unpublished version of the memoir, which reveals that Beach first conceived of the idea of a bookshop during a brief post-World War I stint with the Red Cross in Serbia.<sup>4</sup> Her initial plan to establish a French literature store in New York flounders, but she and Adrienne are delighted nonetheless “as right before our eyes my bookshop turned into an American one in Paris” (15).

The deliberate vagueness of that statement becomes less puzzling when read alongside Carolyn Heilbrun’s analysis of nineteenth-century female autobiographers. Those women, Heilbrun states,

report the encounters with what would be the life’s work as having occurred by chance. This was, in every case, quite untrue. Each woman set out to find her life’s work, but the only script insisted that work discover and pursue her, like the conventional romantic lover. As [Jill] Conway points out, there is no model for the female who is recounting a political narrative. There are no recognizable career stages in such a life, as there would be for a man. (*Writing a Women’s Life* 24–5)

Clearly, the passage applies equally to women who distinguish themselves in arenas other than the political. Heilbrun’s conclusion that “[t]hese women are therefore unable to write exemplary lives: they do not dare to offer themselves as models, but only as exceptions chosen by destiny or chance” (25) neatly describes Sylvia Beach as well. Just prior to recounting the sudden transformation in her bookstore’s

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<sup>4</sup> Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 167, Folder 1. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.

nationality, Beach credits the machinations of fate for her discovery of the rue de l'Odéon. "Suddenly something drew me irresistibly to the spot where such important things in my life were to happen" (12), she writes of her first visit to Adrienne's bookstore. Moments later, destiny disguised as a gust of wind sends Adrienne scurrying after Beach's errant hat; the spontaneous burst of laughter which follows cements Beach's intimacy with the woman who would become her mentor in the bookselling and publishing fields, as well as her lover.

In the section entitled "Sherwood Anderson," Beach recalls how she "listened with suspense to the story of how [Anderson] had suddenly abandoned his home and a prosperous paint business" to take up a career as a writer, "shaking off forever the fetters of responsibility and the burden of security" (30). Though uttered in her characteristic tone of "womanly" deference, the passage subtly highlights Beach's own temerity in founding Shakespeare and Company. The minister's daughter-turned-bookseller/publisher similarly shook off the "burden of security" when she set up shop on the Left Bank; indeed, her wager was probably more perilous than Anderson's, given her total inexperience in her chosen career.

Rather than accentuate the audacity of her venture, however, Beach complies with cultural constructions of femininity by phrasing her motivations in altruistic terms. Thus she describes her initial conception of a New York-based bookstore

with the words, "I wanted to help the French writers I admired so much to become more widely known in my country" (15). Nonetheless, evidence of her business acumen underlies, and likely undermines, accounts of those gentler impulses. For example, she concludes her analysis of the French interest in American writers, "and it seemed to me that a little American bookshop on the Left Bank would be welcome" (16). The observation conveys a desire to help satisfy the French appetite for American reading material; less overtly, it also suggests that she recognizes the financial profitability attached to that service. Elsewhere she writes,

Lending books, just as I had foreseen, was much easier in Paris than selling them. The only cheap editions of English writers were the Tauchnitz and the Conard, and they didn't go much further than Kipling and Hardy in those days. Our moderns, particularly when pounds and dollars were translated into francs, were luxuries the French and my Left Bankers were not able to afford. That is why I was interested in my lending library. So I got everything I liked myself, to share with others in Paris (21).

The brief lesson in economics trails off into an expressed wish to benefit those less fortunate than herself.

Beach's descriptions of her bookstore's immense popularity are delivered in the same unassuming accents. She expresses surprise at receiving any customers at all on opening day, and shortly afterwards punctuates her announcement of Shakespeare and Company's growing fame in the United States with a modest "to my surprise" (23). The self-effacing tones of the "maternal narrative" obfuscate the fact that claims

of her achievements underlie her modesty. Early on, she explains that contemporary American writers were unknown in France when she first arrived in that country (13); one hundred or so pages later she is able to report, “by the middle twenties, French readers were extremely interested in American writers” (127). She credits Monnier for the shift, citing the other’s publications of translated American works. Nonetheless, Beach’s own role should by now be obvious enough, and just in case it isn’t, she casually notes that she co-translated many of those works.

Adrienne Monnier is but one of many figures encountered in the memoir whose representation simultaneously projects and mutes Beach’s claims of influence. Norine Voss observes that women autobiographers “have explored the idea of the female self at the center of a web of relations by using this sense of self as a structuring principle” (228). Voss’s comment is particularly applicable to *Shakespeare and Company*, composed as it is of sketches of the bookstore’s clientele. Beach’s depiction of self — and of the power that self wields — emerges through these anecdotal accounts of her relations with the many members of the “Shakespeare and Company family” (121).

### III

The Parisian artistic community portrayed in *Shakespeare and Company* comprises

a constellation of overlapping groups and cliques. In addition to the *Little Review* crowd in Montparnasse and the *habitués* of Gertrude Stein's and Natalie Barney's salons, there are Léon-Paul Fargue's "*Potassons*," Jules Romains' "*Copains*," and, of course, the café-hopping "Crowd" presided over by Robert McAlmon — to name but a few. In depicting how representatives of these various groups walk through the doorway of Shakespeare and Company to draw its proprietor into their lives and work, the memoir establishes Beach as the central unifying figure behind a multivalenced modernism.

Beach reinforces this centrality by underscoring the bookstore's ties to private presses and little magazines in Paris and beyond. Her assertion that she is kept busy "looking after all the little reviews and cooperating with the new little publishing houses that were springing up around me" (95) suggests the newcomers' dependence upon her at the same time that it attests to Shakespeare and Company's status as a firmly established icon of the Left Bank.<sup>5</sup> Beach further illustrates her indispensability by casting herself as mediator in others' relationships, be they social or professional. It is she who conducts an admiring Sherwood Anderson to an appreciative Gertrude Stein, she who fields phone calls from alarmed friends when George Antheil disappears without warning into the African jungle, even she who

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<sup>5</sup> In chapter fourteen Beach lists and describes many of the reviews distributed by the bookstore as well as the private presses whose works appear on its shelves.

organizes a boxing match between Hemingway and Jean Prévost.

Notwithstanding this active involvement in their lives, Beach deliberately disassociates herself from her clientele to underscore the weightiness of her role as bookseller and publisher. She recounts the writers' exploits with amused objectivity and at times a maternal indulgence. This tone marks, for example, Beach's description of the strategies adopted by those who flock to Shakespeare and Company desperate for her to publish their erotica, her account of accompanying a "skeered" Hemingway to the rue de Fleurus following his quarrel with Stein (33), and her diffident observation that "Wars between writers blaze up frequently, but I have observed that they settle down eventually into smudges" (33). Early in the memoir Beach distances herself from the legendary frivolity of the expatriates by primly declaring, "My occupation was a daytime one, and a long daytime one at that, so I didn't go to the night clubs with my friends" (26). The statement is clearly intended as a dig at Robert McAlmon, who acquires most of the manuscripts for his Contact Editions at the Dôme Café and who "discovered most of his writers at one café or another" (132). As mentioned earlier, Beach's claim also highlights the different spatial conformations of male and female modernisms. Her memoir includes few allusions to the public occasions documented by so many chroniclers of the era, the explosive performance of Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique*—"one of the big

events of the twenties" (124) — being a rare exception. Even that is included only because Beach and Adrienne "were in on the *Ballet Mécanique* from the beginning" (123), Antheil having composed it in Monnier's apartment.

Robert McAlmon is by no means the only character whose literary credibility is undermined by symptoms of frivolity. During her first appearance at the bookstore, Gertrude Stein complains about the dearth of "amusing books," inquiring indignantly, "[where] were those American masterpieces *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* and *The Girl of the Limberlost*?" (28). Beach responds by exhibiting a substantial collection of the other's own works, thereby underscoring her affinity for experimental writing while exposing Stein's self-interested and superficial literary tastes.<sup>6</sup> Beach's disapproval of Natalie Barney's flamboyant lifestyle and overt promiscuity manifests itself in a portrait of a woman whose dedication to literature is similarly questionable. The acknowledgment that Barney "wrote poetry, and [that] her *salon* was famous in the Paris literary world" is followed immediately by the cautious "but I wonder if she ever took literary things very seriously" (114). More damning still is Beach's account of a visit to Barney's residence:

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<sup>6</sup>The depiction of Stein, one of the few expatriate women who rivalled Beach's prominence, accentuates precisely those qualities for which she has so often been condemned. The announcement that "Gertrude's subscription was merely a friendly gesture," as "[s]he took little interest, of course, in any but her own books" (28), is not merely an unsubstantiated repetition of popular Stein mythology — as evidenced by the pat "of course" — but it is also a blatant distortion of the truth. Noel Riley Fitch notes that a library card from the Shakespeare and Company archives indicates that Stein in fact borrowed seventy books during the years of her membership (*Sylvia Beach* 55).

One day I went around to the rue Jacob to help Miss Barney look for one of my library books. She led me to a cupboard so stuffed with volumes that, when she opened the door, out fell one of them on the floor. It was Pound's *Instigations*. She said, "If you don't find your book, just take this instead." I protested that it was very rare, and pointed out that this copy was inscribed to her by the author, but she insisted on my taking it; she never read anything but poetry, kept nothing else in her library, she said. (114)

Barney is reduced to a capricious hostess who serves chocolate cake "of a very high order" (115) and who whiles away her mornings riding bareback in the Bois de Boulogne. As she does with Stein, Beach exploits Barney's colourful public persona to trivialize her compatriot's important contributions to modernist writing and culture.<sup>7</sup>

Beach's portrayal of F. Scott Fitzgerald too is rich in clichés. Anecdotes illustrate his famed extravagance and propensity for drunken exploits: in her wry comment that "[p]oor Scott was earning so much money from his books that he and Zelda had to drink a great deal of champagne in Montmartre in an effort to get rid of it" (116), the cash-strapped publisher of *Ulysses* expresses uneasy ambivalence towards the massive commercial success achieved by the author of *The Great Gatsby*. Ezra Pound

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<sup>7</sup> Beach is even more malicious in the original sketch of Barney: "In an unpublished typescript of her memoirs, Sylvia voices her suspicion that the only time Barney opened books was when a writer was expected at her salon. So that she would at least 'be familiar with the titles' of her invited guest, Barney would send a chauffeur to the bookshop at the last moment for all his works" (Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 73).

In the published version, as we shall see, Beach does align herself with Barney and the women who frequent her salon through a subtle acknowledgment of their common lesbian identity.

is labelled a "great showman" (45). In marked contrast to Beach's view that George Antheil should follow the animated performance of *Ballet Mécanique* by "now bury[ing] himself in his work," Pound proposes that the musician "set out on a walking tour through Italy with his cat, Crazy, on his back" as a publicity stunt (125). Pound's displays of frivolity are interspersed between affected critical pronouncements. On one occasion, for instance, he declares Raymonde Linossier's avant-garde work *Bibi-la-Bibiste* a "chef-d'oeuvre," proclaiming that it possesses "all the virtues required by the academicians: absolute clarity, absolute form, beginning, middle, and end" (153). The passage is rendered all the more effective by Beach's mild observation that "I don't think the French, nor particularly Raymonde herself, would have gone so far," since Raymonde "was far too modest and too humorous to be serious about *Bibi-la-Bibiste*."

Of the best known expatriates depicted in *Shakespeare and Company*, Ernest Hemingway is the only one free from frivolity. Beach's portrait of the young Hemingway as a committed and conscientious writer was evidently intended to serve as a corrective to the body of myth that enveloped him later in life.<sup>8</sup> Even James Joyce, who is persistently exalted above his fellow writers, falls victim to flightiness,

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<sup>8</sup> This depiction corresponds very closely to that provided by Hemingway himself in his memoir of the Paris years, *A Moveable Feast*, published posthumously in 1964. It is no doubt significant that Hemingway approved Beach's portrait of him prior to the publication of *Shakespeare and Company* (Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 412)

as his obsessive promotion of the Irish singers reveals. Depictions of the various writers' idiosyncrasies and vanities lend weight to Beach's comment regarding the difficult and "delicate job of dealing with the customers and understanding the needs of the members of the library, which required a lot of understanding" (49).

*Shakespeare and Company* portrays a woman observing with amused affection the antics of those around her as she struggles to keep a bookstore and publishing business afloat. Her role is that of mother to a large and rambunctious family.

#### IV

Descriptions of Shakespeare and Company in histories of expatriate Paris typically evoke its atmosphere of cozy homeliness. Hemingway remembers the bookstore as a "warm, cheerful place with a big stove in winter" (30) and Janet Flanner dubs it the "hearth and home of the Left Bank American literary colony after 1920" (*Paris Was Yesterday* viii). James Laughlin notes that the central section of the shop was "open like a living room" and alludes to the small bedroom where a homeless writer, or on occasion the hardworking proprietor, could spend the night (xviii). In her own memoir, Beach describes how she created this space where art mingled freely with life: a feminized space over which she could preside with impunity.

The first section of chapter three, recounting how Beach's dream of becoming a bookseller begins to materialize, is entitled "A Bookshop of My Own." Read as a play on Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Beach's title can be understood as articulating her transference of the domestic from a private to a public realm. This transference becomes evident in the following section, "Setting Up Shop," which recounts the "great fun" (17) of refurbishing the bookstore and relates the changes wrought by the upholsterer, carpenter, and painter in preparation for opening day. Beach points out that "[t]he 'office furniture' in my shop was all antique" (18); quotation marks accentuate the inaptness of the term, its inability to do justice to a "charming mirror and a gate-legged table."<sup>9</sup>

Subsequent chapters reinforce this domesticization of Shakespeare and Company. Visitors from the United States are soon giving the bookstore as their address abroad. We learn that "children and animal customers" (56) are welcomed as warmly as adult clientele; young visitors are provided with toys and special children's books, and are permitted to admire the little china Shakespeare's House with its guard of toy soldiers. Indeed, Beach writes, "I was always glad to interrupt less

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<sup>9</sup> The indictment of John Quinn to be discussed shortly includes Beach's comment that the paternalistic lawyer was unimpressed with her store because of its "deplorable lack of office furniture and fittings": "this, coupled with the fact that I was a woman, aroused his suspicions. I could see that he was going to keep a stern eye on me in this Ulysses affair, and I was made to feel that I was very much to blame for being 'another woman,' as he called me" (62). Clearly, for Quinn the domesticization of the bookshop does not obfuscate the extent of Beach's power.

important business to show these members Larbaud's West Pointers and all my toys on top of the cupboard in the backroom; they had to be lifted up to see them" (106). Her dog, Teddy, performs tricks for customers, photos of whom line the walls like family portraits. Ezra Pound inquires whether "there was anything round the shop that needed mending" prior to fixing "a cigarette box and a chair" (26). Beach's ultimate decision to obliterate all traces of the bookstore rather than submit to its confiscation by the occupying Germans is consistent with her portrayal of Shakespeare and Company as something which transcends a mere business venture.

In a tribute to her following her death, Archibald MacLeish remembers Beach as "a bookseller who cared less for books than for the men who wrote them — whence the title of her shop — and less for the writers who *had* written than for those who might" (34). Beach herself announces midway through *Shakespeare and Company* that "human beings were more to me than works of art" (76). Elsewhere she comments on the inappropriateness of the term "lost generation," remarking "I can't think of a generation less deserving of this name" (206). The modernists she portrays are not lost souls searching solipsistically for meaning in a sterile and loveless world. Rather, they are individuals who display the full spectrum of human passions and anxieties in interactions among themselves and with her. Beach presents herself as an eager student of human nature, celebrating the richness of the writers' lives as well as the

idiosyncrasies which make each unique. Hence her declaration that “I learned with interest from Catherine Carswell’s book that when D.H. Lawrence washed the pots and pans, the tea towels that dried them always remained clean” (27), and her fascination with the way that Havelock Ellis’ and Arthur Symons’ lunch selections reflect their characters. On the one hand, this valorization of the personal reveals the distinct contours of a gynocentric modernism.<sup>10</sup> But in this case the exploration of “feminine” concerns also functions to mask “male” perogatives. The innocuously domestic voice Beach adopts tempers her account of rejecting Lawrence’s impassioned pleas that she publish his *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, and mutes her announcement that she is the Paris agent for Ellis’ controversial *The Psychology of Sex*.

As the preceding discussion implies, Beach consistently defines her relationship with customers and colleagues as a primarily personal, rather than professional, one. She frequently refers to individuals as “friends” and more than once uses the term “family” to describe the bookstore’s clientele as a whole. The description of the “skeered” admirers who, fearing to approach Gertrude Stein “without proper protection” (29), enlist Beach’s services as guide must surely be read in counterpoint to all those who gravitate naturally towards Shakespeare and Company’s warm

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<sup>10</sup> The central argument of Pamelyn Nance Dane’s study of the memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim, Margaret Anderson, and Kay Boyle is that the modernist women portray the years commonly associated with impersonality, sterility, and solipsism instead in terms of “passion, children, and community” (iii).

welcome. Beach's intimacy with the most celebrated (male) writers is especially apparent. Fitzgerald, whose name has become virtually synonymous with twenties' Paris, Beach describes as "[o]ne of our great pals" (116). Joyce is welcomed as the "most illustrious member" of the family (40); moreover, "Shakespeare and Company was very proud of being the godchild of Valery Larbaud, one of the most admired writers in France" (55). Hemingway, who goes by the self-appointed sobriquet of "best customer" (77), reappears at the very conclusion of the memoir as the conquering hero, ordering his company of soldiers to dispose of the last German snipers on the rue de l'Odéon. It is this incident, accentuating the bond between her and perhaps the most famous of her customers, which Beach selects to mark the end of the war and the Shakespeare and Company era.

Highlighting as she does the personal facets of relations with clientele, Beach downplays her role as bookseller and publisher in favour of a more conventional, maternal role.<sup>11</sup> Allusions to literary services appear selectively interspersed amidst

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<sup>11</sup> Maternal imagery is even more pervasive in the rough drafts of *Shakespeare and Company*. Examples include, "I had a busy time being the mother to all these people. Taking charge of their books and looking after their personal problems as well which was a great care" (Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 167, Folder 1. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library); "I thought my child should be called 'Shakespeare and Company'" (167/1); and "What would have become of the Contact editions without their foster mother?" (167/4). Another comment points to the integration of labour and life which, as we saw in the previous chapter, characterizes many women's experiences: "The bookseller's life is as hard as the housewife's with its ramifications and continual interruptions. As soon as I opened my bookshop I found myself with a big family of writers to look after ... In my business there was no office for the Head to retire to and everything was on one floor so to speak" (167/1).

depictions of more feminine favours. Thus she precedes her explanation of how she introduced Hemingway to French readers with an account of suspending business at the bookstore to admire the young writer's battle scars. The passage chronicling her difficulties with *Ulysses*' "Circe" chapter segues into an account of a desperate visit to her oculist during Joyce's attack of iritis. Her self-abnegating efforts on behalf of the beleaguered writer temper Beach's assertion elsewhere that her publication of *Ulysses* was becoming "an event of world-wide importance" (63).

The maternal persona is used to good effect as well in the portrait of John Quinn, the celebrated lawyer and art collector. During his two visits to Shakespeare and Company, Quinn makes no efforts to conceal his disapproval of either the store or its female proprietor. Beach recounts how he "walk[ed] up and down as he lectured me on my responsibilities" (62); immediately afterwards she describes his unyielding, and unreasonable, refusal to release his copy of *Ulysses*' "Circe" chapter after an outraged reader ignites the original. Beach appears to mitigate Quinn's behaviour through her implication that his blustering should be excused as the actions of a "very sick man" (62). However, the superficially deferential voice she adopts masks a tone of ironic amusement at his posturing, and she lets his condemnation of "'that stuff of Wyndham Lewis' and 'this rubbish of Yeats'" (62) speak for itself as testimony to his artistic tastes. The patronizing tone of the

section's conclusion — "I'm glad that I had this brief contact with him and that I listened patiently to his complaints" (62) — gives her the upper hand, indicating her willingness to humour Quinn while dismissing as inconsequential his misogynistic rants. Her motherly tone exemplifies Jane Marek's comment, cited in the previous chapter, that self-silencing was one strategy of resistance available to the modernist women (27).<sup>12</sup>

Beach's attentiveness to others' personal needs helps account, no doubt, for the hints of malice which tinge her portrait of Ezra Pound. Like Beach, Pound refused to distinguish between personal and professional aid in his efforts on behalf of aspiring writers, artists and musicians. For Joyce he performed such diverse services as consulting American eye specialists, arranging introductions in Paris, and providing him with clothes, all in addition to numerous literary favours. Beach may well have seen him as a rival of sorts and resented the way that his services — so similar in nature to hers — were granted a weight denied her own. Hence such remarks as "[h]e was busy with his work and his young poets" (27) and "[he] made a business of rescuing poets" (139), and the comment that he attended the *Ballet Mécanique* "to

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<sup>12</sup> In an unpublished portion of the memoir, Beach is more outspoken in her views: "Quinn was a very arragant [sic], strong-willed man, and liked to domineer over the writers and artists whom he patronized. Blustering, nothing else, as his friends agreed" (Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 166, Folder 5. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.)

see that George Antheil got a fair deal" (124).<sup>13</sup>

As we have seen, Beach mitigates her transgressive place in the androcentric world of modernist letters by evincing a concern for the personal accordant with social constructions of femininity. Another strategy she employs is to emphasize that her position as bookseller and publisher is that of an amateur. Her tactics here roughly parallel those adopted by the nineteenth-century women writers Ann Douglas discusses in *The Feminization of American Culture*. Douglas remarks that those authors of domestic literature evaded popular censure by defining themselves as housewives first, writers second (84). They were "professionals masquerading as amateurs" (85); literature, "with its apparent lack of professional requirements, could be treated as a hobby" (84).

Like these women, like Caresse Crosby and Margaret Anderson too, Beach "lived out a display of competence while [she] talked and wrote of the beauties of incompetence" (Douglas 93). The fact that she served as a "combination of apprentice, boss, and personnel" (*Shakespeare and Company* 104) until she acquired a

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<sup>13</sup> That Beach also resented Pound's autocratic behaviour is evident from an unpublished manuscript. She writes, "Mr Pound continued for a while his visits to the bookshop, then left off coming and I missed him very much." The next sentence she has crossed out: "Like Gertrude Stein and Sherwood Anderson, he was displeased with the rue de l'Odéon, but I don't think it could have been on account of Joyce in this case." Then, "I imagine he preferred ... a place with a vacancy for a boss." The ellipses mark another phrase which has been crossed out: "something he himself could run" (Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 166, Folder 1. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.)

assistant provides ample evidence of the general aptitude she brought to her chosen career. Unmistakable indications of her business astuteness surface as well in the memoir. Early on, she sternly rejects the “*rossignols*,” or “unsalable items” (19), sent her by the English bookseller Elkin Mathews, and her later transactions on Joyce’s behalf demonstrate both tenacity and shrewdness. She herself remarks at one point that she “was reputed to be hardheaded in business” (136). As Hugh Ford has noted of Beach, “[e]ven her attire suggested restraint and a no-nonsense approach to things. Removed from her bibliophilistic surroundings she might have passed for a corporation secretary, or a schoolmistress, prim, forceful, formidable” (*Published in Paris* 6).

The persona Beach fashions in the memoir is anything but formidable, however. She candidly confesses to being an “adventuress” (19) and asserts that the painter’s inadvertent description of Shakespeare and Company as a “Bookhop” (18) appropriately captures the store’s debut on the Left Bank. The informal system by which she keeps track of the library’s holdings would, she claims, horrify an American librarian, with “her catalogues and card indexes and mechanical appliances” (21). In the course of *Shakespeare and Company* Beach avows an ignorance of, among other things, proofreading, bookkeeping, Blake, and the recording and publishing industries. She marvels at Joyce’s willingness to “entrust his great *Ulysses*

to such a funny little publisher” (47) — although one is tempted to observe that Joyce’s straitened circumstances left him little alternative — and declares, “Undeterred by lack of capital, experience, and all the other requisites of a publisher, I went ahead with *Ulysses*” (47). Declarations of her amateurism at once mute claims of her indispensability and accentuate the enormity of her achievement.

Just as she diminishes the practical skills that guide Shakespeare and Company through two and a half turbulent decades, so does the woman who early on recognized the mastery of Joyce’s *Ulysses* downplay her literary expertise. Her own approach to writing she characterizes as purely pragmatic: “Seeing me writing something, Satie asked me if I wrote. I said yes, business letters. He said that was the best type of writing: good business writing had a definite meaning; you had something to say and you said it. That was the way I wrote, I told him” (154).<sup>14</sup>

Beach similarly rejects any pretense of critical sophistication with respect to others’ literary output. The deliberate vagueness of her assertion, cited earlier, that “[f]or some time I had had a particular interest in contemporary French writing” (9) suggests that her dedication to literature, while passionate, is that of a dilettante

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<sup>14</sup> In an interview following the publication of *Shakespeare and Company* Beach stated,

One of the criticisms of my book that interested me most was the one that said, ‘It’s strange that a woman who has lived among such fine writers never learned how to write, herself.’ That’s splendid. I never considered myself a writer at all, I don’t have to say so, even. I am just telling...it’s the chronicle of my bookshop, that’s all. (Matthews 148)

rather than a scholar. Later she writes, “Good writers are so rare that if I were a critic, I would only try to point out what I think makes them reliable and enjoyable. For how can anyone explain the mystery of creation?” (83) The statement epitomizes the modesty of her aspirations as literary theorist. Hastening to underscore her awareness that her functions at Shakespeare and Company do not qualify her for the more rigorous role of critic, Beach represents the creative process as something that is to her inexplicable, even mystical. Dismissing the New Critics’ warnings about affective fallacies, she focuses upon literature’s impact upon the reader. Joyce’s *Pomes Penyeach* “affected [her] deeply”; she detects in this poetry “a certain mystery present in all his work, the strange presence of Joyce himself” (175–76). Emotional response, not objective critical judgement, determines her preferences, and that response is evoked by traces of the author’s personality. This heretical refutation of high modernist doctrine is shared by Caresse Crosby and Margaret Anderson, as we shall see. The gulf between these women’s “sentimental modernism” (to use Suzanne Clark’s term) and the dominant (male) modernist aesthetic is underscored by Pound’s “contempuous” description of *Pomes Penyeach* as “the sort of poetry to be kept in the family Bible” (176).

Thus, Beach’s refusal to label herself a critic in fact masks claims for a feminized, anti-modernist criticism. A similar subversiveness underlies her statement that she is

“very fond of plain readers like myself. What would the writers do without us? And the bookshops?” (105). The phrase “plain reader” seems an incongruous one to describe the publisher of so highly complex and allusive a text as *Ulysses*. Beach likely excerpted it from the Proclamation for the “Revolution of the Word,” which had appeared in Eugene Jolas’ *transition* in 1929. The Proclamation summarizes in twelve points the tenets of the experimental literature to which the review was committed. It opens with a sharp indictment of those literary works “still under the hegemony of the banal word, monotonous syntax, static psychology, [and] descriptive naturalism”, and concludes simply, “The plain reader be damned” (Jolas, “Proclamation” 14). The author of *Shakespeare and Company* — a work which exemplifies the avant-gardists’ complaints — appropriates the term to fill out her portrait of a naive reader. However this portrait masks another: that of a woman who advises the English publisher of T.E. Lawrence and Joyce which American writer to publish; who is “at home” (183) in *Finnegan’s Wake* because she receives instruction in it by its author; and who offers “informal courses in American literature” (106) to her French clientele. Beach, that is, carves out a place in modernism for the “plain” — Clark would say “sentimental” — reader.

In keeping with her claim that she is not a critic, Beach offers assessments of specific writers or their works only sparingly. Brief remarks appear interspersed

amidst the feminine discourse of personal anecdote. At one point, for example, she describes how Adrienne Monnier impressed Sherwood Anderson with her chicken speciality. The passage concludes, somewhat abruptly, with the comment that, notwithstanding the decline in his reputation, Anderson “was a forerunner, and whether they acknowledge it or not, the generation of the twenties owes him a considerable debt” (32). In “My Best Customer,” Beach depicts a Hemingway who speaks “rather bitterly” (79) of his boyhood and who deftly bathes his infant son. The chapter ends,

As a bookseller and librarian, I paid more attention to titles perhaps than others who simply rush past the threshold of a book without ringing the bell. I think Hemingway’s titles should be awarded first prize in any contest. Each of them is a poem, and their mysterious power over readers contributes to Hemingway’s success. His titles have a life of their own, and they have enriched the American vocabulary. (83)

Beach’s tone is characteristically unassuming, yet quietly didactic. She neither elaborates upon nor substantiates her claim, but nonetheless articulates her opinion unequivocally and with assurance.

Elsewhere Beach defuses her literary commentary by articulating, as well as embedding, that commentary in a domestic or otherwise feminized discourse. The passage cited above likens a book cover to a housedoor; earlier in the chapter Beach notes that Hemingway’s works have “landed in schoolbooks, which is much more fun for the children than they have as a rule and very lucky for them!” (81) Joyce’s “effort

to be a good family man and respectable burgher,” while at odds with “the ‘Artist’ of the *Portrait*,” nevertheless “helped you to understand *Ulysses*”: after all, “there was a good deal of Bloom in Joyce” (42–3). Valery Larbaud’s writing has a “delicate flavour” and a “bouquet” reminiscent of “certain French wines” (55). (This last comment calls to mind the passage from *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in which vinegar, lemons, egg shells, and coffee are invoked to explain Matisse’s experiments with technique. Impersonating the domestic voice of Alice B. Toklas, Gertrude Stein writes, “I do inevitably take my comparisons from the kitchen because I like food and cooking and know something about it” (46).) Throughout *Shakespeare and Company*, the domestic and the personal pervade Beach’s response to literature as they do her life and work.

## V

As will be evident from the preceding pages, Beach’s memoir foregrounds interpersonal relations to an extent unusual even in female self-representational writing. Some of the relationships she depicts are tenuous at best. Her statement that she caught “only glimpses” of John Dos Passos “as he raced by” (111), though he did slip a photograph of himself under the door for her collection, smacks of namedropping: she appears to include it only because Dos Passos is a stock character,

albeit a lesser one, of the twenties memoir. With very few exceptions — namely Stein, Barney and Bryher — all of the modernist women are accorded the same perfunctory treatment. For example, Janet Flanner, Djuna Barnes, Mary Butts and Mina Loy merit one or two paragraphs each; of Kay Boyle Beach comments only, “With her talent for writing and for motherhood, she is considered one of the interesting characters in the story of the twenties” (140). Of the many figures who people the memoir’s pages, two are worth particular note: Adrienne Monnier and James Joyce. I would like to conclude my study of *Shakespeare and Company* with a closer look at these relationships.

A Frenchwoman who herself owned a bookstore on the rue de l’Odéon, Monnier played a key role in the establishment of Shakespeare and Company. Having initially provided Beach with valuable advice and personal connections, she in later years continued to counsel Beach on publishing and financial matters. In 1921, Beach moved into Monnier’s apartment where the two lived together until 1937, when Beach returned from a visit to the United States to discover that a young female graduate student had taken up residence with Monnier. Though this rupture marked the end of their intimacy, the two women remained friends until Monnier’s suicide, following a protracted illness, in 1955.

Very few of these personal details appear in the published version of *Shakespeare*

*and Company*, which focuses almost exclusively on the women's professional relationship. The brief accounts of visits to Monnier's parents' in the countryside, to a mountain retreat at Les Déserts, and to the Mediterranean coast provide the sole indications that the relationship extends beyond the two bookstores. The intimacy they share is evoked through descriptions of the women racing through the train gate with Beach's dog Teddy or of their sleeping arrangements in the hayloft at Les Déserts. This lesbian space is carefully circumscribed, however, and deliberately encoded. If the code remains not merely undecipherable but invisible to the average reader, it is because, to quote Leigh Gilmore, "[h]eterosexuality has been an unwritten context of the autobiographical subject" (208).

The portrait of Natalie Barney cited earlier offers one example of how this code operates. Although Beach accompanied Adrienne Monnier to Barney's Sapphic salons whenever she could escape her responsibilities at the bookstore, she appears to use this section of the memoir to dissociate herself from the lesbian community. The statement, "[a]t Miss Barney's one met the ladies with high collars and monocles" (115), certainly offers no indication of her own lesbianism, while her explanation that "many of [Barney's] sex found her fatally [attractive], I believe" (114) seems to distance Beach from not merely lesbians but all women. Beach's entertaining account of the woman who arrives at Shakespeare and Company seeking something "more

about *those unfortunate creatures*" (115) superficially reinforces this detachment from the lesbian community. Reading the memoir as a lesbian text, however, lets one interpret the italics as inscribing Beach's veiled amusement at the woman's patriarchal reading of female homosexuality. That is, Beach employs the italicized phrase to articulate an affinity with Barney and her lesbian guests which undermines her earlier attempts to distance herself from them.

Noel Riley Fitch points out that an unpublished draft of the memoir offers a more forthright description of Barney's visitors, but that Beach's editor objected to such candour (*Sylvia Beach* 72). The statement serves as a reminder that the author's censorship of her sexuality resulted not merely from her own reluctance to expose herself to public reprobation but equally from the qualms of her editor. Even so, Beach was by nature reticent about her homosexuality. As Shari Benstock notes, "[i]n her relationship with Monnier, Sylvia was silent on the subject of their shared sexual orientation, remaining reserved even with women friends — like Gertrude Stein and Alice Toklas — who were also lesbian" (*Women of the Left Bank* 209).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The rough drafts of *Shakespeare and Company* offer a highly indeterminate treatment of Beach's sexuality. In one version she writes, "On account of my Wilde picture and my partner Bill's [Shakespeare's] sonnets and perhaps because of my tailormade costume, adopted for convenience in my business, I was adopted without any trouble by the intermediate-sexers" (Sylvia Beach Collection, Box 167, Folder 4, CO108, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.) Quotation marks enhance the ambiguity of another statement: "Everyone 'knew' that Mr Joyce was my lover, and homosexuals had no difficulty in reconciling that with the 'fact' that I was also one of them" (168/1).

*Shakespeare and Company* is dedicated to Adrienne Monnier, and Beach repeatedly uses the memoir to express her gratitude for the other's support and advice. She explains that it was Monnier who found a vacant shop to house Shakespeare and Company, Monnier who promised to send her "lots of customers" (16), and Monnier who "initiated [her] into the mysteries of limited editions" (48). The fact that the proprietors of the two bookstores shared the American writers between them even leads Beach to observe at one point, "There should have been a tunnel under the rue de l'Odéon" (116). Beach's determination to portray a working relationship which is, to use Fitch's rather saccharine phrase, "sweetly uncompetitive" (*Sylvia Beach* 53) is nonetheless jeopardized by her simultaneous desire to distinguish her Shakespeare and Company from Monnier's Maison des Amis des Livres. Her explanation that the latter "gave one the impression of peacefulness" (105) in contrast to the former's boisterous unruliness is followed by the not-so-subtle reminder, "but then, Adrienne hadn't a Joyce on the premises" (105). Elsewhere Beach remarks disingenuously, "So Shakespeare and Company in 1921 moved to the rue de l'Odéon and Americanized it; and very very French though Adrienne was, we did our best to annex her, too" (61).

If her relationship with Monnier constitutes an important but submerged component of *Shakespeare and Company*, Beach's relationship with Joyce forms the

memoir's backbone. Over a third of the sections describe Joyce's person, his writing, or Beach's efforts on his behalf; many others allude to him less directly.<sup>16</sup> Beach's elaborate accounts of her Joycean labours — which included publishing multiple editions of *Ulysses* as well as single editions of subsequent works; arranging the translation, serialization, and promotion of his writing; performing research for his works; and managing financial and other practical matters for him and his family — dominate the memoir. This has prompted Shari Benstock to observe,

It has often been claimed that Sylvia Beach would not be remembered today had it not been for her courage in undertaking the publication of *Ulysses*. It was Joyce's text that brought her fame and — many thought — fortune. Without this book, she would have remained what she was before and after his arrival in her life — a Left Bank librarian and bookseller. That she herself was convinced of the truth of such an assessment is evidenced in *Shakespeare and Company*. (*Women of the Left Bank* 221)<sup>17</sup>

Perpetuating the myth of Beach's self-effacing modesty, Benstock fails to explore the possibility that Beach consciously highlights and manipulates her portrait of Joyce to underscore her own influence. Mary Grimley Mason's model of the "Other," introduced in the previous chapter, offers fuller insight into this subject.

<sup>16</sup> The Joycean sections of the memoirs were actually published three years prior to the rest as a Christmas gift book entitled *Ulysses in Paris* (Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 412).

<sup>17</sup> Benstock's position is clearly invalidated by a letter in which Beach angrily responds to Joyce's proposal that she relocate her bookstore to the United States to facilitate the fight against Samuel Roth's piracy of his work: "Shakespeare and Company was my invention, and although it is on a very different level from a *Ulysses* ... all the same it was something I could really claim as mine. Don't forget that my bookshop and Company was already in full swing when Joyce came along" (qtd. Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 259-60). Elsewhere in the unpublished manuscripts Beach makes similar claims for her store.

Joyce's dominance of *Shakespeare and Company* clearly supports Mason's theory that the female autobiographer typically invokes another consciousness to structure her text. Beach nevertheless deviates from Mason's model in important ways. Her determination to guard her personal privacy means that she carefully limits and edits disclosures of her relationship with Joyce; though Mason argues that the Other "enable[s] women to write more openly about themselves" ("The Other Voice" 22), Beach strenuously resists such candid self-revelation. Furthermore, since Beach's portrait of Joyce is shaped primarily by her wish to foreground her indispensability to his career — rather than vice versa, as Benstock contends — he is represented not as a fully autonomous being but as one whose existence is largely dependent upon her own. A third departure from the theoretical model concerns Mason's point that the female autobiographer charts a "recognition of rather than [a] deference to" her Other ("The Other Voice" 22). In fact, Beach regularly assumes a deferential stance towards Joyce to temper her claims of the celebrated writer's reliance upon the proprietor of a little Left Bank bookstore.

The dramatic opening to chapter five — "It was in the summer of 1920, when my bookshop was in its first year, that I met James Joyce" (34) — immediately establishes Joyce's arrival upon the scene as a climactic event in the history of *Shakespeare and Company*. In the pages which follow, Beach distinguishes the Irish

writer from her other customers by painstakingly detailing every aspect of his exceptional character. The reader learns of his prodigious memory, his voracious literary appetite, and his unfailing consideration for others. (This last point will, alas, be undermined somewhat by subsequent revelations of his behaviour.)

Beach's demeanor towards the man she calls "the greatest writer of my time" (37) is one of awed reverence. Recounting her arrival at André Spire's party, she states, "I worshipped James Joyce, and on hearing the unexpected news that he was present, I was so frightened I wanted to run away" (34). Shortly afterwards she describes her first encounter with him: "Trembling, I asked: 'Is this the great James Joyce?'" (35). Beach's account of her behavior mirrors that of the awed admirers of Gertrude Stein she had mocked only pages earlier, and it is unconvincing given her easy familiarity with other modernist leaders. Unconvincing too is her comment regarding Joyce's "one-man revolution" with language (141): what about Stein? one is tempted to ask. Equally unpersuasive — in light of the literary egos she describes elsewhere — is Beach's claim that Hemingway, Fitzgerald, McAlmon and the others regard Joyce as "their god" (40). By elevating Joyce above his fellow writers in this way, however, Beach indirectly magnifies her own stature as his publisher.

Beach uses rather more subtlety to elevate herself above her fellow publishers. Chapter six, grandiosely entitled "Shakespeare and Company to the Rescue," begins

with an elaborate description of the history of attempts to bring *Ulysses* to press. The passage traces a sort of matrilineal descent, detailing the struggles of first Harriet Weaver in London and then Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap in New York. Relayed through such lofty phrases as “the future looked dark” and the “battle of *Ulysses*” (45), the history reaches a climax with Beach’s spontaneous suggestion that she herself publish Joyce’s much maligned novel.<sup>18</sup>

Beach pays homage to her colleagues’ ingenuity and perseverance in handling prudish subscribers and prudent printers. She eulogizes the *Little Review* as “the liveliest little magazine of the period” (47) and later canonizes the editor of the *Egoist* as “Saint Harriet” (74). Nonetheless, her decision to include the publishing history of *Ulysses* in *Shakespeare and Company* is clearly a self-serving one. In the ensuing chapters she will demonstrate how the difficulties experienced by the other women would be dwarfed by her own; hence, their difficulties effectively highlight both the extent of her efforts and the magnitude of her achievement. Beach underscores the defeat of Anderson and Heap with her assertion that the censor’s fourth seizure of the *Little Review* — which was serializing Joyce’s novel at the time — “put an end to

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<sup>18</sup> How spontaneous this offer actually was has been laid open to question. Citing a letter written by Beach to her mother in 1921, Harriet Weaver’s biographers assert that “[i]t had already occurred to her that she, wholly inexperienced though she was, might undertake the colossal task” of publishing *Ulysses* (Lidderdale and Nicholson 179). Fitch suggests that it may in fact have been Joyce who proposed that Beach publish his novel, substantiating this point with a quotation from the unpublished memoir: “I accepted with enthusiasm Joyce’s suggestion that I publish his book” (qtd. *Sylvia Beach* 78).

the magazine" (47). Linking the *Ulysses* ordeal directly to the demise of the *Little Review* allows Beach to underscore by contrast Shakespeare and Company's ability to endure. She conveniently neglects to mention the fact that the journal survived the obscenity trial which followed, moved to Paris to explore new literary developments, and continued publication until 1929.

Earlier in this chapter we saw that Beach maintained that *Shakespeare and Company* was "a history of a bookstore."<sup>19</sup> In fact, her memoir is more than a history of the shop: it is a forum to air her achievements, acknowledge her debts, and, perhaps most importantly, clear up persistent misconceptions, especially regarding her relationship with Joyce. Several allusions to the enmity she incurred within the literary community appear within its pages. "I'm afraid some of the writers didn't like my exclusiveness in publishing only Joyce, but perhaps they didn't realize that I was almost swamped already with my one author" (138), Beach remarks at one point. Elsewhere she cites a letter in which the pirate publisher Samuel Roth labels her "that vicious virago, Joyce's secretary Sylvia Beach" (182). The postcard George Bernard Shaw sends Pound — an image of Joyce's "editresses" (53) as the four tearful Marys at Christ's entombment — is more subtly misogynist, trivializing the women's efforts through mockery. Beach employs her memoir to counter such

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<sup>19</sup> Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 168, Folder 1. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.

attacks. Leigh Gilmore notes, “women have frequently been compelled to adopt defensive postures in autobiography and to argue for some claim to the discourses of truth-telling it deploys” (46). Beach’s assertion that “you couldn’t persuade anyone that Shakespeare and Company hadn’t made a fortune” (93) exemplifies the stance Gilmore describes.

However, Beach more typically adopts the by now familiar self-effacing voice to silence her critics. Although her private correspondence reveals that her decision to publish Joyce’s novel was motivated largely by expectations of financial recompense and publicity for Shakespeare and Company,<sup>20</sup> the published memoirs tie Beach’s travails to more altruistic impulses. Her readiness to indulge Joyce’s insatiable “appetite for proofs” (58) offers one example of the selflessness which marks her efforts for *Ulysses* and subsequent projects. She recounts her response to the printer’s suggestion that she attempt to curb Joyce’s propensity for revision to minimize her expenses:

But no, I wouldn’t hear of such a thing. *Ulysses* was to be as Joyce wished, in every respect.

I wouldn’t advise “real” publishers to follow my example, nor authors to follow Joyce’s. It would be the death of publishing. My case was different. It seemed natural to me that the efforts and sacrifices on my part should be proportionate to the greatness of the work I was publishing. (60)

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<sup>20</sup> For example, in one letter Beach informs her mother that “*Ulysses* means thousands in dollars in publicity for me;” in another she writes, “*Ulysses* is going to make my place famous ... if all goes well I hope to make money out of it, not only for Joyce but for me” (qtd. Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 78).

Among other examples of Beach's selflessness: her struggles to have one copy of *Ulysses* completed in time for Joyce's birthday, her persistence in ensuring that he is adequately recompensed by other publishers — Beach, pointing to her own lack of profit, employs this opportunity to defend herself against charges of greed — and her willingness to sell *Pomes Penyeach*, at a loss, for a mere shilling.

Beach's disregard for her own welfare is increasingly juxtaposed with Joyce's materialism and self-absorption. Late in the memoir she complains of his indifference to the practical problems encountered by his publisher; elsewhere she describes *Ulysses* as "his big investment," out of which he tried "to get as much ... as he could" (96). As the memoirs progress, Joyce becomes ever more dependent upon the proprietor of Shakespeare and Company:

Joyce and *Ulysses* had practically taken over the bookshop in the rue de l'Odéon. We attended to Joyce's correspondence, were his bankers, his agents, his errand boys. We made appointments for him, won friends for him, arranged all the business of the translations of his work published in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia. (88)

Earlier Beach had recounted how "little sums [of money] went to and fro between the Shakespearean cashbox and Joyce's pocket" (75), and then how the transactions became increasingly one-sided. The description of Joyce's reluctance to relinquish Beach to the Monniers for her weekends in the country further testifies to his inability to manage without her.

As Beach relates Joyce's growing dependence on, and periodic abuse of, her services, her tone undergoes a subtle change. An early suggestion of tensions to come occurs within pages of her first encounter with him. She concludes her description of Joyce's discomfort over discussion of risqué topics in mixed audiences by commenting tersely, "Yet Joyce had no objection to putting *Ulysses* into the hands of ladies, or to ladies publishing it" (41). That opportunism becomes particularly evident with the second printing of *Ulysses*. The published memoirs do not explicitly state that Joyce failed to inform Beach of his negotiations with Harriet Weaver for this edition or that the ensuing discord put a strain on the Joyce/Beach relationship.<sup>21</sup> In the version that does appear in the published work Beach's displeasure over the incident is nonetheless obvious. She explains that Joyce "had dashed over to London shortly after *Ulysses* came out and had arranged the whole business, with his usual haste" (95) while she was kept occupied by problems arising from the exportation of first editions to the United States. Acknowledging that she should have considered the booksellers who had not had time to clear out their original stock prior to the arrival of a second edition, Beach nevertheless implicates her colleagues in her error. In tones of assumed innocence she declares, "Apparently Miss Weaver and Joyce saw nothing strange in this procedure, for it seems that in a

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<sup>21</sup> See Hugh Ford's *Published in Paris*, pages 23 to 25, for one version of the incident.

letter to Miss Weaver, Joyce expressed surprise at having heard from Miss Beach that the Paris booksellers were complaining" (97).

If problems over the second printing of *Ulysses* tested Beach's relationship with Joyce, those surrounding the American edition would sever it entirely. The published memoirs understate Beach's actual response to Joyce's clandestine and duplicitous negotiations with publishers in the United States, censoring, for example, her observation in a rough draft that "I never saw such a man for secret maneuvering" (qtd. Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 322). Beach does, however, make the loudest claims yet for her sacrifices on Joyce's behalf and expresses frustration over her lack of compensation for them. Noting that Joyce had instructed his London agent to address her as his "representative," not his publisher, she writes, "It was exactly as if they were proposing to publish a manuscript, not to take over a book that had been published by someone else for almost ten years" (202). She abandons the muted tones of the maternal narrative to articulate her galled recognition that her selflessness had been rewarded with — had indeed fed into — this trivialization of her services.

The issue of the American edition reaches a head when an old friend of Joyce, (recruited by him for the purpose, though this is not stated) informs her that the contract Joyce himself had initiated is invalid and that she is only "standing in the

way of [his] interests" (204). Beach immediately telephones Joyce to announce that she will make no further claims upon his novel. Her half-hearted attempt to resume the self-effacing maternal narrative now rings painfully false: "And, after all, the books were Joyce's. A baby belongs to its mother, not to the midwife, doesn't it?" (205).<sup>22</sup> The section concludes with a brief account of Beach's refusal to engage in further transactions with Joyce on the grounds of exhaustion and the neglected needs of her store. After this point Joyce disappears from the memoirs, even his death in 1941 going unacknowledged.

Even as her displeasure over his treatment of her becomes increasingly apparent, Beach continually exonerates Joyce of blame.<sup>23</sup> She concludes a two-paragraph long list of her responsibilities to him by asserting, "I was free to refuse all these services, of course, and if I accepted the Joycean job, it was because I enjoyed it immensely"

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<sup>22</sup> Benstock has this to say about the passage:

One doubts that Beach, who had risked so much on Joyce's behalf — nearly risking her bookshop because of the financial support she had given his work — really believed that she was merely the midwife to his literary creativity. Even if the sentiment were true, the metaphor nonetheless reflects a strangely mixed response to womanhood. It is significant that Beach chose to describe her contribution in terms that are role-defined: even among women there appears to be an order determined by biological rights, in this case the mother's over the midwife's. (*Women of the Left Bank* 20-21)

<sup>23</sup> This is certainly not true of the suppressed versions of the memoir, which were far more outspoken in their criticism: "Sylvia Beach progressively lost her nerve at each stage of *Shakespeare and Company*. In Princeton you can find what she really thought — far darker, bitterer, more appropriate to a real woman who was near-paralyzed by migraine headaches than the brisk cheery Girl Scout leader of the final version" (Maddox 83). As we have seen, such figures as Pound, Stein, and Barney are likewise treated far more charitably in the published memoir.

(88). Later she explains that “the pleasure was mine — an infinite pleasure; the profits were for [Joyce]” (201). Chapter twenty contains an in-depth analysis of Joyce’s extravagance, rendered particularly effective by contrast to the austerity of life at Les Déserts. In between details of his propensity for first-class travel, overtipping, and elaborate banquets, though, Beach remarks upon his natural desire to compensate for the poverty of his youth and to reap the rewards of years of labour. The ambiguities which permeate Joyce’s portrait issue from multiple layers of conflict. Beach’s “iron-willed determination to repress anything that might undermine the public identity she had so carefully assumed” (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 212) clashes with an equally firm resolve to finally claim the recognition she deserves. Her enormous respect for the man and his work are tempered by a resentment of the way he exploited her services.<sup>24</sup>

In *Women of the Left Bank* Shari Benstock remarks of Beach,

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<sup>24</sup> Fitch writes, “Sylvia’s emotional response to the break with Joyce was contradictory, as was her treatment of him, which was by turns affectionate and reproachful. Joyce was like a lover in whom she had invested twelve of her best years” (*Sylvia Beach* 326). Several statements from the unpublished drafts summarize Beach’s conflicting emotions towards Joyce. Of the contract affair she writes, “Personally I saw him in another light after this, not only as a very great writer but also a great business man, hard as nails;” he was a “great, loveable but merciless man” (Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 166, Folder 3. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.). Later she describes the pleasure of working for Joyce, “up to the discovery of a certain unsuspected ruthlessness where his interests were concerned;” to this she appends a handwritten comment: “which never affected in the slightest my admiration for the writer but resulted in my withdrawal from all of his affairs” (167/4). Another comment suggests a further source of conflict: “Probably I was strongly attracted to Joyce as well as to his work, but unconsciously. My only love was really Adrienne” (167/4)

Our impressions of her, filtered through her own memoir and through the memories of others, have been of a woman somehow lacking the stamp of personality. Her self-effacing attitude, her discretion, her service to others, have often been read as weakness or reticence in the face of the overpowering egoism, for instance, of a Joyce or Stein. (222)

Like so much else in the story of the modernist women, Beach's character has been misread and her contributions to the movement distorted. The minister's daughter from New Jersey not only catalyzed literary creation among the writers congregated in Paris but "retained her identity in a crowd of dominant personalities" (Fitch, *Sylvia Beach* 17). The self-effacing tone which characterizes her memoir bespeaks neither weakness nor subservience to more outspoken literary colleagues. Rather, Beach adopts the maternal persona to mask the very real power she exercised in her role as, among so many other things, bookseller, librarian, and publisher. Pamelyn Nance Dane suggests that the domestic themes in Kay Boyle's autobiographical dialogue with Robert McAlmon, *Being Geniuses Together*, constitute an acknowledgment of "the narrative she is supposed to be living, that of wife and homemaker" (21). Dane does not explore the subversive potential of this acknowledgment. Nonetheless, we have seen that if "mother" is substituted for "wife" her argument applies as neatly to Beach as it does to Boyle. Change "wife" to "hostess" and it becomes equally applicable to Caresse Crosby.

## Chapter 3

### The Society Pages: Caresse Crosby's *The Passionate Years*

The word on her lips is always YES, and all her being says YES YES YES to all that is happening and all that is offered her. She trails behind her, like a plume of a peacock, a fabulous legend. She ran the Black Sun Press in Paris, lived in a converted windmill, knew D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, André Breton, painters, writers. At the Quatre Arts Ball she once rode a horse as Lady Godiva. (Nin 3: 15)

Like *Ulysses'* Molly Bloom, Caresse Crosby responded to life with a fervent "Yes."

For almost eight decades she embraced life's challenges and offerings with an affirmation which was at once unapologetically sensual and profoundly spiritual.

Oriented always towards a roseate future, Crosby combined a thirst for the new with an "indestructible idealism" (*The Passionate Years* 59) in a potent blend which spawned careers so divergent as avant-garde publisher and political activist. She indulged her appetite for gourmet food, expensive wines, and, most of all, entertaining company in society parties that became fodder for the international media. Her story is told in the fittingly entitled *The Passionate Years*, originally named

with equal aptness “The Answer is Yes: An Autobiography.”<sup>1</sup>

A superficial reading of *The Passionate Years* suggests that it is as dissimilar to *Shakespeare and Company* as Caresse Crosby to Sylvia Beach. Whereas Beach arduously resists self-disclosure, Crosby situates herself front-row centre. While the days Beach describes are consumed by caring for her “family,” Crosby’s are filled with dress fittings and elegant luncheons. Beach struggles with poverty and literary piracy, Crosby with guest lists and unruly chauffeurs. These obvious differences conceal fundamental similarities, however. Most notably, both autobiographers figure professional interactions as personal relationships, Beach by assuming the role of self-sacrificing mother figure, Crosby by highlighting her status as glittering society hostess. Furthermore, both women locate those professional interactions within a feminized realm, a realm over which they, as mother or socialite, hold uncontested sovereignty.

Critics of Crosby’s text, as of Beach’s, have failed to read beyond the surface of the persona it constructs. Geoffrey Wolff, the only scholar to comment on *The Passionate Years* at all, remarks derisively that Crosby “uses the kinds of symbols and social shorthand to draw herself that one gossip-ridden matron might use to draw

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished draft of *The Passionate Years* (Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 4, Folder 2. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.)

*The Passionate Years*, published in 1953, chronicles Crosby’s existence until the Second World War. An unpublished sequel, entitled *Who in the World?* resumes where *The Passionate Years* leaves off. That manuscript is in the Caresse Crosby Collection at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

and quarter another matron while at tea with a third" (77). Paralleling *Shakespeare and Company*, *The Passionate Years* has been denied literary validity by critics who fail to recognize that its depictions of domesticity and stereotypes of femininity encode claims of the author's indispensability to modernism.

## II

Caresse Crosby arrived in Paris with her husband in 1922, the peak year of the American migration and the same year that Sylvia Beach presented Joyce with his birthday copy of *Ulysses*. Christened Mary (Polly) Phelps Jacob, Caresse was the descendent of a prominent New York family. She could trace her paternal lineage back one thousand years and counted Governor William Bradford among her maternal ancestors. As with Beach, her contact with illustrious names began early: offspring of the New York social and political élite comprised her playmates and, later, her dance partners. Harry Crosby, Caresse's second husband, was scion to an even more distinguished Boston dynasty. His relatives bore names culled from the pages of American history: "Uncle Jack" Morgan, "Cousin Walter" Berry, Colonel John Schuyler Crosby, General Stephen Van Rensselaer.

With their emigration to Paris, the young Crosbys sought to escape that weighty heritage. Once in the French capital they became increasingly engrossed in the arts,

and within a few years both Caresse and Harry had submitted collections of poetry for private publication. In 1927, they began to publish their work themselves under the imprint Editions Narcisse, named for their stately black whippet. By the following year, the firm, now rechristened the Black Sun Press, was publishing literature by other writers as well. Geoffrey Wolff, Harry's biographer, summarizes the evolution of the press thus:

[It was] begun in 1927 as a noncommercial outlet for their own work, extended briefly as a vanity publisher for other writers, and pursued in earnest as a showcase for writers as yet unknown or distrusted by commercial publishers, and as a nonprofit enterprise which produced deluxe editions of the work of celebrated writers. During the Twenties the Black Sun Press published books by Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Crane, Proust, MacLeish and Kay Boyle. (174)

Like that other husband and wife publishing partnership, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, the Crosbys maintained "a strict control over quality" (King 371). Eager participants in every stage of the publication process, they quickly achieved renown for the exceptional elegance of their products. To quote Millicent Bell, "All of the Black Sun Press books have been notable for the successful fusion of the writer's, the illustrator's, and the designer's points of view. In a few cases, the Crosbys even illustrated as well as designed books written by themselves — thus making every aspect of the book a personal expression" (4). Writers were encouraged to participate in the creative process and the couple was frequently guided in their decisions by an

author's wishes. For example, D.H. Lawrence furnished a drawing and decoration for the Black Sun Press editions of his *Sun* and *The Escaped Cock*. At the Black Sun Press, as at both Shakespeare and Company and the *Little Review*, interpersonal relations were part and parcel of the publication process.

In December 1929 Harry Crosby died in a sensational suicide pact with his young lover, leaving Caresse in full control of the press. Two years later, she founded the Crosby Continental Editions, producer of inexpensive reprints of avant-garde literature. In its first year alone, the C.C.E. published an eclectic assortment of ten American and European authors, including Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Dorothy Parker and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The list of publications comprised several works not previously issued: "the translations of the novels by Saint Exupéry and Alain Fournier, having been done especially for the series, could be considered first editions, and Miss Boyle's novel *Year Before Last ...* was appearing on the Continent for the first time" (Ford, *Published in Paris* 224).

Crosby's publishing operations continued intermittently throughout the 1930s, and isolated publications appeared during the '40s and '50s. However, the postwar period saw an increased diversification of her interests and activities. Leaving Paris, she established the Crosby Gallery of Modern Art in Washington, courting controversy with its exhibitions of Surrealist art. Later, she founded *Portfolio: An*

*International Quarterly*, a journal featuring experiments in literature and the visual arts in the tradition of the by-now-defunct *transition* review. Crosby was becoming increasingly drawn towards political activism as well. That interest manifested itself in her involvement with the World Citizen movement and in her organization of Women Against War, a body committed to achieving universal peace by mobilizing women worldwide. Later still, Crosby acquired an Italian feudal castle called Rocasinibalda to house pacifists and exhibit works by resident artists. Caresse Crosby died in 1970 at the age of 77, just as a fortune teller had predicted many years earlier.

Extraordinary as Caresse's life story is, it has always been eclipsed by that of her second husband. Malcolm Cowley devotes a forty-page chapter of *Exile's Return* to Harry Crosby, postulating that Harry's life exemplified the themes of psychic exile and demoralization intrinsic to Cowley's construction of the expatriate experience. Harry's suicide becomes for Cowley "a symbol of change" heralding the death throes of an entire era: "It was not so much that he had chosen the moment for suicide as rather that in his disorganized frenzy the moment had chosen him" (288). Caresse, on the other hand, Cowley mentions very little, and even then only in relation to Harry.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Frederick Hoffman includes Harry's biography at the conclusion

<sup>2</sup> It is worth pointing out that in *The Passionate Years* Caresse Crosby refutes Cowley's version of history. Writing with uncharacteristic vehemence, she states that "Malcolm Cowley's imaginative remarks in *Exiles* [sic] *Return* are fiction. We never knew him in those days; nor he us" (292).

of his study of American modernism but evidently finds Caresse's story unworthy of mention.

All of the evidence indicates that the Black Sun Press was very much a joint project between husband and wife. Generally Harry selected prospective titles for publication and Caresse performed the editing and typological design (Wolff 175). Caresse's biographer, Anne Conover, argues that in fact, "Caresse was the driving force behind the Press, with an uncanny knack of picking winners among the vast smorgasbord of unknown writers in Paris. She had a rare gift of nurturing the poets, painters, and novelists who came seeking recognition, tea, and sympathy" (*Caresse Crosby* 16). (Anaïs Nin memorably describes Caresse as "a publisher who played the writers as others of her set played the horses" (4: 225).) Hart Crane's letters reveal that negotiations regarding the press's publication of *The Bridge* were carried on primarily with Caresse, even prior to Harry's death. Archibald MacLeish praised the Black Sun Press edition of his *Einstein* with the words, "This was quite a book to make for a man. Somebody, and I rather suspect it was Caresse, had taste. I know that Harry had it too, but somebody *really* had it" (qtd. Wolff 183). And Harry himself worries in one of his diary entries about the demands made by the press's simultaneous publication of six different books: "[it] makes things too complicated

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Appropriating control over her representation, she replaces Cowley's nihilistic narrative with the life-affirming fictions of her own creation.

and much too much work for Caresse" (*Shadows of the Sun* 276).

Despite this evidence of her indispensability to the press's operations, Caresse's literary function has been subjugated to Harry's, even as her life story has been subsumed by his. For instance, Hugh Ford describes the same division of labour as Wolff does above, but details Caresse's professional activities only after her husband's death: his account of the pre-December 1929 Black Sun Press features Harry as the principal organizer and decision maker. Edward Germain similarly implies that Caresse's involvement with the press began subsequent to Harry's suicide.<sup>3</sup>

At least as detrimental to Caresse's literary reputation as the attention garnered by her husband has been the by-now-familiar "cult of personality." Typical is this review of the autobiography, tossed among her papers and yellowed with age:

<sup>3</sup> Germain writes that Harry Crosby

was the man to publish D.H. Lawrence's *Sun* and *The Escaped Cock*, and the *Einstien* of his friend Archibald MacLeish, *Short Stories* by Kay Boyle, poems by Jolas, and sections of Joyce's *Work in Progress* — all making the transformation from manuscript to book in the jumbled printshop of M. Lescaret, now *Maître Imprimeur*. After Harry's death, Caresse continued the press until World War II, publishing works by Ezra Pound, Dorothy Parker, William Faulkner and James Joyce. (15–16)

Hugh Ford follows Cowley and Hoffman in devoting far more attention to Harry's personal life and literary output than he does to Caresse's. He explores in detail the significance of Harry's wartime experiences and his obsessive worship of the sun but makes no allusion at all, for instance, to Caresse's entry into the artistic circles of the Left Bank. Harry's collection of poetry, *Red Skeletons* receives a two-page long explication; Caresse's *Painted Shores* is dismissed in two sentences as a combination of "newsy revelations of [the Crosbys'] social life with some disquieting reflections on its consequences" (*Published in Paris* 171–72).

Mrs Crosby, who financed and ran a precious, fancy-pants press in Paris and published bits by Joyce, Eliot, Huxley, Pound, Faulkner, etc., in limited, expensive editions, actually fancies herself an artist, a critic, and an arbiter of taste, although she gives no evidence of having read anything and is practically illiterate in her management of syntax.

Nonetheless, despite everything I have said, Mrs Caresse Crosby has undoubtedly led an interesting life. It is a shame someone hasn't written it. (Rascoe)<sup>4</sup>

In the eyes of the reviewer, Crosby's transgressive flirtation with modernist publishing is mitigated very slightly by the allure of her personal life. Nonetheless, Rascoe elsewhere offers a scathing mockery of, among other things, her participation in the notorious Four Arts Ball and her visit to a Paris opium den. He also derides her involvement with the World Peace movement, thereby confirming Shari Benstock's thesis, cited in my introductory chapter, that modernist women writers who ventured into alternate enterprises have been especially devalued.<sup>5</sup>

Crosby's credibility as a serious literary figure has been compromised by one aspect of her "cult of personality" in particular, namely her relative affluence. A passage from the same review of her autobiography illustrates this point:

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<sup>4</sup> Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 4, Folder 5. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

<sup>5</sup> Benstock's claim that "such diversification signalled indecision, an inability to persevere in a single endeavour, or a lack of talent" (*Women of the Left Bank* 387) is further substantiated by Geoffrey Wolff's assessment of Caresse: "Polly [her childhood name] skipped from ambition to ambition. She always showed flair, was quick to catch the drift, but had no staying power" (109). The final phrase is particularly unjust in light of Crosby's lengthy publishing and political careers. A more insightful Anaïs Nin captures her friend's character as "[t]he motion, *mouvement perpetuel*, due to her saying 'yes' to all life" (4: 15)

It is appalling that rich camp-followers of the arts, such as Harry and Crosby and others like them, have any connection with literature and the other arts whatever. They corrupt by making their favorites into "vogues," thereby not only making it seductively profitable for persons of talent to cater to their capricious and ignorant tastes, but also by establishing vicious norms of aesthetic judgement which starve and exclude other, individual, and often better talents from a proper hearing.

The harsh attack on the Crosbys' enterprise invokes the perceived gulf between the avant-garde and "corrupting" commercial interests discussed at the beginning of this dissertation. Clearly, one can refute Rascoe's criticism on a number of grounds, not least the fact that there were few "better talents" among the modernist writers than the ones published by the Black Sun Press. Furthermore, the Crosbys, like most of their counterparts at other private presses, were guided primarily by altruistic motives, not by self-interest as Rascoe implies. Indeed, the press "gave their generous impulses an opportunity for dignified expression in that they could, as they often did, pay high prices for rights to books they could not hope to sell in adequate numbers to return their investment" (Wolff 174).

As with Sylvia Beach's *Shakespeare and Company*, the publication of *The Passionate Years* reinforced popular preconceptions of its author's character and lifestyle. Just as Beach perpetuated the Madonna myth with her maternal persona, Crosby's self-portrait clearly did little to persuade the Burton Rascoes of the world to regard her as a legitimate literary figure. Response to both texts illustrates the veracity of Sidonie

Smith's argument regarding speaking postures available to the female autobiographer. Predictably, Beach's self-effacing "maternal narrative" failed to engender a more rounded understanding of her responsibilities; accusations of narcissism and frivolity levelled at Crosby's rendition of the "paternal narrative" likewise obviated serious consideration of her achievements. A scholarly analysis of *The Passionate Years*, hitherto nonexistent, reveals, first, how that text perpetuates and exploits the aestheticization of Crosby's life, and, second, how representations of her social preeminence comprehend previously unrecognized claims of her literary centrality.

### III

If Beach implements various strategies to efface herself from *Shakespeare and Company*, Crosby goes to equal lengths to establish herself firmly at the centre of *The Passionate Years*. As she traces her life story from a patrician childhood and adolescence to a troubled first marriage, from the tumultuous Paris years to a brief third marriage in Virginia, Crosby continually foregrounds the features which mark her existence as unique. It is she who becomes the envy of her school when Cole Porter bestows his attentions upon her, and she who is initiated as the first Girl Scout of America. Later it is she who first hears Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis circling high above the anxious crowds at Le Bouget airfield, and she who stumbles

into a dinner gathering of the German High Command. By distinguishing herself from her fellows she lends credence to claims of her ability to dominate assorted social groups. Crosby describes her need for attention even when very young with the words, "I was the first child, I should have hated not to be" (4). The statement strengthens her much later claim that "Extravagant in talk and in action, I was often the centre of an exhilarated group" (299). Similarly, the synopsis of her boarding school years — "the track team, of which I was captain, the hikes of which I was leader, and the Shakespearean plays enacted in the flowering orchard, and of which I was heroine" (47) — anticipates revelations of subsequent distinctions: for instance, her election as mascot of the Beaux Arts atelier and victorious procession as an Inca princess borne aloft by a giant dragon at the famous Four Arts Ball. *The Passionate Years* constitutes an affirmation of its author's "unique potentiality" (Smith, *Poetics* 52), a potentiality realized most notably in her emergence as a celebrated socialite.

Clearly, then, the representation of Crosby's personal development flaunts the "self-assertion, self-absorption, and self-exposure" manifest in the paternal narrative (Smith, *Poetics* 52). If the Editions Narcisse was named after her black whippet, one is tempted to ask for whom the dog was named. Throughout her autobiography, Crosby flaunts stereotypes of female narcissism in much the same way Margaret Anderson does in *My Thirty Years' War*. For example, her account of a New York

dinner party concludes with a detailed description of the Schiaparelli dress and jewelry she wore, and of the green peppermint which was “the perfect accessory to that *toilette*”: “I looked my best and I guessed that I was cresting the breakers of society’s opinion” (268). This preoccupation with self is elemental to the socialite persona, the fabrication of which we shall shortly examine more closely.<sup>6</sup>

A handwritten poem in Crosby’s collected papers offers an even more overt — and equally unabashed — treatment of the narcissus motif. Entitled “My Bed,” it reads:

I have a bed as soft as fleece  
 Gauze curtains like a fairy’s gown  
 A pale rose satin counterpiece  
 Silk pillows filled with eiderdown  
 And at the head and at the foot  
 Two lovely mirrors clear and bright  
 That I may see how nice I look  
 When I am ready for the night.<sup>7</sup>

If the mirrors evoke Narcissus’ pond, they also reflect a highly sexualized scenery.

Pervasive in *The Passionate Years* as well, that uninhibited sexuality distinguishes

Crosby’s autobiography from most other specimens of the genre. As Sidonie Smith

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<sup>6</sup> Caresse’s proposed theme for the unpublished sequel to *The Passionate Years* — “How I became aware of the world outside my Self” — implies that she perceived her increased involvement in political and social movements after World War II as signalling at least a diminution of her narcissistic impulses (Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 4, Folder 6. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale).

<sup>7</sup> Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 1, Folder 3. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

notes, the female autobiographer typically effaces the figures of sexuality from her text. On the one hand, the paternal narrative of “androcentric selfhood” necessitates the “repression of the mother”; on the other, the maternal narrative, or “‘good woman’ fiction,” requires the “suppression of female eroticism, though not, of course, self-effacing love and devotion” (*Poetics* 55). In either case,

the autobiographer acknowledges, sometimes explicitly, more often implicitly, an uneasiness with her own body and with the sexual desire associated with it. Moreover, woman’s goodness is always marked by her narrative and dramatic orientation to sexual desire. Thus, as she writes, she both asserts her authority to engage in self-interpretation and attempts to protect herself from the cultural fictions of female passion and contaminated sexual desire. Given the cultural alliance of woman’s speech with the forces of unleashed sexuality in Western discourse, giving the exacting expectations of female goodness such association enjoins, the woman who would write autobiography must uphold her reputation for female goodness or risk her immortal reputation. (55–6)

In jarring contrast to Smith’s paradigm, Crosby replaces the “nice girl” stereotype with that of the *femme fatale*. The only reputation she seeks to cultivate is that of the irresistible, much-sought-after life of the party. While there is no direct evidence to support her biographer’s claim that she amassed a total of “some 200 lovers” (Conover, *Caresse Crosby* xii), Crosby blithely, albeit discreetly, describes a steady stream of paramours during as well as after her marriage to Harry. (She is equally candid about Harry’s notorious penchant for illicit liaisons.) Indeed, F. Scott Fitzgerald, who propositions her during his only appearance in the autobiography, is one of the few men she chooses to resist. Like Margaret Anderson, Crosby is keenly

aware of the power her sexuality exerts and joyously willing to exploit it. The lascivious art instructor, the Turkish policeman, the Spanish prince, the Egyptian thugs: all fall victim to her many charms. And far from manifesting the uneasiness with body and desire Smith discusses, Crosby exhibits a brazen delight in her sensuality. Hence her unself-conscious account of abducting a young Adonis for some afternoon sport in the countryside, or of paddling along the Seine in her swimsuit to the accompaniment of cheers and whistles. The exercise was, she claims, “good for the breasts!” (106) and indeed it must have been, for her exposed “*nichons*” help bring victory to her atelier’s float at the Quatre Arts ball (132).<sup>8</sup>

As with Molly Bloom, Joyce’s fictional creation, Crosby’s robust sensuality is one expression of her “passionately affirmative view of life” (Levin 666). When Harry asks her to join him in suicide, Caresse’s overwhelming love for him cannot alter the fact that there can be only one answer for her: there is “so much to live for” (249).

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<sup>8</sup> Crosby’s unabashed sensuality is even more overt in the unpublished manuscript. A description of her bathtime reflections is marvelously Whitmanian: “My God, it’s marvellous to have a nice body,’ I thought. ‘It works so well, it smells so deliciously,’ and I sniffed at my soapy armpits” (Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 3, Folder 10. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.) She is also more explicit regarding her sexual liaisons, for example recounting how she once entertained three lovers at the Mill at the same time (3/10).

Shari Benstock argues that the exploration of sexuality is a common theme in modernist women’s writing. According to her, both heterosexual and lesbian women expatriates “discovered *sexualized* writing identities in expatriation” and in doing so “changed the history of modern women’s writing, charting the terrain of female sexuality from female perspectives” (“Expatriate Modernism” 28). Benstock suggests that this radical subject matter may have been partly responsible for the women’s exclusion from modernism.

An ardent idealist, she declares at one point that “I always believe that had I had diamonds enough to finance the dreams I have dreamed, much that is wrong with the world would never have come to pass” (34). The private manifesto she issues in 1928 for a “Caressive Community” upholds the “Marxian ideal of eighty years before” but adds a few amenities geared towards helping the masses to “share the fun”: “free entertainment,” picnics and parades, “lots of flags!” (325). Vehemently refuting the post-war era’s ethos of despair, Crosby never falters in her faith in humanity’s capacity to ameliorate its condition. The autobiography closes on a note of ringing affirmation, one which surely demands to be read as an echo of *Ulysses*’ final words: “The answer to the challenge is always ‘Yes’” (342). That sentiment marks all of her endeavours, both personal and professional. The elaborate system of pulleys and harnesses the five-year old Crosby devises to propel her perambulator, doll carriage and wagon; the perpetual motion machine she doesn’t quite invent and the brassiere she does; her determination to master the ins and outs of life on a Virginia plantation; and of course her assorted publishing and political projects: all underscore Crosby’s receptivity to change and challenge.

If her healthy sensuality is one expression of Crosby’s zest for life, her love of entertainment is another. Like the protagonist of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, she gathers people around her as a vital celebration of life: “That’s what I do it

for’,” Clarissa Dalloway says, “speaking aloud, to life” (108). The fictional creation and her flesh-and-blood counterpart both weave a web of human interaction. Compare Anaïs Nin’s portrait of Caresse with Virginia Woolf’s description of Clarissa. Nin states, “A pollen carrier, I thought, as she mixed, stirred, brewed, concocted her friendships by a constant flux and reflux of activity, by curiosity, avidity, amorousness” (3:15). And Woolf writes, “Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and someone else, say, in Mayfair ... and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but for whom?” (109) That troubled “for whom?” points to a crucial distinction between the two women’s motives. Clarissa Dalloway unites people physically in an attempt to counteract their spiritual alienation: her parties constitute a “greeting to other beings across the emptiness which she sees at the heart of life” (McLaurin 14). Caresse Crosby, on the other hand, vehemently refutes that model of alienation and offers community — in the guise of her parties — to prove it.

#### IV

In 1931, a reporter for the Universal Wire Service proclaimed Crosby’s social stature in Paris to be “without parallel in the history of society in this capital of art

and letters and pleasure” (qtd. Conover, *Caresse Crosby* 65). Beauty, charm, and “fortuitous circumstances” had, he declared, “played a part in the metamorphosis of this society butterfly into a welcomer of the great who come as callers, to create that impressive entity known as a salon.” During the 1920s, guests encountered at the Crosby residence might include “André Gide, or Hart Crane, or Goops the Gunman, models from Chanel, bookies or photographers, artists or Archibald MacLeish” (Conover, *Caresse Crosby* 7). The eclectic assortment of writers and royalty, playboys and playwrights who encircled Crosby during those years, and who would be brought so vividly to life in *The Passionate Years*, comprised a distinct departure from the company she had kept prior to her arrival in the French capital.

The first third of Crosby’s autobiography is given over to an extensive account of her sheltered upbringing amidst the social élite of New York and Boston.<sup>9</sup> Her family, “a decorous clan” (8), raise her in accordance with the strict codes of behaviour governing an upper-class household at the turn of the century. As an infant she is wheeled around Central Park in an “elegant Brewster baby sleigh of white enamel” by her nursery maid, “Delia from Cork” (3). Swimming expeditions at

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<sup>9</sup> Crosby not only devotes a sizeable chunk of her autobiography to her early years but also dedicates the work “To the secure years of childhood, to those years unblemished by fear, unscarred by war — to the cambric years of fun and faith.” Her preoccupation with childhood evokes Patricia Meyer Spacks’ observation regarding the female autobiographer: “For women, adulthood — marriage or spinsterhood — implied relative loss of self. Unlike men, therefore, they looked back fondly to the relative freedom and power of childhood and youth” (48).

the age of seven are complicated by a bathing costume composed of a “top and bloomers in one piece and a very full skirt banded with white piqué that buttoned on over the bloomers at the waist” (8). As Mary Phelps Jacob enters adolescence, the same strict codes of behaviour dictate which social events she attends: the Yale Prom, hunt balls, a royal garden party, cotillions, and countless debutante balls and luncheons. Her first visit to Paris, in 1914, is a shopping trip for a gown suitable for her presentation at Court — a distinct departure from what we have come to define as the “typical” expatriate experience.

With her marriage to Harry in 1922, however, Crosby “became a rebel” (101). Her revolt against her “crystal-chandelier background” (4) had been presaged by earlier events, most notably her decision to bob her hair preparatory to pursuing a short-lived acting career and her invention of the brassiere as an alternative to the constraints of the conventional corset. (The brassiere patent is reproduced in all its technical glory at the conclusion of the Ecco Press edition of *The Passionate Years*, just ahead of a section headed “What Famous Authors Say About Crosby Editions.”) In terminating her brief first marriage and eloping with Harry she finalizes the break with convention: “By *that* act of emancipation and by the conquest of desire over obedience, opposing the code of a conformist upbringing, I, of my own volition, entered into a life of adventure” (101).

Henceforth the Crosbys' life together would be shaped by a determined repudiation of the past. Of their decision to join the American exodus to Paris Caresse states, "Harry and I were actually escapists from the society in which we had been brought up" (102). After several years, they take a further step to sever their roots. Harry leaves his comfortable position at the Paris Morgan bank to become a poet, he and Caresse having agreed that "a fat income and a life on the Park Avenues of the world" is less tempting than the "immediate joy" and possibility of fame offered by a life of letters (128). Nonetheless, discordant notes persistently weaken Crosby's claims of mutiny. It is at the elegant home of the Count and Countess de Beaumont that the two see their first Picasso. Crosby's accounts of riding topless in the mouth of the dragon or entertaining visitors in the Pompeiiian bathtub further suggest that the rupture with her background is not as complete as she maintains. She is, after all, essentially still the socialite of her youth; her socializing has merely assumed rather less genteel forms.

That the Crosbys' break with the past is far from absolute is indicated as well by her assertion, uttered apparently without irony, that "in the escapist tradition ... we avoided all home ties (except letters and money)" (141). The life of extravagance she depicts — a life subsidized largely by contributions from home — is a far cry from the impoverished existences of Sylvia Beach and Margaret Anderson; the contrast

highlights the fact that “[e]ven so narrow a critical category as white Anglo-American women’s modernism must acknowledge privilege as an important site of difference” (Elliott and Wallace 124). Though Crosby claims, “We were not rich by plutocratic standards” and stresses her “knack of making the pennies glow,” she adds tellingly, “I never tried to balance a budget in my life unless I’d added the necessary heading, ‘Experience and Fun’” (124). Furthermore, her declaration that “money weighed very little in the balance of my decisions, and to actually sacrifice joy for cash would have been very bad indeed” (128) bespeaks an indifference to finances which only the wealthy can afford. In any case, Crosby’s accounts of gambling at the casino, of betting at horse and whippet races, of journeys to exotic locales, and of innumerable social festivities supply little evidence of financial constraint.

The portrait which emerges of Crosby in *The Passionate Years* is, in short, that of a wealthy woman of leisure. Considerable attention is paid to details of clothing, jewelry and general appearance, and an explanation such as “my ‘page-boy’ bob, which looked divine with the golden suit, was all wrong with Back Bay tulle” (189) is not uncharacteristic. Completing the portrait is the requisite housepet, not a lapdog but a black whippet who “supp[s] from silver” (171) and sports a gold necklace with toenails lacquered to match. Mornings at the press — reached by chauffeur-driven limousine — are followed by afternoons at the couturier. The intervening hours are

dedicated to “well-planned little luncheons” attended by, among others, the surrealist writer René Crevel (whose *Mr Knife, Miss Fork* she published in 1931), Salvador Dali, Cole Porter, and Elsa Schiaparelli, her fashion designer (278). The autobiography comes complete with a checklist of essential ingredients for the successful party, as well as a key to the intricacies of the social hierarchy: “To be invited [to a party] and to attend is A plus. To be invited and not attend is A minus, but not to be invited at all is D minus” (294).

Crosby’s own preeminence within this hierarchy is evidenced by the attention she generates. Of one circle of old friends she states, “We always did receive the best everywhere, and we were the gayest, the most lavish, the most envied in Paris that season — 1934 — the very gizzard of the glamorous years” (298–99). Nor is her renown confined to the French capital. Her socializing is reported in the *New Yorker* and *Town and Country*, and during one visit to New York she becomes the “subject par excellence for speculation”: “Was I as hedonistic as the old wives told?” (267). Later in the autobiography Crosby employs the “darling of the paparazzi” persona to feminize her account of introducing Salvadore Dali to America. As she relates the tale, she had offered to accompany the nervous artist and his wife on the crossing. Upon entering New York’s harbour, she recognizes several “reporter friends,” one of whom approaches her with the “usual request for a photograph”(320). When the

cameras have ceased clicking, she inquires whether Dali is included on their list of visiting luminaries. Informed that he is not, Crosby, with a brisk “Come on, boys” (321), leads them to where he sits tied by string to his paintings. The reporters greet Dali’s “melting watches” and “lamb chops” (321) with uproarious derision, but Crosby, unfazed, launches into a brief lecture on surrealism. Almost instantly Dali becomes a celebrity in America, and his stature is further increased by the “Dream Party” Crosby throws in his honour the following year.

Crosby’s determination to guard her social preeminence colours her portraits of Edith Wharton and Gertrude Stein, almost the only two literary women portrayed in *The Passionate Years*. Her relations with Wharton, a foremother of the expatriates and a fellow salonière, become strained after Crosby inadvertently — though one suspects, unrepentantly — puts Wharton’s nose “slightly out of joint” by usurping her role as hostess of Walter Berry’s “famous little luncheons” (109). The “chilliness” (109) which subsequently marks the women’s relationship becomes positively icy when Wharton launches a “Grab Act” on Berry’s library following his death (212).<sup>10</sup> Gertrude Stein, whose salons helped make her the most visible of the

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<sup>10</sup> In her own autobiography, *A Backward Glance* (1934), Wharton depicts a life pattern in many ways remarkably similar to Crosby’s. Both women could point to extensive and illustrious family genealogies, and both grew up in a New York which had, to use Wharton’s words, “slowly but continuously developed from the early seventeenth century to my own childhood” (55). Wharton recounts engaging in the same genteel amusements — lawn tennis, dances, boating and bathing parties — that Crosby would enjoy thirty years later. While Wharton does not highlight her social activities to the same extent as Crosby, she does outline the requisites for a successful salon and

women modernists, is treated with considerable ambivalence. Crosby notes disapprovingly that one encounter with her at a party was “no fun, too much like an audience with the Pope or Elizabeth Marbury — each aspirant was led to the footstool like a mule to the well” (225). Immediately afterwards, however, she adopts a very different tone in a ploy to reverse the hierarchy. Recounting Stein’s attendance at a post-war exhibition of American art organized by Crosby, the latter marvels, “She sat in the centre of the tiny room and almost stole the show, my show, but even when she walked off with the best-looking GI in the place, I forgave her” (225). Crosby’s coy announcement of her graciousness in forgiving Stein’s presumption is particularly amusing in light of the other’s well-known lesbianism.<sup>11</sup>

In underscoring the self-indulgence of her lifestyle — at one point she describes life with Harry as a “hedonistic adventure” (101) — Crosby duplicates standard representations of interwar Paris. Her affluence admittedly distinguishes the tenor of her memoir from those of other expatriates; nonetheless, *The Passionate Years* evokes the careless *joie de vivre* so often associated with the era. The madcap antics, freely

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expend upon the responsibilities of the hostess. These similarities between the women’s lives, and particularly between their social personae, no doubt fuelled Crosby’s need to define herself against Wharton in *The Passionate Years*.

<sup>11</sup> Crosby’s more candid version of the incident in the unpublished manuscript offers a revealing glimpse of the complex power dynamics between the two women: “[Stein] sat in the centre of the tiny room and almost stole the show, but it was my show nonetheless mine and my own brilliant artists — at last we met on equal terms and our liking for each other was nurtured” (Caresse Crosby Collection, Box 3, Folder 8, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale).

flowing alcohol, and sexual license, the whimsical “It was all such fun!” (186), situate the text firmly within a tradition of expatriate literature which was well ensconced by the time she wrote. Indeed, Crosby goes so far as to elevate her experience to a sort of apotheosis of the Lost Generation:

“Yes,” and never “no” was our answer to the fabulous twenties. We built a gossamer bridge from war to war, as unreal as it was fragile, a passionate *passerelle* between a rejected past and an impossible future. Perhaps no such span of years (only two whizzing decades) have ever so amazed and disturbed a generation. Harry Crosby and I briefed the pattern of our times and, unknowingly, we drew the most surrealistic picture of them all. (128)

Even as she perpetuates the legend of the Roaring Twenties, however, Crosby parallels Sylvia Beach in detaching herself from its myths. She hastens to point out that there was more to life than parties and pernod, noting that the “riotous hours of entertainment” were interspersed with “secluded hours of work” (133). She and Harry “went to sleep by midnight and ... worked busily all day. It was only the early evenings that were so gay. We went out hardly at all. I never owned an evening gown all the time we were married” (188–89). The reader may be forgiven feelings of scepticism at these claims; nonetheless, they point to a reality beyond that chronicled in *The Passionate Years* and hint at the literary responsibilities suppressed by the socialite persona.

Crosby’s delineation of her social loyalties further defines her experiences against those of the “typical” expatriate. Notwithstanding her own history, she professes to

be drawn more towards the “European *avant gardists*” than to the “American *escapists*”: her milieu, like Beach’s, is trans-national. She declares, “Many of the American writers and artists of the 20’s whom I might have known I never met. My life reflected only one or two of the facets of that kaleidoscopic era” (292). The key to this uncharacteristically emphatic claim lies in Crosby’s comment that she and Harry typically bypassed the gang at the Dome café in favour of champagne cocktails at the Ritz (292). Throughout, she aligns herself primarily with the international jet-set crowd, not with the American pseudo-bohemians or even the “European *avant gardists*.” Still, her renunciation of the expatriate scene is undermined by memorable accounts of her relations with the characters most closely associated with twenties’ mythology, particularly Hemingway, Pound, and Fitzgerald. Like both Beach and Anderson, Crosby recognizes that the autobiography’s appeal rests to large extent in the enduring allure of the expatriate mythos.

However, it is in setting that *The Passionate Years* departs most from standard, male-authored representations of the period. As in *Shakespeare and Company* and *My Thirty Years’ War*, domestic space and not Montparnasse cafés provides the backdrop for rendezvous. “I don’t like to go out very much, to a friend’s house yes, but to a restaurant *no*” (293), Crosby announces to her readers. Accordingly, the Crosbys’ first encounter with Joyce occurs in his tidy but “unimaginative” (181) apartment off

the Boulevard des Invalides. Caresse's futile attempt to convince Picasso to render Joyce's portrait for the Black Sun Press edition of *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun* takes place in the studio atop his Faubourg St. Honoré residence; she points out that while few Americans even knew of Picasso's work at the time, she received a personally guided tour of his collection. She watches Brancusi, the sculptor, carve a pullet with a sculpting knife in his whitewashed atelier, and is lured into "confessions and regressions (but no transgressions)" (271) by F. Scott Fitzgerald at his Baltimore residence.

More often, though, it is the Crosbys' own residence which is stage to their adventures. Analysis of the complex, even rather bizarre, portrayal of domestic life in *The Passionate Years* can be fruitfully approached via Sidonie Smith's discussion of the autobiography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Smith remarks that the nineteenth-century political activist initially appears to embrace cultural constructions of ideal womanhood by positioning herself squarely within the enclosure of domestic space, her "natural" domain ("Resisting the Gaze of Embodiment" 86). Stanton employs the familiar figures of sentimental fiction to trace the conventional stages of female maturation: childhood, youth, courtship, and marriage. However, the script of ideal femininity begins to unravel once the roles of wife and mother have been fulfilled. Stanton's husband all but disappears from the narrative and her children are

relegated to the textual sidelines. After this point, the “shadow existence” (87) of her family functions solely to legitimize Stanton’s account of her “unfeminine” participation in the abolitionist and suffrage movements. Now the domestic script strains against the “alternative teleology” (89) of the political activist. To quote Smith, “Stanton uses her position as wife and mother to screen her self-asserting presentation of herself as ‘individual,’ as ‘man,’ as ‘metaphysical self.’ This double-positioning underwrites the tensions, points of opposition, and contradictions of and in the text” (90).

“[P]oints of opposition” punctuate Crosby’s text as well, and here too they signify divergences within a bi-layered narrative. The only mother among the women I study, Crosby begins by chronicling a conventional tale of female self-realization: she recounts the pangs of puppy love, the thrill of the first kiss, engagement and marriage to a childhood sweetheart named Dick Peabody. Almost immediately, however, wrinkles appear in the script. With her husband away at war, Polly Peabody and her two infants are forced to take shelter in the funereal quarters of her new in-laws. When Dick finally returns to the family, his inability to cope with either the horrors of his wartime memories or the passive domesticity of home life manifests itself in depression and an increasing dependency upon alcohol. Unable to cope any longer, his wife finally determines to terminate the marriage. Her unease

over this departure from the domestic script is signalled through the telling remark, “I would not care to tell all this if I could not tell also of Dick’s remarkable recovery after our divorce” (81). Only after she has acknowledged the obligations of the dutiful wife by establishing Dick’s well-being does the narrative loop back to the earlier, portentous first encounter with Harry Crosby, the “other man” with whom she was by then already madly in love.

From this point onwards, Crosby’s adherence to the domestic script becomes increasingly tenuous. She had earlier demonstrated her commitment to motherhood by declaring, “I was aware of my maternal obligations, and I loved my children” (78), a sentiment confirmed by displays of anxiety and maternal intuition when her daughter requires emergency surgery. However, Harry’s jealousy of the children and horror of domestic maternity now thrusts Caresse into a “double-positioning” similar to that Smith describes. Her account of the crossing to Paris dramatizes her delicate negotiation of two diametrically opposed roles:

I had to play both the lead and the sustaining rôle in my drama, and both parts were very exacting and very dissimilar. To be a spectacular bride and a devoted mamma, a sort of saint and sinner combination, on one and the same voyage, was complicated but exciting. I actually managed beautifully; when Mary took to her berth as nursemaids always do, I made a sort of hide-and-go-seek game for the children (aged six and four) and if Harry suspected that perhaps I said I had appointments with the hairdressers or masseuses more often than I looked it, he was happy and gallant enough to make no comment. (102–3)

As *The Passionate Years* becomes increasingly the glamorous tale of Crosby's metamorphosis into an international socialite and, less overtly, avant-garde publisher, the children fade into the background. They are dispatched to fashionable boarding schools abroad; in one memorable episode young Polleen is, at Harry's instigation, relocated from the main house into a renovated toolshed. Sporadic reversions to the domestic script do appear, as when Crosby declares that "there were many times when my feet were in the Ritz and my heart was in the nursery" (159). Tellingly, though, the guilt implicit in that statement — an example of tensions generated by the double-positioning of the subject — clouds all allusions to motherhood. Hence too Crosby's poignant response to winning the Mother's Race at Billy's graduation: "Sometimes I think that this was the most I have ever been able to do for my son" (127).

As we shall see, Harry Crosby does remain a key character of *The Passionate Years* until his death, in contrast to Elizabeth Cady Stanton's husband. However, he is hardly the prototypical husband of conventional domestic narrative, with his mercurial nature and obsessive propensities. Nor does the Crosby marriage bear much resemblance to what one might loosely term a "typical" union. Husband and wife fluctuate wildly between blinding passion for each other and bitterness over both side's adulterous affairs.

Furthermore, Caresse's "alternative teleology" of the *femme fatale* intersects with the conventional role of wife and mother to create a peculiarly sexualized domesticity. The Crosbys' bedroom comprises the "heart of the house" (129). Caresse recounts that it was not unusual for them to entertain in bed, with guests dining on champagne and caviar at small tables around them. Subsequently, those guests would be invited to join their hosts in a vast marble tub overlooking an open fireplace and multitudinous bath accessories — an invitation of which the visitors, accustomed to rather more primitive conditions in Latin Quarter rooms, would gratefully avail themselves. After the notorious Quatre Arts Ball, Crosby arrives home to find Harry bathing with "three pretty girls," ostensibly scrubbing paint off their backs; that night their bed sleeps seven, including one man whose identity they never discover (133). The Wildean flamboyance and decadence Crosby associates with the domestic is a far cry from its conventional connotations of oppression and containment.

In her study of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's autobiography, Sidonie Smith comments that its domestic script is subverted in part by depictions of the author's itinerant lifestyle. Smith writes, "whatever lip service [Stanton] might give to the centrality of the 'home' for women, the text constantly displays a kind of homelessness, albeit it a wealthy homelessness, not one of poverty but one of

constant travel" (88). In *The Passionate Years*, it is not so much constant travel as, paradoxically enough, a profusion of homes which hints at a "wealthy homelessness." Detailed descriptions are offered of a miniature pavilion behind the Cimetière Montparnasse, of the elegant eighteenth century hôtel in the "gratin gratin" Faubourg St. Germain (123), of Crosby's New York apartment and Virginia plantation — to name but a few. Most memorable of all, though, is the old mill outside of Paris. Once inhabited by Jean Jacques Rousseau, it stands on the property of Count Armand de la Rochefoucauld, from whom the Crosbys purchase it in 1928.

The Moulin de Soleil fulfills a role roughly analogous to Beach's Shakespeare and Company. By making a domesticized version of her bookstore the focus of her memoir, Beach is able to highlight the personal facets of interactions with her clientele. Similarly, Crosby can represent her professional relations with colleagues as social by portraying the writers and artists at play at the extensively renovated mill. Amidst the film stars and nobility, they lounge by the pool, indulge in a game of donkey polo, or relax with a drink prepared by a bartender from the Ritz. Here Hart Crane and the chimney-sweep he brings home one night track hundreds of sooty hand- and footprints over the rosebud wallpaper and frilled pincushions of young Polleen's room. (Crosby comments, "That I forgave him sufficiently to agree to publish *The Bridge* shows that my good manners as a hostess did not fail me — nor

my good sense as a publisher" (238).) Here too Max Ernst, "Doyen of the Surrealists" (294) and illustrator of the Black Sun Press edition of René Crevel's *Mr Knife, Miss Fork*, prepares a magnificent bouillabaisse for a highly successful costume ball. Crosby explains:

Week after week that season the Surrealists gathered at the Mill. Jacques and Donald and René, the Ernsts and the Dalis were regulars, and to these delightful and spirited gatherings were always added a half-dozen droppers-in. I welcomed and wined them with enthusiasm. I was Queen Mistress of my own small realm. (292)

Crosby's appropriation of the regal sobriquet highlights the power she wields within this domestic sphere. Her comfortably feminine role as society hostess overlays her more vital status as publisher of the avant-garde. In related fashion, she elsewhere describes breakfast parties as an effective way of luring the "busy businessman" to her board: "one can bait one's hook with eggs and bacon and entice many a fine fish to the lure" (293). The Chinese pajamas she sports for these appointments lend a typically Crosby-esque touch to the proceedings.

The flavour of that memorable era is dramatically captured in Crosby's description of the "guest book on the wall":

From the cobbled dining room to the rafted living loft, a narrow stairway ran, with whitewashed wall. On this wall, we asked our friends to sign their names. Upon a ledge by the newel post was ranged a rack of little jars, in each a vivid color and in a pewter jug was water and beside it an assortment of watercolor brushes. Our guests had fun emblazoning that book. When I left the Mill the stairway was a kaleidoscopic pattern of multicoloured

names; among them were both royalty and rogues but more were artists, and not a few of these, Surrealists. The fumes from masterchef Kurnonsky's *pot au feu* haloed the regal signature of "George," and D.H. Lawrence's Phoenix clawed at the embellished graph of Indira, Maharanee of Cooch Behar, Louis Bromfield and Salvador Dali interlocked l's for the only time in history and Hitler's Eva Braun, who once dropped in for a drink with a Viennese White Hunter, and Lady Koo who signed "jade," could have been sisters on that wall. I wish I might have taken it with me when I left. It was the German troops billeted there in 1940 who painted our world out! (243–44)

The vivid metamorphosis of the wall into an *objet d'art* epitomizes the conjunction of the domestic and the artistic so characteristic of *The Passionate Years* as well as *Shakespeare and Company* and *My Thirty Years' War*. Crosby reconfigures professional transactions as social interactions, then further feminizes her narrative by inscribing the names of prominent colleagues and friends upon a domestic space. Like the "guest book," the description of her New York apartment subtly but unmistakably establishes her centrality to both the historical moment and the modernist movement: "With Virgil Thompson at one piano and Nicholas Nabakoff at the other and a Picasso over the fireplace, the room was immediately photographed for *Town and Country* (or was it for *Vanity Fair*?)" (314).

That conflation of domestic and artistic characterizes Crosby's accounts of her own literary efforts as well. Contextualizing allusions to her poetry with domestic detail is one strategy she employs to deflect attention away from her transgressive foray into the male-dominated world of modernist letters.

## V

Although Caresse Crosby was author to six published volumes of poetry, three of which were released through the Black Sun Press, little evidence of her industry appears in *The Passionate Years*. Allusions to her poetry, as to her publishing projects, are interspersed meagerly between details of her newest Schiaparelli gown and so-and-so's dinner party. As we shall see, on those isolated occasions that Crosby does offer more extensive descriptions of her writing, she typically relates her work to domestic themes and/or her husband, or dismisses it as the flawed efforts of an amateur.

That self-consciousness is absent from portrayals of her earliest literary endeavours. Crosby's formal schooling was, like that of most of her modernist sisters, elementary at best. Raised as she was amidst the New York elite, her education was oriented largely towards the requisite female accomplishments: riding, skating, and dancing. Nonetheless, Crosby recounts in *The Passionate Years* supplementing those studies with a steady diet of reading, so much so that her parents were at one point obliged to limit her intake. In 1902, when Crosby is ten, that passion for the printed word manifests itself in her first publication, the "Madison Avenue Gazette" (34). Despite her valiant efforts, the gazette folds; with the wisdom of hindsight, its editor

speculates, “Perhaps the ‘one-man’ approach to publishing is what ruins such ventures, and how unsparingly history repeats itself. Could it be that *Portfolio* [Crosby’s post-WWII quarterly] has lately languished for the self-same reasons?”

(35) Undaunted by the setback, young Polly subsequently submits an ode, “O wonderful, beautiful Springtime world,” to a poetry contest sponsored by the *St. Nicholas* magazine. As yet unfamiliar with the word “type,” she inadvertently arranges to have the piece professionally printed, only to be reprimanded by the authorities for her attempt to submit “published material” (36). Again *The Passionate Years*’s narrator ruefully correlates the experience with more recent events: “The fact that ‘Spring’ constituted my first limited edition as a publisher and thereby added twenty-five years to such standing (les Editions Narcisse’s *first* was in 1927) could not at that time justify the hurt” (36).

Crosby relates descriptions of her youthful literary efforts with candour, secure in the knowledge that the child is granted a license denied the grown woman.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, the passages quoted above mitigate allusions to adult publishing ventures by aligning those ventures with childish experiments. The correlation between Crosby’s “Spring” poem and the founding of the Editions Narcisse, for instance, establishes her credentials by tracing her commitment to literature — not

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<sup>12</sup> Again Patricia Meyer Spacks’ comments regarding “the relative freedom and power” (48) the female autobiographer associates with childhood and youth seem relevant here.

to mention her entrepreneurship — to an early age. At the same time, that implicit claim of authority is clearly moderated through reference to bathetic juvenilia.

In contrast to the uninhibited accounts of youthful enterprise, explications of literary projects undertaken as an adult are couched in dissemblance. To begin with, Crosby follows both Beach and Anderson in underscoring her amateurism. Midway into *The Passionate Years*, she recounts her “first taste of Latin Quarter life”:

Harry was working at the bank every day and I with Paris in my pocket felt I should do more with such opportunity than housekeep, rhyme and dine. It was our second winter in Paris and I decided I would try to become an artist. Since Harry had begun to write, I felt that that branch of the arts could be left to him. (113)

The passage represents Crosby as a dilettante, a role that Anderson too manipulates to great effect, particularly in the third volume of her autobiography. Crosby’s self-portrait is of a bored housewife who decides to dabble in the arts as a means of passing the time; her choice of the visual arts is a superficial one, predicated solely upon a reluctance to crowd her husband’s domain. For her, the route to the ateliers of the Left Bank lies by way of the financial institutions and aristocratic residences of the Right Bank. Initially directed to the fashionable but stuffy Julian’s Academy by Harry’s employers, she subsequently lands at the atelier of the lascivious Maître Q. on the recommendation of an Italian countess. Crosby finally ends up at the Atelier de la Grande Chaumière, where she is taught by Fernand Léger and the sculptor

Bourdelle. Allusions to her prestigious instructors and to fellow students who are “all famous now” (115) hint at the genuine artistic talent obscured by the persona she fashions.<sup>13</sup>

The dilettante role similarly helps feminize, and thus trivialize, Crosby’s poetic endeavours. After expressing “utter astonishment” over Houghton Mifflin’s eagerness to publish her work, she observes of the printed text, “and not a word was changed since that summer day when I chewed my pencil on a cliff above Etretat and, as in the *St. Nicholas* years, rhymed dove with love” (213). Regarding her eagerness to join the other signers of Eugene Jolas’ Manifesto for the Revolution of the Word, she states, “I was unqualified really, user of easeful cliché and well-worn rhyme, in fact I was flagrantly *démodée*” (155). Clearly, that characterization of her poetry situates it firmly within the devalued tradition of “sentimental” literature.<sup>14</sup> Like Beach’s appropriation of the “plain reader” phrase, however, the passage delivers a subversive thrust. Crosby does use the opportunity for some subtle self-promotion, adding, “but the metamorphic spirit was strong though the pen was

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<sup>13</sup> Crosby’s papers reveal that she in fact took first prize in both sculpture and drawing at the Salon D’Automne (Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 1, Folder 2. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale).

<sup>14</sup> Suzanne Clark writes, “Modernism inaugurated a reversal of values which emphasized erotic desire, not love; anarchic rupture and innovation rather than the conventional appeals of sentimental language. Modernism reversed the increasing influence of women’s writing, discrediting the literary past and especially that sentimental history” (1).

weak, and I did actually get some “hymnic” imagery into “The Stranger,” which appeared in *transition* 18, and was published again in *transition Workshop* in 1949” (155). More significant are Crosby’s relations with the other names cited at the conclusion of the document. Kay Boyle and Hart Crane both had collections published by Crosby’s press, Stuart Gilbert contributed introductions to two Black Sun Press volumes and Laurence Vail a translation, and Eugene Jolas, editor of *transition*, published and was published by Crosby. Prestigious colleagues indeed for a writer of “easeful cliché.”<sup>15</sup>

As we saw earlier, another way in which Crosby feminizes her poetry is by contextualizing it with the domestic detail. The proof sheets of *Crosses of Gold* she corrects in bed, sandwiched between Harry and stacks of books. The couple’s early “[e]xperiment in rhyme” is described as “our most domestic game”: “H[arry] would call to me over the bannister to come quick and I flew up the library stairs to hear

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<sup>15</sup> Contradicting Crosby’s claims of her shortcomings as a poet are the positive reviews garnered by her work. A contributor to Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry* journal declared that Crosby’s writing “shows none of the pretentious gravity of the minor poet. Rather it is devout and joyous wantonness”; she concluded, “We may thank God for a poet who is intoxicated by the beauty of the world around her, wherever she may be” (qtd. Conover 13). Eugene Jolas wrote in a letter to Crosby, “You are a real poet, with fine imagination and creative perceptions” (Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 52, Folder 9. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale). Hart Crane, whose *The Bridge* Crosby published in 1930, expressed his admiration for her *Poems for Harry Crosby* thus:

The whole collection achieves a power in repose, a renunciation-plus, that is very rare. I hope you are writing more and more, Caresse, for the sheer vision of your nature deserves an ever branching extension and expression. You really come up to the great themes of Love and Tragedy, as very few women can, at least in words. (Crane 405)

some novel paraphrase — or I would buzz the buzzer and he would come leaping down to praise my newest couplet” (145). (In an unpublished manuscript of *Shakespeare and Company*, Sylvia Beach remarked of the Crosbys, “They were children playing around in poetry and were as serious as children over it”).<sup>16</sup> Aptly enough, the jacket of the Dial edition of *The Passionate Years* features a photograph of Crosby in bed, mounds of pillows at her back and papers and books strewn randomly about. Under the photo, the caption reads, “With props upon the coverlet, a radio at one elbow and a telephone at the other, within the four posters of my castle, I have penciled these pages.”

As the preceding paragraph suggests, discussions of Crosby’s poetry frequently invoke her husband. If the character of James Joyce supports Mary Grimley Mason’s model by functioning as “Other” to Sylvia Beach, Harry fulfils a similar role in relation to Caresse. Like Joyce in *Shakespeare and Company*, Harry’s presence in the autobiography is pervasive, extending well beyond those passages in which he actually appears. The dedication to *The Passionate Years* is preceded by a reproduction of the colophon Caresse devised, an acrostic linking her name with his; the final sentences of the text read, “Like Harry, I believed there can be no compromise. The answer to the challenge is always “*Yes*” (342). The intervening pages chronicle in

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<sup>16</sup> Sylvia Beach Collection. Box 166, Folder 4. CO108. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library.

detail their passionate courtship, impetuous wedding, and abiding love for each other, as well as his petty acts of selfishness, countless infidelities, and dramatic suicide. Their relationship is depicted as one that was both somehow preordained and — notwithstanding her brief third marriage and numerous affairs — destined to endure beyond his death. Early on, Crosby describes the inevitability of their union thus: “To know Harry was a devastating experience, and every one of his friends fell beneath the spell. It was no wonder that I was drawn into the golden orbit, as metal to the magnet by his magic — and as I look back now I see that there was never any question of escape. Not even when I ran away” (84).

Yoking her poetic efforts to those of her husband, Crosby corroborates Mason’s thesis that “the disclosure of the female [autobiographical] self is linked to the identification of some ‘other’” (“The Other Voice” 22). The passage, previously cited, which characterizes the couple’s poetic experimentation as a “domestic game” balances the account of Caresse’s couplet compositions with Harry’s pursuit of “novel paraphrase” (145). That section begins, “One of the very best things about our marriage was that Harry and I always enthused about people and places at the same time but as soon as one lost interest the other did too.” Their joint interest in poetry, one way in which this reciprocity manifests itself, is emphasized to deflect attention away from her own. Relatedly, the description of T.E. Lawrence’s

admiration for her poetry — one of the rare occasions in which Crosby makes a claim for her work — is moderated by the fact that the collection which so impresses him is *Poems for Harry Crosby*. In compliance with cultural scripts of feminine self-abnegation, Caresse most values her own poetry when it is inspired by Harry.<sup>17</sup>

Their shared interest in poetry is one way in which the Crosby's intimacy manifests itself; the establishment of the publishing firm is another. From the beginning, Crosby underlines the fact that the Black Sun Press is a joint project. Together she and Harry realize that "the simplest way to get a poem into a book [is] to print the book!" and together they find the "perfect printer" in a cluttered workshop in the very heart of the Latin Quarter (146). Their first publication is, aptly enough, Harry's *Sonnets for Caresse*. Caresse highlights Harry's involvement with the press to validate her participation in this "unwomanly" enterprise. Later, she similarly underscores the contributions of Jacques Porel, with whom she was romantically involved at the time, in mapping out Crosby Continental Editions.

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<sup>17</sup> If Harry's presence in the autobiography offers Caresse a limited means to promote her own writing, it also enables her to champion his poetic career. The excerpt from his "House of Ra" she quotes is far longer than the brief passages of her own poetry cited elsewhere; she mentions that it was this poem which Hart Crane recited repeatedly prior to his departure for Mexico. Elsewhere, she explains that a certain university instructor taught Harry's "Naked Lady in a Yellow Hat" as the "perfect example of the one-line poem" (247). Caresse emerges as the supportive wife of a gifted poet. However, her proselytizing was intended to serve a more practical purpose as well, that of reviving interest in her late husband's work. It was Malcolm Cowley, *The Passionate Years*' editor, who suggested that Caresse include the quotations from Harry's diary; the publicity would be "an important step towards [the diary's] republication in full" (Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 4, Folder 5. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale).

In a piece entitled "How It Began" Crosby explains, "I invariably put in four or five hours a day in the rue Cardinale, guiding, planning and approving each sheet as it was lifted crisp and fresh from [the printer] Lescaret's press, and I was publishing my own poetry, too ... No day was long enough" (n.p.). *The Passionate Years* offers almost no evidence of this assiduity, however, nor does it provide much information regarding the actual publication process. Following the account of how the couple discovered Roger Lescaret, for instance, Crosby abruptly propels the narrative forward "a year or two" to the time when "we had a dozen or more titles to our credit, among them *Fortyseven Letters of Marcel Proust*, *The Escaped Cock* and *Sun* by D.H. Lawrence and *The Bridge* by Hart Crane" (150). The decisions and activities which culminated in that impressive list of publications are omitted from the autobiography. (Elsewhere, Crosby does offer further details pertaining to some of these titles but she manipulates her material so as to feminize her motives. For example, she portrays the publication of Proust's correspondence with Walter Berry in altruistic terms, explaining that by making the letters available to the public she and Harry have laid the foundation stone for "Cousin Walter's immortality" (107). Later, their decision to publish *The Escaped Cock* is traced to personal experience: she recalls their travels in "the land so wild and temple ridden" (203) that is Lawrence's setting and the mystical vision she witnessed while there.) Another characteristic

allusion to the Black Sun Press appears shortly afterwards: "That winter catapulted into spring — we were hurrying. There were five books on the presses. I was very busy. These were Harry's birthday resolutions that year" (233). Presumably, readers lured by the promise of "a glimpse of ... the international set at work or at play"<sup>18</sup> do not thirst for further details of those five books.

That consideration doubtless helps account too for the lack of literary commentary in *The Passionate Years*. Though Crosby quotes Eugene Jolas' manifesto in full, she makes no attempt to analyze its content; she rejoices that the "great moment" for the "historic document" (155) has finally arrived, but offers no explanation of the manifesto's import to modernism. Nor does she reveal why she selects *In Our Time* as Hemingway's best work and her choice for the Crosby Continental Editions. A notable exception to this reticence occurs midway through the autobiography when Crosby expounds at some length about the difficulties inherent in the translation process. However, she evidently deems it necessary to substantiate her remarks by commenting that the Greek poet Seferis agreed with her views. Elsewhere she notes that in the pages of René Crevel's work "one sensed the naive heart yet profound spirit that conceived them" (303). Beach-like, Crosby foregrounds the writer, rather than the writing.

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<sup>18</sup> Dust jacket, Dial edition of *The Passionate Years* (1953).

Like Beach too, Crosby repeatedly accentuates her professional shortcomings. Just as the publisher of *Ulysses* avows her ignorance of proofreading, bookkeeping, the publishing industry and the like, so Crosby claims an ineptitude at finances and contends, “even of my own special subject, typography, I know too very little” (195–96). Asserting that she understands nothing of Joyce’s erudite explications of “The Mookse and the Gripes” — which the Crosbys publish in 1929 — she describes how the impromptu lesson sends her in search of “some very dry martinis” (187). (Immediately afterwards, Crosby rather pointedly reverses this power dynamic with her anecdote of the eight extra lines of “Tales Told of Shem and Shaun.” Her printer, dismayed over a typographical error which result in only two lines appearing on the final page of text, suggests to Crosby that she ask Joyce to compose a few additional sentences. When she scoffs at the idea of requesting a “great writer” to “inflate a masterpiece to help out the printer,” Lescaret decides to approach Joyce without her knowledge. Joyce, it transpires, “had been wanting to add more” all along, “but was too frightened” of Crosby to do so (187).)<sup>19</sup> As with Sylvia Beach,

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<sup>19</sup> When Geoffrey Wolff repeats the story in his biography of Harry Crosby, he concludes it thus: “Lescaret confessed that he had himself gone to Joyce and begged for [the extra lines], and that Joyce, without a second thought, had added them” (250). By omitting Caresse’s “punchline,” Wolff not only obscures the point of the story but, more significantly, diminishes her stature.

Like Beach, Crosby presents a highly ambiguous portrait of Joyce. Her statement that “Harry and I were, of course, as excited as everyone else on the left bank over the publication of *Ulysses*” is problematized somewhat by her observation immediately afterwards that “we yearned for a piece of the rich Irish cake then baking on the Paris fire” (181). The first statement indicates her proximity to modernist experimentalism, much as her enthusiastic response to Jolas’s manifesto does. However, its

glimmers of Crosby's business and artistic acumen destabilize the dilettante persona.

Her recognition of the profitability of paperbound books and her selection of exceptional inks in Berlin, to say nothing of her remarkable publishing record, indicate that her talents are both real and diverse.

Nonetheless, Crosby professes to be drawn to her work not because it is intellectually rigorous or artistically demanding but because it is amusing. In *Shakespeare and Company*, Sylvia Beach explains her tolerance for Joyce's demands thus: "So, either you run your publishing house far away, where your writer can't get at it, or you publish right alongside him — and have much more fun — and much more expense" (175). "Fun" is the same word Crosby chooses to describe her experiences as a publisher: "[Lescaret's] shop, by a devious route, was not far from where we lived and we could drop in several times a day just for the fun of seeing the pages emerge crisp and fair from the hand-worked press, and smell the good strong ink that permeated the place" (149). Crosby feminizes her work by disguising it as a

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sequel implies, uncharacteristically, that her enthusiasm is founded upon professional, even financial, opportunism, rather than a disinterested passion for the arts. She claims to be "flattered beyond measure" (183) by Joyce's high regard for the Black Sun Press; nonetheless, her brisk response that "[i]t's the meat, not the water, that makes the broth" (183) to his query regarding the number of pages she will publish indicates her refusal to be cowed by his prominence. Her allusion to him as the "great man," speculation that "we were admitted to the Joyce circle because we were Jolas's side partners," and recollection that "he seemed bored with us" (181) all suggest a veiled resentment of his authority. The indeterminate tone of Joyce's portrait presumably derives from the conflict between this resentment and Crosby's simultaneous recognition that depictions of her acquaintance with him aggrandize her own stature.

hobby, one that is all the more harmless for being pursued, at least initially, alongside her husband. The decision to expand the venture beyond *Sonnets for Caresse* is likewise portrayed purely in terms of entertainment value. It is because “the typesetting, the paper choosing, the outlay and the binding were all such fun, done in this intimate and delightful manner” that the Crosbys elect to proceed to “greater and more complicated achievement” (149). Even as their plans become increasingly ambitious, the press remains true to its modest origins. Though Lescaret eventually acquires additional staff and more sophisticated machinery, his office remains as “unmanageably disordered and his approach to the publishing business as elementary as in the beginning” (151). Indeed, when a distinguished assembly of typographers from England arrives unannounced to investigate the premises, their horror at what they find parallels John Quinn’s dismay over little Shakespeare and Company; flustered, the group withholds its invitation to Lescaret to lecture at a black tie function. Like Beach — and Anderson — Crosby represents herself as an amateur performing a literary labour of love in a setting which subverts our notions of “professional.”

Conventional standards of professionalism are likewise unsettled by descriptions of Crosby’s demeanour at work. Just as Anderson manipulates stereotypes of femininity in relating her struggles for the *Little Review*, so Crosby periodically

feminizes accounts of her labours by conducting herself in a manner supposedly befitting the weaker sex. Evidence suggests that Crosby could be rigorous and demanding in her daily work at the press: Anaïs Nin remembers her as an “exacting, capricious taskmaster” (6: 349). However, *The Passionate Years* generally censors representation of such “unwomanly” inflexibility in favour of a culturally sanctioned competence and sensitivity. Crosby does mention at one point that what she wanted “usually came to pass” (53) and later explains, “if perchance I do encounter hostility it really whets my determination” (276). However, the woman we meet in the autobiography seems disposed to pursue her ends through so-called “feminine” wiles, rather than through more forceful means. For example, an account of her negotiations with Simon and Schuster concludes with her bursting into tears, tearing up a contract, and “stalk[ing] sobbing out of the office” (317). Elsewhere she recalls how Hemingway’s duplicity over a proposed C.C.E. edition of his work made her “so indignant and disappointed that I wanted to cry” (285). Instead, to the reader’s delight, she fires off a “red-hot” letter to him condemning his actions and provoking the famed author to fury.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Crosby’s unpublished writings, like Beach’s, reveal a severity absent from her published self-portrait. A letter to Hemingway concludes, “I have been counting so much on doing something of yours that I hope you are not going to disappoint me. When will you be back in Paris and can I see you then? If, however, you have made arrangements for your things with some other editor could you please let me know. I can’t go on hoping in vain forever” (Caresse Crosby Collection. Box 5, Folder 4. Southern Illinois University at Carbondale).

Of Crosby's relationship with Hemingway, her biographer writes, "Ernest was one of the few men who did not succumb to Caresse's charm. From the beginning, the chemistry was not right, and future encounters between the two would be difficult and stormy" (*Caresse Crosby* 58). Their strained relations result in a portrait which is the obverse of that painted by *Shakespeare and Company*: Crosby's Hemingway is a demanding father, an egocentric writer, and a manipulative and opportunistic colleague. The portrait is a departure for Crosby, who, like Beach, typically presents professional relations as warm personal friendships. Indeed the foreword to *The Passionate Years* proclaims, "I believe the characters in this human comedy" — many of whom are affiliated with Crosby's work in one way or another — "to be my friends with only a few exceptions." In one memorable passage Crosby recounts in colourful detail how, following Ezra Pound's invitation to "do the town with him," she was treated to the sight of his "piston-pumping knees" performing "a sort of voodoo prance" in "Anglo-savage ecstasy" at a local night club (256). Her explanation that "[f]rom that time on we became the best of friends and the following year the Black Sun Press brought out a limited edition of *Imaginary Letters* by Ezra Pound" (256) suggests that their professional collaboration issued directly from the friendship launched in the Paris dance hall.

That Crosby follows Beach in privileging human beings over art is evident from

her description of *Mr Knife and Miss Fork*, a collaborative effort between René Crevel, Max Ernst and herself. Crosby states, “Max’s fanciful illustrations and his Victorian cover-design made of René’s text perhaps the publication that I am proudest of, for into it went not only our separate skills but our inseparable friendship as well” (303–4). Shortly afterwards, she describes how loyalty to her own distributor moved her to reject Random House’s offer to bind and distribute Black Sun Press books under a joint imprint. “It might have been better for the B.S.P.,” she writes, “but I believe it would have been a disaster for C.C.” (316). Like Beach, who goes to enormous lengths to accommodate Joyce’s wishes, Crosby prioritizes personal ties over professional gain, regardless of the material loss incurred as a result. It seems plausible that it is partly this attitude which alienates her from the profit-oriented Hemingway, who — as presented in *The Passionate Years* anyway — regards publishing transactions as strictly a matter of business.

To Crosby nothing is ever simply a matter of business. The *joie de vivre* which informs her parties and publishing projects alike arises jointly from her ardent conviction that each day will yield new delights and an unwavering faith in human nature. In the final paragraph of *The Passionate Years* she states, “I have learned that personal life is the individual’s only means of expression in a cosmos forever mysterious” (342). Her cosmos is not the bleak wasteland of high modernist doctrine

but an expanse ripe with unimagined promise. And personal life she defends as too precious to discount in the name of aesthetics or anything else. Indeed, her own life is elaborately interwoven with her art, as the allusion to her “surreal response to life” suggests ( 300). It is this ability to integrate avant-garde aesthetics with everyday truths which, more than anything else, links Caresse Crosby to Margaret Anderson, that stalwart proponent of “life-as-an-art.”

## Chapter 4

### “The Art of Life”:

#### Margaret Anderson’s *My Thirty Years’ War*

Most of all in the number we enjoyed the various snap shots of the editor, *Margaret Anderson*. She certainly is a darn pretty girl.<sup>1</sup>

It is very likely that Margaret Anderson would have taken no offense to the honest praise proffered by the anonymous reviewer for the *Saturday Review of Literature*. After all, the woman who presided over the transformation of the *Little Review* from “a naively enthusiastic protest against the status quo” in Chicago to “an important magazine of the international avant-garde” (Platt 152) displayed a lifelong preoccupation with self-presentation. Friends and enemies alike recall with awe the air of elegance and refinement she exuded even when finances were at their lowest.

In *My Thirty Years’ War*, the first of a three-volume autobiography, Anderson finds the ideal outlet for her delight in self-presentation. Like the outfits she assembled with such care, the work constitutes a passionate expression of her individuality and creativity. Rejecting the scripts society would impose upon her, its

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<sup>1</sup> The “Phoenician,” “The Phoenix Nest,” the *Saturday Review of Literature* (13 July 1929), p. 1184. Quoted in Johnson, p. 363.

author challenges not only conventions of female self-representation but, even more dramatically, cultural constructs of womanhood. To challenge those constructs, however, is by no means to dispense with them entirely. Rather, Anderson manipulates them to create a version of womanhood which speaks to her own experiences and aspirations. And it is in this version of womanhood that her aesthetic is firmly embedded.

Like *Shakespeare and Company* and *The Passionate Years*, *My Thirty Years' War* foregrounds the domestic realm and woman-identified roles. Affirmation of the interdependence of personal and professional, comparatively muted in the other autobiographies, resounds clearly through Anderson's text. Invoking her philosophy of "life-as-an-art" or "the art of life," the author of *My Thirty Years' War* redefines "art" to encompass forms — domestic, "womanly" — traditionally deemed unworthy of the term.

## II

Margaret Anderson was just twenty years old when, in 1908, she left her comfortably middle class home in Columbus, Indiana, to immerse herself in Chicago's vibrant artistic scene.<sup>2</sup> According to *My Thirty Years' War*, the move was

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<sup>2</sup> The dates I use are in some cases approximate, as Anderson is vague regarding chronology and scholars provide contradictory accounts.

advocated by a journalist, Clara Laughlin, who had been favourably impressed by Anderson's appeal to her advice column. Laughlin was at the time literary editor for a religious weekly called *Interior*; however, her affiliations with the magazine were social rather than religious, and the position she offered Anderson involved interviewing stage celebrities. There being a dearth of celebrities in Chicago at the time, Anderson instead turned her hand to reviewing books. The fervency which would eventually receive expression in the *Little Review* was already very much apparent: when she began contributing pieces to the *Chicago Evening Post*, its literary editor "found her views to be so extreme that he sometimes ran a second review of the same book in order to balance her enthusiasm" (Platt 144). Not long afterwards, Anderson became a staff member at the *Dial*, where she acquired many of the practical skills — "composition (monotype and linotype), proofreading, and make-up" (*My Thirty Years' War* 28) — she would need as editor of the *Little Review*. In 1912, Clara Laughlin resigned as literary editor at the *Interior*, by then known as the *Continent*, and proposed Anderson as her successor. Anderson left the *Dial* to accept the position; in the course of the following year, however, she came to feel increasingly constrained by the journal's conservative editorial policies. It was from this dissatisfaction that the *Little Review* was born.

In *My Thirty Years' War* Anderson describes in breathless detail the epiphanic

moment of the magazine's conception and her subsequent trip to New York in pursuit of advertising. The first issue appeared in March of 1914 and was headed by an editorial which communicated Anderson's idealism and ardour:

If you've ever read poetry, with a feeling that it was your religion, your very life; if you've ever come suddenly upon the whiteness of a Venus in a dim, deep room; if you've ever felt music replacing your shabby soul with a new one of shining gold; ... if these things have happened to you and continue to happen till you're left quite speechless with the wonder of it all, then you'll understand our hope to bring them nearer to the common experience of the people who read us. ("Announcement" 2)

This inaugural issue contained submissions by such local literary figures as Sherwood Anderson, Margery Currey, and Eunice Tietjens, and foregrounded topics which would become typical of the early numbers. During the first three "formative" years, the *Little Review's* content reflected Anderson's interest in anarchism, feminism, and psychoanalysis, as well as the writings of Nietzsche and Bergson (Hoffman *et al* 245).

In 1916, Jane Heap joined the *Little Review* as Anderson's co-editor. At around this time too, Heap and Anderson became lovers; the two would remain intimate until Anderson met and fell in love with Georgette Leblanc five or six years later. Not long after Heap joined the *Little Review*, its editors took the journal to New York where it stayed until 1922. This period has been identified as the "years of greatness:" it was during this time that the *Little Review* introduced to America developments in cubism, futurism, expressionism and other literary movements still

largely unknown outside of Europe (Hoffman *et al* 57). Yet another change occurred around this time when Ezra Pound joined the staff as foreign editor. Pound stated his motivation in assuming the position in no uncertain terms in correspondence with Anderson:

I want an "official organ" (vile phrase). I mean I want a place where I and T.S. Eliot can appear once a month (or once an "issue") and where James Joyce can appear when he likes, and where Wyndham Lewis can appear if he comes back from the war ... I must have a steady place for my best stuff. (*Pound/the Little Review* 6-7)

As numerous commentators have noted, Pound's impact on the *Little Review* was immediate and substantial. The magazine began to feature works by Pound, Eliot, Joyce and Lewis, as well as the likes of W.B. Yeats, Hart Crane, and John Rodker. Additionally, Pound arranged for the serialization of Joyce's *Ulysses*, which appeared from 1918 to 1921. Other responsibilities included securing subscribers, organizing special issues, procuring John Quinn's sponsorship, and overseeing such practical matters as typography, proofreading and paper quality (Scott and Friedman xxx).

The Pound period has generally been regarded as the high water mark of the magazine's existence. The comments of this reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* are by no means atypical:

Pound was the only participant in the *Little Review* who knew what he was doing and had the executive force to do it. The editorial women were heroines, but at the same time children ... in its later [post-Pound] years the *Little Review* was so crazy that it was useless to American writers for any

important purposes. (qtd. Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 377)

We saw in the introductory chapter how recent scholarship has begun to revise such long-cherished readings of literary history, exposing the misogyny and arrogance which all too often characterized Pound's interactions with the modernist women.

In 1919, Pound left the *Little Review*, citing the magazine's inability to provide him with "the necessities of life and a reasonable amount of leisure" ("Cooperation" 55). (He did, however, collaborate on several later issues.) A couple of years later, lack of finances — always a severe problem — finally forced the editors to cut the magazine back from monthly to quarterly installments. Then, in 1922, the same year that the Crosbys arrived in Paris, Anderson and Heap joined the migration to the French capital. During its Paris period, the *Little Review* provided a forum for the work of Jean Cocteau, Tristan Tzara and numerous other members of the European avant-garde. By the following year, however, Anderson had lost interest in the magazine, "exasperated with the sluggishness of the public mind, with financial nightmares, with the hindrances put in our way by the Post Office and the censor" (*Little Review* 12 (2): 63). She turned the editorship over to Heap, who returned to New York and directed the journal's focus increasingly towards the visual arts. In 1929, Anderson, who had remained in France with Georgette Leblanc, helped edit the final number of the *Little Review*. This issue contained the responses of over fifty

“of the foremost men and women in the arts” to a questionnaire circulated by Anderson (*My Thirty Years' War* 271). Addressing such questions as “What should you most like to do, to know, to be? (In case you are not satisfied.)” and “What is your attitude toward art to-day?” the issue offers an intriguing glimpse into modernist creation.

Anderson remained in France until Leblanc's death in 1941, after which she resided in New York for over a decade with Dorothy Caruso. In 1955, she returned to Le Cannet where she remained until her death in 1973. Amidst a few valued female friends, she devoted these post-*Little Review* years primarily to her writing. *My Thirty Years' War*, published in 1930, was followed by two sequels, *The Fiery Fountains* and *The Strange Necessity*, the latter appearing shortly before her death. Whereas *My Thirty Years' War* focuses upon the *Little Review* era, *The Fiery Fountains* celebrates her love for Georgette Leblanc and recounts their studies with George Gurdjieff, the cosmic philosopher. *The Strange Necessity*, the most introspective of the three volumes, meditates upon a life dedicated to the pursuit of “Art as a state” (37). In addition, Anderson wrote an account of her exploration of Gurdjieff's philosophy, *The Unknowable Gurdjieff*, and an unpublished lesbian novella. That she found it increasingly difficult to interest publishers in her material is apparent from the “Dilettante's Dedication” which opens *The Strange Necessity*: “1961. Life was once

wonderful , and so were we. This fact will be of no interest to publishers, and publishers are of no interest to me. They will reject this book about our wonderfulness, so I have written it for myself [and] for my wonderful friends.” The section concludes, “1968. Publisher found, to my great delight.” Notwithstanding her later achievements, it was as editor of the longest lived of the era’s little magazines that Anderson was destined to be remembered.

In the decades since the *Little Review*’s demise much has been written about the magazine that represented “the range of literary experiments included under the Modernist rubric” (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 371). No less an authority than T.S. Eliot has stated, “In those days, the *Little Review* was the only periodical in America which would accept my work, and indeed the only periodical there in which I cared to appear” (*Little Review* 12(2): 90). Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich provide the sort of mixed tribute typical of assessments of the *Little Review*. They term the journal “the first to give us an adequate cross-section view of European and American experimentism” and note, “[t]hough much of this experimentism was freakish, especially after the move to France, the periodical did, despite attitudinizing, erratic editorial whims, and a frequent lack of literary taste, present a great volume of significant work, some of it the most significant of our time” (66). Even Anderson’s most outspoken detractors cannot keep a grudging note of

admiration from creeping into their words: "Setting aside the solid achievements of the period in which Pound had the reins, *The Little Review* deserves praise for, at the least, its entertainment value. Frivolous, absurd and simpleminded, it had some kind of buried instinct for the genuine" (Hamilton 43).

The barbs which so often accompany tributes to the *Little Review* are in many cases an indirect reaction to Anderson's editorial policy — or, more precisely, the lack thereof. As Shari Benstock has noted, Anderson "consistently refused to delineate fully her conception of the *Little Review*, even as she wrote the history of the review in the first volume of her memoirs" (*Women of the Left Bank* 370). She refused to pursue a specific agenda for her magazine: "[s]he did not set out to put her 'stamp' on modern literature but to let it put its 'stamp' on *her*" (377). Anderson herself did not deny that her enthusiastic commitment to providing "a free stage for the artists"<sup>3</sup> resulted in the publication of some works of dubious quality.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, these occasional lapses in judgement do not in any way diminish Anderson's achievement in offering the world a magazine whose form was as radical

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<sup>3</sup> Margaret Anderson, "The Little Review," *Times Literary Supplement*. Quoted in *Women of the Left Bank*, page 377 (Benstock provides no pagination or dates for this source.)

<sup>4</sup> Benstock notes that during the early years Anderson was often discouraged by the poor quality of material she published and "saw herself as heavily indebted to Pound and Joyce for having 'saved' the reputation of the journal" (*Women of the Left Bank* 23). Later she revised her opinion of that early period, "giving credit to her own sense of what directions the journal should take and to Jane Heap for her fine literary judgement."

as the works it presented. The *Little Review* challenged its readers to not merely interrogate conventional notions of art but to reconceptualize the form and function of the little magazine itself.

Abby Ann Arthur Johnson's definition of the "personal magazine" — a term previously applied to the *Little Review* by Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich (52) — offers a useful approach to Anderson's unorthodox interpretation of the editorial role.

According to Johnson, the principle characteristic of the personal magazine

is that it allows the editor a freedom not possible with other periodicals. The editor may have associates, but he will not work in conjunction with an editorial board or with a supporting institution. He thereby avoids the internal disagreements which have led to the demise of many journals. Essentially independent, he can pursue his own interests, wherever they may lead. He can express his opinions not only on the editorial page, but in comments introducing articles, in statements attached to letters on the contributor's page, in remarks addressed to advertisers and to influential members of the artistic and political communities. (351–52)

Johnson's persistent, though no doubt casual, usage of the masculine pronoun underscores the extent to which the role of the personal magazine editor as it is here defined incorporates qualities historically constructed as masculine: independence, authority, and freedom of choice. In other words, Anderson, as editor of a personal magazine, was contesting both conventional views of the editor's role *and* social constructions of femininity. In *Little Review's* inaugural issue, for example, Anderson simultaneously flaunted the traditional editorial function and models of feminine

reticence by proposing to manage the magazine in accordance with her own particular interests, rather than “objective” standards of art (Marek 109).<sup>5</sup> Anderson, and eventually Heap too, vehemently rejected the role of literary midwife imposed upon her by Ezra Pound and others. The two women refused to regard the editing process as merely the “passive facilitation of others’ works” (Marek 103). Rather, they elected to be “visibly creative and confrontational, juxtaposing editorials, reviews, and articles to highlight critical exchanges, and also including their own parenthetical responses to articles and to letters in the ‘Reader Critic’ and ‘Comment’ sections” (Marek 104).

Thus, even as Anderson managed her magazine with a stereotypically “masculine” independence and self-assurance, her insistence on dialogic interaction infused the *Little Review* with a distinctly feminist flavour. She anticipated recent trends in feminist theory with her conviction of the desirability, indeed necessity, of acknowledging an interplay of voices.<sup>6</sup> In her introduction to the first issue she

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<sup>5</sup> “We mean to print articles, poems, stories that seem *to us* definitely interesting, or — to use a much abused adjective — vital” (“Announcement” 2; my italics). Compare this to Crosby’s statement of her intentions for the C.C.E press, as described in the introduction to the series’ first number, *Torrents of Spring*: “I am going to publish books that I like, that have merit, and that interest me, amuse me personally” (qtd. Conover, *Caresse Crosby* 60).

<sup>6</sup> Anderson’s dialogues with contributors to the *Little Review* are particularly interesting in light of Crosby’s and Beach’s relations with the authors they published. As we have seen, Crosby was frequently guided by an author’s wishes when preparing a text for publication, and Beach went to enormous lengths to accommodate Joyce’s demands. All three seem to support current theory crediting women with a greater ability to disperse authority and foster open exchange than male counterparts.

proclaimed, "Our point of view shall not be restrictive; we may present the several judgements of various enthusiastic contributors on one subject in the same issue. The net effect we hope will be stimulating and what we like to call releasing" ("Announcement" 2). (Anderson's choice of the first person plural pronoun, notwithstanding the fact that she would not be joined by Heap as co-editor for another two years, also anticipates later feminist ideology, suggesting that ownership of the magazine was shared with its contributors and readers.) Hence the pages of the *Little Review* record the lively and often heated dialogues that developed amongst editors, readers and contributors. At the same time, of course, any editor, even one who sees as part of her function the decentring of editorial authority, ultimately wields considerable power. Jayne Marek observes that "[e]ditorial prerogative obviously delighted Heap and Anderson, whose use of ... headings, postscripts, and excerption demonstrates subtle control over their authors and correspondents, especially those who disagreed with, and even insulted, them" (132).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> A similar dynamic is apparent in the pages of *My Thirty Years' War*. Supplementing her autobiography with fragments of letters, literary excerpts and quotations, Anderson engages the authorial voice in dialogue with the voices of Heap, Pound, and John Quinn, and numerous other contributors to the *Little Review*. In some cases these fragments offer telling, even damaging, insight into the speakers' characters. Pound's letters, for example, expose the egocentrism and desire for self-aggrandizement that underlay his involvement with the *Little Review*. Similarly, Quinn's remark in a letter to Anderson that "though votes for women is an absurdity in itself, it will be a good thing for women, even though they do add an element of hysteria to public consideration of questions" (225) bares the misogynistic attitudes he shared with Pound. Anderson provides no authorial commentary, remarking merely that Pound's letters "would have made a good magazine" (159) and that Quinn's "were full of temperament" (222). By exercising the "subtle control" that Marek refers

Besides elucidating the complex and sometimes dissident elements of Anderson's editorial technique, Johnson's discussion of the personal magazine editor also sheds light upon the chronic tendency of commentators to privilege Anderson's person over her achievements. Johnson explains that because the personal magazine derives its identity largely from the character of its editor — and Anderson herself has pointed out that “it's my opinions that made the *Little Review* what it was” (*The Strange Necessity* 107) — the editor may well find over time that “his [sic] personality has overshadowed his magazine” (352). Certainly reviewers of the *Little Review*, even those who purport to be serious scholars, inevitably gravitate towards the subject of Anderson's “physical beauty and personal magnetism” (Bryer 30).<sup>8</sup> The epigraph to this chapter is but one example of this trend. Another is offered by Harry Hansen, who exhorts the reader to “[s]eek the answer [to the *Little Review's* success] in the character of its founder, editor, and nurse; there is energy, resourcefulness, eternal youth” (102). Gender-inflected imagery, such as Hansen's choice of the word “nurse,” as well as stereotypes of femininity pervade descriptions of Anderson as they do those of Sylvia Beach. For instance, Hoffman, Allan and Ulrich argue that “[i]n explaining the varied career of the *Little Review*, one must keep a close eye on the to, Anderson allows the two men — both of whom she quarrelled with at times during her career — to incriminate themselves through their own words.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, Johnson's comments supply only part of the answer: as we have seen, the “cult of personality” which afflicted almost all of the modernist women has been equally responsible for the neglect of their professional achievements.

impulsive temperament of the editor” (52): “the one quality in Margaret Anderson’s personality which made the *Little Review* an important magazine” was her feminine “volatility” (20).

*My Thirty Years’ War* and its sequels helped perpetuate popular perceptions of Anderson’s character, much as Beach’s and Crosby’s autobiographies did for them. As in their cases too, the construction of Anderson’s autobiographical persona has not been subjected to critical analysis. With the important exception of Pamelyn Nance Dane, scholars attempting to redress the misconceptions surrounding the modernist women have failed to recognize *My Thirty Years’ War* as integral to their project.

### III

In marked contrast to *Shakespeare and Company* and *The Passionate Years*, *My Thirty Years’ War* represents Anderson’s interactions with influential artistic and historical figures as secondary to the unfolding of her individual development. More introspective than the other two works, Anderson’s text falls into the category of autobiography proper, as distinct from memoir. In Beach’s and Crosby’s texts, self-revelation is mediated by an external landscape that is peopled by figures calculated to hold interest for the reader; in *My Thirty Years’ War*, on the other hand,

the external landscape is significant only insofar as it refracts the internal landscape of the psyche. Naturally, as in any self-representational text, revelation is restricted by authorial self-censorship: Anderson employs ellipses and textual fragmentation to edit accounts of such painful occurrences as her father's descent into madness and subsequent death, her own nervous breakdown, and the arguments with Heap which preceded their professional and personal rupture. Nonetheless, as she chronicles her gradual transformation from the combative early years to the rebirth that follows her withdrawal from the *Little Review*, she offers more insight into her psychology than do either Beach or Crosby.<sup>9</sup>

It is through the text's central metaphor of warfare that Anderson explores the progress of her transformation. Subtitled "beginnings and battles to 1930," and presented as a "war story" (99), *My Thirty Years' War* is punctuated by military allusions. Significantly, Anderson's war is not the Great War that Malcolm Cowley, Paul Fussell and others identify as the cataclysmic foundation of the entire (male) modernist project. Rather, her war comprises a series of battles fought for personal emancipation and professional achievement. As a child she presents impassioned arguments for her spelling of the word "ball" and for the immutability of her

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<sup>9</sup> Crosby does allude to an evolving self-awareness periodically in *The Passionate Years*. She mentions that "this book has proved to me that until I became fifty I never matured" (317) and begins the final paragraph, "I have learned that personal life is the individual's only means of expression in a cosmos forever mysterious" (342). On the whole, however, Crosby avoids such introspection to foreground instead her lively social life.

handwriting; that, incidentally, is all we are told about Anderson's childhood. Later, there are polemics waged against her family, not only for her right to travel to Chicago "but for every abstract right for anyone to do anything" (17). Her relationship with Heap is portrayed as a succession of exhilarating but ultimately debilitating verbal jousts. Beginning with the litany of opponents cited in the opening paragraphs, Anderson depicts her life as a series of struggles, including four she "feared [she] could not win" (124). Only after her arrival in France with Georgette Leblanc does she discover that "[p]erhaps it would have been better to have spent some of the time sitting down" (242–43). By repeatedly invoking the imagery of warfare to represent her tentative movement towards self-awareness, Anderson suggests that as a modernist woman she waged some battles of their own — less bloody, perhaps, than those fought on the battlefields, but every bit as intense.

In *My Thirty Years' War*, then, we see more self-scrutiny than in either *Shakespeare and Company* or *The Passionate Years*. However, to say that Anderson's text is more aptly labelled "autobiography" than "memoir" is not to say that it conforms neatly to the autobiographical paradigm. In fact, *My Thirty Years' War* flies headlong into the face of that androcentric and heterosexist tradition, offering as it does an "affirmation of the woman-centred life and [a] rejection of the heterosexual

narrative” (Dane 243).<sup>10</sup> Her autobiography constitutes a response to the scripts patriarchy would impose upon her: as Dane points out, Anderson repeatedly asserts her refusal to “acknowledge and live the life written for her” (257) as a woman, a writer, and a lesbian. Early in the book, she recounts that already during her days at the *Continent*, “I knew I would never know any story but my own ...” (31). *My Thirty Years’ War* is that story and it is, as we shall see, very much her own.

Anderson’s refusal to heed those narratives imposed upon her from without is trumpeted in distinctly unfeminine tones in the opening words of her autobiography. She begins:

My greatest enemy is reality.  
I have fought it successfully.

What have I been so unreal about? I have never been able to accept the two great laws of humanity — that you’re always being suppressed if you’re inspired and always being pushed into a corner if you’re exceptional. I won’t be cornered and I won’t stay suppressed. This book is a record of these refusals. (3)

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<sup>10</sup> Dane’s description applies equally to the two sequels of *My Thirty Years’ War*. *The Fiery Fountain* is dedicated to “Five Friends,” identified in *The Strange Necessity* as Jane Heap, Georgette Leblanc, Dorothy Caruso, Solita Solano and Janet Flanner (115–118 and 145). Three of these women were Anderson’s lovers; the other two, Flanner and Solano, were involved in a long-standing lesbian relationship. *The Strange Necessity* is dedicated “To Solita with my love, admiration, and gratitude.” These five women, with Anderson herself, occupy the principal roles in *The Fiery Fountains* and *The Strange Necessity*; excepting the philosopher Gurdjieff, no male character features prominently in either.

As Nina Auerbach reminds us, these representations of female community deliver a transgressive thrust: “As a recurrent literary image, a community of women is a rebuke to the conventional ideal of a solitary woman living for and through men, attaining citizenship in the community of adulthood through masculine approval alone” (5).

Seldom has been so vehemently articulated a woman's resistance to marginalization, her rejection of the Law of the Father. With this memorable introduction, Anderson instantly registers not only her defiance of the culturally prescribed narrative of self-effacing femininity but also, even more radically, her willingness to advertise that defiance. It has been argued that the "grand theme of American autobiography, almost its fixation, is the quest for distinction, a quest that has shaped and deranged American identity throughout our history" (Leibowitz xix). Perhaps, but for a woman to proclaim that she is both "inspired" and "exceptional" remains a dangerous move, as Sidonie Smith explains:

[The] valorization of autonomous selfhood demands the individual's willingness to challenge cultural expectations and to pursue uniqueness at the price of social ostracism. Yet even the rebel whose text projects a hostile society against which he struggles to define himself, if he is male, takes himself seriously because he and his public assume his significance within the dominant order: only in the fullness of that membership can the fullness of his rebellion unfold. For women, on the other hand, rebellious pursuit is potentially catastrophic. To call attention to her distinctiveness is to become "unfeminine." To take a voice and to authorize a public life are to risk loss of reputation. Hence distinctiveness may never be attractive in and of itself. (*Poetics* 9-10)

The autobiographical persona Anderson projects is in fact anything but "unfeminine," due to her manipulation of stereotypes of femininity, a subject to which we shall return later. Even so, she was not exempt from censure. Interestingly, some of the harshest criticism of her book came from another woman, Harriet

Monroe. In a review of *My Thirty Years' War* entitled "Personality Rampant," the editor of *Poetry* describes the autobiography as "egocentric to the *nth* degree" and berates her colleague for "stating or implying that the *Little Review* introduced everybody worth while during the period of its very fitful and irregular existence" (96).<sup>11</sup> Monroe's comments echo criticisms frequently directed at *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Ironically, Gertrude Stein gained, rather than lost, a reputation by accentuating her distinctiveness; nonetheless, it is telling that six decades later debate over her impertinence still rages.

It is with a blithe disregard for public opinion, then, that Anderson expands the parameters of Smith's "paternal narrative." While Crosby merely suggests her uniqueness by documenting occurrences which distinguish her from others, Anderson unabashedly announces her exceptionality. Her aspirations are lofty ones, not unexpected of a woman who has already avowed her refusal to be curbed. Turning her back on the "higher joys of country clubs and bridge" beloved by her family, she sets her sights instead on attaining a life that will be "beautiful as no life had ever been" (9). Later, she acquires permission to test every piano at the Mason

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<sup>11</sup> Monroe clearly had Anderson in mind when she wrote this passage in her own autobiography, *A Poet's Life*, published shortly after *My Thirty Years' War*. "The battle which *Poetry*, from its first issue, fought for a 'new movement' in the arts — for freer technique, for stripped modern diction, for a more vital relation with the poet's own time and place, and especially for recognition of new talent — is in danger of being obscured by the mists of time and by propaganda for later literary interests" (362).

and Hamlin factory by explaining to staff there “that I had discovered the Mason and Hamlin to be the best piano in the world and that I meant to play it some day better than anyone” (32). Regarding her withdrawal from the journal she explains, “I had never considered that my personal destiny was to be confined within that of the *Little Review*” (230); like Crosby at middle age, she is lured by new projects promising challenge and self-fulfillment. According to Anderson’s redefinition of the feminine, distinctiveness can never be *unattractive* in and of itself; the language of superlatives she employs reinforces this principle.

Such disregard for codes of “womanly” modesty is apparent as well in Anderson’s expressions of self-satisfaction. Spurning the yardstick against which patriarchy would measure her, she assesses herself instead by her own standards and emerges content. Thus, she tells the woman referred to as Nineteen Millions, “I think I’m interesting” (115). In *The Fiery Fountains*, Anderson elaborates further: “I liked myself — liked the way I behaved, the way I thought and felt, the way I looked — except for certain obvious defects which with intelligence, labour and discomfort I could disguise” (64). She outlines the nature of those defects — her loquaciousness and lack of poise — then concludes, “But, in all seriousness of vanity, I liked myself because as a human statement I could give myself an almost unqualified approval” (64). That vanity underlies her “ubiquitous happiness” (64), a theme which, recurring

throughout all three volumes of the autobiography, mirrors the affirmation of *The Passionate Years*. Too often in history, women have internalized the contempt directed at them by their fathers and husbands; in asserting her worth, Anderson counters that legacy of self-loathing. Her claim that “[s]elf-preservation is the first responsibility” (239) may defy scripts of womanly self-sacrifice but it offers a necessary key to survival.

Anderson’s refusal to “acknowledge and live the life written for her” (Dane 257) manifests itself too in her cavalier dismissal of categories of womanhood upheld by her culture in general and her family in particular. Her reality is shaped by alterity, negatives, and refusals.<sup>12</sup> She writes,

I have no place in the world — no fixed position. I don’t know just what kind of thing I am. Nobody else seems to know either. I appear to be a fairly attractive woman in her thirties. But such a human being falls inevitably into one or more of the human categories — is someone’s daughter, sister, niece, aunt, wife, mistress or mother. I am not a daughter: my father is dead and my mother rejected me long ago. I am not a sister: my two sisters find me more than a little mad, and that is no basis for a sisterly relationship. I am certainly not a niece; it was my aunt who held out for Aimeé McPherson and we haven’t spoken since. I could almost be called an aunt (no one would dare), but my two nephews don’t find me convincing; so I’m not an aunt. I am no man’s wife, no man’s delightful mistress, and I will never, never, never be a mother. (4)

Anderson’s comments seem audacious even today. By rejecting labels grounding

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<sup>12</sup> Dane explains, “When Anderson writes about her many refusals, her unrealities and her fictions, she is often reacting to expected female roles. While writing of her reactions she calls into question the refusals, the unrealities and the cultural fictions of women’s lives” (216).

her identity in service to men, she implicitly unveils her lesbianism and explicitly presents a model of female independence. After all, if it is true that women “who evade the aegis of men also evade traditional categories of definition” (Auerbach 42), then presumably the reverse applies as well. Particularly reckless is Anderson’s dismissal of motherhood, still regarded as woman’s highest office and most valued achievement. The remarkable passage seems to anticipate Luce Irigaray’s essay, “When Our Lips Speak Together,” written almost a half century later. In it, Irigaray exhorts all women to shake off the fetters of patriarchal discourse: “We change names as men exchange us, as they use us, use us up ... Come out of their language. Try to go back through the names they’ve given you” (205). And later: “How can we speak so as to escape from their compartments, their schemas, their distinctions and oppositions ... How can we shake off the chain of these terms, free ourselves from their categories, rid ourselves of their names?” (212). Anderson’s passage reads as a direct response to Irigaray’s challenge. She does go back through the names given her, does shake off the narratives imposed upon her, not merely by men but also by women complicit in patriarchal systems of oppression. Notable among these are her mother, who attempts to shape her “unnatural daughter” (18) into a paragon of mediocrity, and her aunt, who holds up the evangelist Aimée McPherson as the model of ideal womanhood. Shari Benstock’s comment, cited earlier, that modernist

women commonly rejected a family structure and roles they experienced as oppressive (“Expatriate Modernism” 23) is substantiated by Anderson’s determination to “escape” a family she actively “disliked” in order to “conquer the world” (11).

The identity Anderson fashions for herself from the negatives of externally imposed personae is one which knows neither compartments nor borders.

Occupying “no fixed position,” she manifests a chameleon-like inconstancy:

I look like various things, at various seasons: like the Ritz in the winter (if my tailor has does well by my shoulders); like a musical comedy in the summer — or rather like something in those old operettas — “Robin Hood” perhaps; also like a tennis player, a sailor, or a great deal like Little Lord Fauntleroy. In the late fall I look like the Dame aux Camelias. In the early spring I look as if the world were mine. (4)

The passage, with its costume motif, supports Gilbert and Gubar’s claim that “female modernists frequently dramatized themselves through idiosyncratic costumes, as if to imply that, for women, there ought to be a whole wardrobe of selves” (*No Man’s Land* 2: 327). Female modernist costume imagery is “radically revisionary,” insinuating as it does that “no one, male or female, can or should be confined to a uni-form, a single form or self” (332). Anderson celebrates the rich potentiality of the “multi-form.” Freed from the constraints of the “human categories,” she straddles genres, nationalities, even genders. One might see Crosby’s attachment to her apparel as similarly affirming an interplay of multiple identities.

She does claim in *The Passionate Years*, "I have always enjoyed a chameleon-like exterior" (80).

In her discussion of Audre Lourde, a black, lesbian, working class autobiographer, Leigh Gilmore sets out the political implications of refusing to submit to culturally defined group identities. She writes:

While subjects are doubtless complex, our ideologies of personhood reduce this complexity for political ends. One is permitted to be a member of *a* group; indeed, the force with which we are named and contained therein testifies to the compulsory nature of group identification. But the more politically troublesome challenges to such ideologies of the person are precisely those that cannot be contained by a single group identification.

The absence of autobiographical categories to mirror the complexity of human life reveals, of course, autobiography's sustaining role in hegemony ... The reduction of identity to a one-to-one correspondence between *the* group and *the* individual is reinforced in studies of autobiography which value a single representation of subjectivity and therefore suppress the range of subjectivities written in relation to, and often in complicated interaction with, one another. (32)

Forsaking the "uni-form" for a "network of differences within which the subject is inscribed" (Gilmore 85), Anderson thus attacks not only ideologies of gender but, more broadly, all totalizing ideologies of human identity.

Gilmore's comments underscore the fact that Anderson's persistence in defining herself by way of alterity cannot be read merely as a variation on a familiar modernist leitmotif. Anderson's sense of estrangement bears no relation to the expressions of alienation found in much male literature of the period (Dane 233). Her alienation

gives rise to feelings of elation, not angst. That “she revels in her otherness” (Dane 233) is evident from such exclamations as “[m]y unreality is chiefly this: I have never felt much like a human being. It’s a splendid feeling” (4). Ignoring the social penalties imposed upon women who dare to distinguish themselves, Anderson pursues difference with a vengeance. Hence her delight, for example, in creating a “fantastic, amusing and invented” version of the French language; after all, she reasons, anyone can learn to speak it properly (13). Her nonconformism manifests itself too in her abhorrence of groups. Not for her “coöperation, the decision of the majority, the lowest common denominator”; instead, her taste runs to “monarchies, tyrants, prima donnas, the insane” (41).<sup>13</sup> With her fierce individualism, Anderson explodes cultural myths of woman’s “natural” compliancy.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson’s professed distaste for group efforts supports Abbey Ann Arthur Johnson’s comments regarding the independence characteristic of editors of personal magazines. Later in the autobiography, Anderson describes a visit from Amy Lowell, who offers her payment in return for the opportunity to direct the *Little Review*’s poetry department. Lowell assures Anderson, “You can count on me never to dictate” (61). Anderson, recognizing that “[n]o clairvoyance was needed to know that Amy Lowell would dictate, uniquely and majestically, any adventure in which she had a part,” politely refuses, explaining that she “can’t function in ‘association’” (61).

Crosby expresses sentiments similar to Anderson’s in *The Passionate Years*: “To my financial distress, I have never been able to cooperate with another publisher. I hate to compromise. I’d almost rather give up” (316).

<sup>14</sup> Susan Suleiman’s study of women and the avant-garde offers another reading of Anderson’s treatment of alterity :

There is a way in which the sense of being ‘doubly marginal’ and therefore ‘totally avant-garde’ provides the female subject with a kind of centrality, *in her own eyes*. In a system in which the marginal, the avant-garde, the subversive, all that disturbs and ‘undoes the whole’ is endowed with positive value, a female artist who can identify those concepts with her own

Anderson's individualism arises from her firm belief in the sanctity of self-expression, defined as "being able to think, say and do what you believed in" (13). Her decision to abandon the family home is a quest for self-expression, as indeed is the *Little Review* itself; upon her arrival in Paris she is dismayed by the lack of self-expression the expatriate community affords. However, Anderson's understanding of the term extends well beyond the intellectual realm of the metaphysical or the aesthetic. Invoking her philosophy of "life-as-an-art," she finds an avenue of creative self-expression in the personal details of ordinary existence. Her appearance and gestures are manifestations of her individuality no less valid than the editorials she writes. Thus she describes her attempts to "walk as rhythmically as possible": after extensive experimentation with various types of music, she concludes that "three-four time produced a more billowy movement than two-four" (68-9). Ever observing others' expressions of self, she evaluates their "sartorial perfections or crimes" and mentally makes the necessary editorial adjustments; she "edit[s] people's tones of voice, their laughter, their words ... their gestures, their photographs" (58).

Anderson's enthusiasm for the personal as a mode of self-expression helps explain too her immense admiration for the eccentric Baroness Elsa von Freytag von Loringhoven. The Baroness was a frequent contributor to the *Little Review*, much to

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practice and metaphorically with her own femininity can find in them a source of strength and self-legitimation. (16-17)

the dismay of traditional scholars who counted the publication of her unconventional poetry among the greatest of the editors' follies. In *My Thirty Years' War* Anderson describes with relish the bizarre ensembles concocted by the aristocratic poetess, "costumes which resulted in her arrest whenever she appeared upon the streets" (179). Decorative furniture braid, tea-balls, mustard spoons, postage stamps, coal scuttles: all were enlisted to adorn the Baroness' person. Her eclectic self-expression — which truly integrated the material of everyday life with artistic creativity— combined with her total disregard for authority must have seemed irresistible to Anderson.<sup>15</sup>

#### IV

It has been remarked of the modernist woman that "she is not unconventional; she is anticonventional, wishing her creative energy to take every form of expression possible to her" (Hanscombe and Smyers 11). One form of self-expression particularly prized by Margaret Anderson is home decoration. Like *The Passionate Years*, *My Thirty Years' War* is structured around a succession of residences, each corresponding to a different stage in the author's personal and professional

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<sup>15</sup> In a recent conference paper, Irene Gammel argued that the Baroness advocated an "art of madness" which made manifest the repressed facets of high modernism. Gammel presented her as a performance artist whose body was the medium of her art and whose outrageous costumes dramatized the underlying reality of her poverty.

development. Country club-like mansions, tents on the beach, the Chicago Y.W.C.A., Californian ranchhouses, New York apartments: all these and more play a prominent part in Anderson's life story and are described in minute detail for the reader. By thus inscribing her story in private space, she parallels Beach and Crosby in distancing herself from twenties' mythology. She and Jane Heap were, Anderson claims, "a great disappointment to the *literati*" of New York:

Somehow we could never lead the kind of life that appeared normal for them. They could never count on finding us day after day in the restaurants or other haunts of the intellectually gregarious. We seemed to bear little relation to the younger generation bent on escaping the home. No sooner had we escaped than we began to create a hearthstone. (155-56)

But the heat their hearth radiates is intellectual as well as domestic. More overtly than either Beach or Crosby, Anderson challenges the conventional public sphere/private sphere dichotomy by collapsing the distinction between home and workplace. Beach transfigures her bookstore as home; Anderson demonstrates that home functions beautifully as editorial office. The residences she describes in such detail become the "headquarters" (196) from which the *Little Review's* editors wage their campaigns. The tents where Anderson resides with her household one particularly impecunious summer double as oversized mailboxes when Ben Hecht and Maxwell Bodenheim pin to them their latest poetic efforts. Elsewhere, Anderson recounts how in a lovingly decorated bedroom of the New York apartment "the *Little Review*

entered into its creative period" (152): it was here that "the poets, writers, painters came to see us, seeking an entry into the *Little Review*" (153). Anderson's account anticipates the kaleidoscopic universe of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, published a mere three years later. Indeed, the description of Gertrude Stein's rue de Fleurus residence as "a ministry of propaganda for modern art" (Mellow 3) might be applied equally to Anderson's apartment or, for that matter, to Crosby's Mill or Beach's Shakespeare and Company.

While all three autobiographers challenge cultural constructions isolating the home from the arena of professional endeavour, Anderson further narrows the gap between personal and professional by aestheticizing the domestic. Domestic space and the *Little Review* are aligned as examples of editing which equally express her creativity. The New York literati may regard the home as the locus of bourgeois oppression, by nature inimical to artistic endeavour, and wonder at Anderson's allegiance to the hearthstone; Anderson responds by demonstrating that the home can in fact be *synonymous* with artistic endeavour. In so doing, she pays homage to a long, largely unacknowledged tradition of female creativity. As Pamelyn Nance Dane points out, domestic space has traditionally existed as a means of creative expression for women where paper or canvas has been withheld: "For women, rooms and homes are often their art — in rooms women use colour, texture, and design to create a

place to live. Pictures, furniture, paint and wallpaper have been for many women their only artistic outlet” (225). Considered in this context, the behaviour of Anderson’s mother — who indulges her “passion for houses, furniture, [and] interior decoration” through annual relocations to “a new house with new colour schemes, new carpets, curtains, lamps and, naturally, new furniture” (7) — can be read as signifying repressed creative energy, and not merely as the whims of a bored housewife. Nonetheless, Anderson’s comment that nothing delighted her mother so much as a “sincerely mediocre book” (10) implies that her mother’s home decoration projects are rooted in dubious aesthetic and ideological premises. Exemplifying the repressive bourgeois culture scorned by the New York literary set, the senior Anderson’s decor mirrors the superficiality of her lifestyle.

Margaret’s own idiosyncratic experiments with interior design exemplify her repudiation of that heritage. Consonant with her philosophy of “life-as-an-art,” her living space images the iconoclastic art that she publishes — or, perhaps, vice versa. Like the *Little Review*, many of her homes reflect her interest in the experimental and the eclectic. Indeed, they might have borne over its front door, as the review did on its cover, the inscription “Making no compromise with the public taste.” Thus, Anderson and Heap decorate one room in “unrelieved black, with a magenta floor and a midnight blue rug” (209); its colour scheme, incidentally, shows off to

advantage the yellow tea rose boutonnière of Otto Kahn, who arrives to discuss funding for the review. An earlier apartment, entirely naked except for Anderson's inevitable piano, became an appropriate stage for anarchists' meetings. (That naked apartment suggests an interesting comparison with the blank issue of the *Little Review* which appeared in September, 1916. Intended as a protest against what its editors perceived as a dearth of publishable material, the issue bore on the first page a notice reading, "The *Little Review* hopes to become a magazine of Art. The September issue is offered as a Want Ad" (*Little Review* 3(6)). Like her naked apartment, the empty issue dramatizes Anderson's aesthetic convictions. Jayne Marek's claim that the issue "could be seen as a form of 'silence' demonstrating resistance to social expectations" (132) applies equally to the apartment.)

Through her autobiography, then, Anderson redefines artistic expression to encompass forms which, because domestic, have traditionally been deemed unworthy.<sup>16</sup> In *The Fiery Fountains*, she explains, "I have never lived in a room that wasn't a still-life — I couldn't" (69). *My Thirty Years' War* constitutes a sort of gallery of these still-lives. Not all are as avant-garde as the rooms cited above: with equal delight she describes a hotel room overlooking a lake whose blue deepens when white lilacs are placed by the window; a bedroom vivid with "pale green walls,

<sup>16</sup> Dane states, "As a way of breaking apart cultural assumptions of gender, [Anderson] collapses private and public within a discourse of the domestic as she goes about domesticating art in the same way she domesticates her life thereby creating a revisionary domesticity" (217).

wistaria hangings, a pink rug, a large yellow lamp, a blue lake" (57); rooms adorned with Christmas trees whose whitened branches, hung with silver and blue, are positioned against "a midnight sky of blue cloth with stars, or against gold" (136). Each lovingly, even sensuously, crafted portrait reveals the imaginative gifts of its creator.

Anderson's flair for home decoration derives from the same editorial impulses which guide her innovations at the *Little Review*. "I was born to be an editor. I always edit everything. I edit my room at least once a week," she declares with characteristic zest (58). She and Heap "edit" assorted homes with the same bold and dynamic touch they bring to their journal, for example transforming a dilapidated ranchhouse into an abode worthy of *Better Homes and Gardens*, complete with lawn furniture painted to blend "with the gray-blue of the eucalyptus and the mud-beige of the California hills" (119). Their labours serve as a metaphor for their work at the *Little Review*. The roles of journal editor and home renovator/ interior designer merge as Anderson demonstrates how both employ similar artistic and organizational skills to plan, assemble, and design.

The editorial function acts as well as an analog for the day-to-day operations of the household. Mirroring the conflation of home and editorial office discussed earlier is an alliance between the roles of housewife and editor. It is wholly fitting

that the column by Clara Laughlin which precipitates Anderson's initial journey to Chicago — and thus, indirectly, her creation of the *Little Review* — appears in the magazine *Good Housekeeping*. Throughout *My Thirty Years' War*, Anderson “shows that the creation of home and the creation of a literary magazine require the same kind of work: editing, cleaning and polishing” (Dane 22). For instance, she compares her inspiration for the *Little Review* to the emotional revitalization induced by rearranging the furniture in a room:

Often in the night I wake with the sensation that something is wrong, that something must be done to give life form. Sometimes it is merely a matter of changing the furniture in a room. I imagine the whole operation, decide each change with precision, feel suddenly healthy and fall into deep sleep. In the morning I arrange the furniture accordingly, and it's always a great success.

So it was for the *Little Review*. I had been curiously depressed all day. In the night I wakened. First precise thought: I know why I'm depressed — nothing inspired is going on. Second: I demand that life be inspired every moment. Third: the only way to guarantee this is to have inspired conversation every moment. Fourth: most people never get so far as conversation; they haven't the stamina, and there is no time. Fifth: if I had a magazine I could spend my time filling it up with the best conversation the world has to offer. Sixth: marvelous idea — salvation. Seventh: decision to do it. Deep sleep. (35)

The passage puts a domestic spin on Carolyn Heilbrun's remark, cited earlier, that women autobiographers typically report their encounters with their future careers as having occurred by chance (*Writing a Women's Life* 24). Much later, Anderson again couples the roles of editor and housewife to describe her withdrawal from the review: “Cleaning the house and addressing envelopes no longer left me feeling

unconquerably lyric" (233).

Yet another example of the correlation between editor and housewife appears when Anderson recounts the household tasks she and Heap performed:

We kept our house in the most perfect order. We cleaned, scrubbed, dusted, cooked, washed dishes. We made our own fires, cleaned our hearths — we could never afford a charwoman. We did our own shopping — chose our own meats and vegetables — and as Jane had an intelligent old-fashioned prejudice against canned foods, hulled our own peas. (156)

On the following page Anderson continues, "Besides this domesticity we brought out the *Little Review* every month — almost literally brought it out ourselves" (157). She describes how she and Heap spent whole days in the print shop, "correcting proof, setting type, even folding pages for the binder" (157). Their domestic self-sufficiency becomes a metaphor for the persistence and ingenuity that fuel their continued promotion of the new art in the face of a chronic shortage of funds.

The coupling of personal and professional privation seen here is evident throughout the autobiography. Alterations in *Little Review* finances have immediate repercussions in the Anderson household; accordingly, the state of living conditions at any given time provides a remarkably clear indication of the journal's current fiscal status. On one occasion, the loss of advertising revenue resulting from the *Little Review*'s espousal of anarchist causes promptly compels Anderson to seek cheaper accommodations. Later, the publication of an excerpt from Joyce's *Ulysses* results in

more dramatic household economies: "We published a hundred dollars' worth of 'Ulysses' and settled again into poverty. We had no potatoes this time — a sack of flour was all that remained. Jane made biscuits and for three days we ate nothing else but" (190). When the alleged obscenity of Joyce's work results in confiscation of *Little Review* issues, Anderson and Heap are confronted by the prospect of a Christmas with "no fruits or cakes or candies or nuts or wine or cigarettes" — not to mention a tree or presents (172).

As the implicit correlation between domestic and editorial self-sufficiency mentioned above suggests, Anderson responds to shortages in her personal and professional finances with equal aplomb. Anderson the housewife and Anderson the literary editor demonstrate the same inventiveness in their struggles to make ends meet. As housewife, for instance, she devises the plan of erecting tents on a remote stretch of beach to avert the inconvenience of rental payments. For six months she and her entourage lead a distinctly bohemian existence, bathing in Lake Michigan and roasting corn in the camp fire; Anderson would later fondly recall this interlude as "pure 'art of living'" (*The Strange Necessity* 140). Later, during yet another bout of extreme penury, she and Heap subsist for three days on nothing but potatoes, potatoes "arranged in every way to which the potato will lend itself" (157–58). The tuber becomes one more expression of Anderson's art of life, a marriage of creativity

and practicality.

As editor, Anderson displays similar ingenuity in tackling fiscal challenges. Because she adamantly refuses to compromise the journal's aesthetic standards by accepting endowments offered "on the condition that we would make the *Little Review* the kind of mediocre journal we particularly detested" (188), and because "[w]ith the exception of the first two or three issues the magazine never garnered much advertising" (Hoffman *et al* 56), she is compelled to explore alternative fund-raising strategies. One involves canvassing brokers on Wall Street for subscriptions, a scheme calculated to extend the *Little Review's* "cultural influence" as well as its subscription list (191). Repressing her innate distaste for money-raising ventures, Anderson descends upon New York's business district, awing secretaries with her haughty manner and emerging with a lengthy list of subscribers. Another fund-raising strategy she describes is the false advertising campaign carried by the June/July issue of 1915. In sly retaliation for Chicago publishers' refusal to sponsor the *Little Review*, Anderson "donated a page to every firm that should have advertised and didn't — a full page with a box in the centre, stating why that particular concern should have recognized us" (80).<sup>17</sup> Although Chicago's publicity expert congratulates

<sup>17</sup> Anderson did not hesitate to mock the reprobate publishers. One advertisement read:

Carson, Pirie, Scott and Co. ought to advertise something, though I don't know what. The man I interviewed made such a face when I told him we were "radical" that I haven't the courage to go back and pester him for the desired full-page. The C-P attitude toward change

Anderson on the trick, the publishers refuse to pay for the free publicity, leaving her “with a disdain of the business man’s sense of humor” (80).

As we have seen, the correlation between personal and professional finances is but one way Anderson couples the roles of editor and housewife. By repeatedly accentuating analogies between her domestic and literary projects and by representing the home as the site of editorial authority, she acknowledges the centrality of everyday life to many women’s existences. This reading of *My Thirty Years’ War* suggests the inadequacy of Janet Flanner’s response to the autobiography.

Flanner, a journalist based in Paris and lifelong friend of Anderson, had this comment after viewing a rough draft of the work:

I now urge that from time to time you cease describing in delightful detail every door, shrub, painted chair and grand piano that filled your exterior (interior) life during these periods to talk about the thing which, more than the chairs surely, was truly important to you: believe me it is now also to the public: don’t take or granted they know: the L.R. is already a thing of the past, a distinctly previous generation: recall that past: the clarity and good writing you failed to put into it when you *were* it emotionally you now can. (qtd. Benstock *Women of the Left Bank* 370)

What Flanner evidently fails to recognize is that Anderson does not shortchange the *Little Review* through her extensive descriptions of household fixtures. Rather, these “delightful” details of domesticity constitute an integral part of Anderson’s representation of her literary endeavours, as they do Beach’s and Crosby’s too.

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of any sort is well-known — I think they resent even having to keep pace with the change in fashions. (*Little Review* 2 (4): 59)

That being said, however, a reading of the autobiography which overemphasizes the housewife persona risks betraying Anderson's own representation of selfhood. We have seen how she resists fixity by rejecting the constraints of compartmentalization. Rather than reading the housewife persona as *the* overarching trope of *My Thirty Years' War*, one must regard it instead as merely one incarnation of the narrative voice. This particular incarnation coexists with another more akin to Caresse Crosby's *femme fatale*.

## V

The preoccupation with Anderson's appearance which so often intrudes upon analysis of her career is mirrored in — and probably partially derived from — her own interest in the subject. Like Crosby, she makes no bones about either her physical attractiveness or her appreciation for the trappings of femininity. Speaking of her early days in Chicago she notes, "It would be unbecoming for me not to know that I was extravagantly pretty in those days — extravagantly and disgustingly pretty. I looked like a composite of all the most offensive magazine covers" (15). The rueful tone of the confession notwithstanding, Anderson clearly thrives on tributes to her appearance, declaring that she "could not live" without the compliment "[y]ou look so beautifully groomed!" (90). Something else she cannot easily live without are her

cherished fragrances. When an acquaintance informs her that her financial difficulties stem from her air of arrogance, noting that people are reluctant to contribute to those who appear to have everything, she observes mournfully that no one can feel arrogant who must live for months without her favourite perfume (188).

When poverty begins to exact its toll, improvisation offers a necessary key to survival:

This was the winter of my discontent. Tired of having no clothes, tired of being continually ugly, I dressed for dinner in the apartment in the only becoming garment I had left — a crêpe de chine chemise. Draped in an old fur scarf and installed before the fire, I enjoyed the décolleté and talked better for the illusion of charm. (206)

Anderson finds consolation in experimenting with her “wardrobe of selves” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land 2*: 327).

The attention to physical appearance, the sensuous enjoyment of fine clothes and perfumes, is but one way Anderson accentuates her femininity. To Jayne Marek's claim that Anderson “radically manipulated the stereotypes attached to woman's appearance” (25) one might add, “not to mention those attached to woman's behaviour.” Marek notes elsewhere that “in general, the terms applied to the [modernist] women carry heavy connotations of emotionalism, immaturity, and frivolity which have often been used to dismiss women and their achievements” (13). In *My Thirty Years' War* Anderson exhibits precisely those qualities cited by Marek.

Opposing the “intellectualism of her time with an editorial philosophy of ‘feeling’” — a quality she sees as reaching its height in the artist (Hoffman *et al* 20) — she follows Crosby and Beach in replacing the modernist ethos of objectivity with one founded on subjective emotion.<sup>18</sup> As Jane Heap tells the anarchists, “Art is something that one judges with the emotions” (134). Ideas erupt out of Anderson in an “emotional explosion” (151); her attitude during this time she summarizes as “[l]ife is just one ecstasy after another” (69).<sup>19</sup> Her sentimentality manifests itself in “adolescent admirations” (233) and “infantile” behaviour (151). She and Jane are “suspected of being frivolous” (155) by fellow members of the artistic community, who are distrustful of the women’s capacity for laughter. No doubt they are distrustful too of such utterances as “I disapprove of snobbery in matters of thought as intensely as I approve of it in matters of dress. Good thinking never springs from snobbery — good dressing from little else” (151).

These qualities of emotionalism, immaturity and frivolity are not the only stereotypes of female behaviour Anderson displays. Motivated as she is by emotion

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<sup>18</sup> In *The Strange Necessity* Anderson encapsulates her aesthetic in an “Einsteinian formula”: “E + M = A. (Emotion plus mind = Art)” (106)

<sup>19</sup> Her encounter with A.E. Orage late in the autobiography leads Anderson to rethink that position. Under his influence, she recognizes her impassioned pursuit of ecstatic states as constitutive of a behavioural pattern driven by reaction, rather than action. For this reason, allusions to her early outbursts of emotion are occasionally delivered ironically. This is particularly true of the description of the first issue of the *Little Review*, after which she “toned down somewhat [her] desperate ardor for art” (52).

rather than logic, her actions are frequently wildly impractical and gloriously impetuous. For instance, when confronted with the choice between one house, described as “lovely, much too large and without heating facilities,” and another, “small, practical and [with] a good furnace” (81), she unhesitatingly takes the former — though not for long. (The passage is reminiscent of Crosby’s impulsive decision to purchase the decrepit Virginian plantation late in *The Passionate Years*.) Once inspired by the idea for a little magazine, she loses no sleep over specifics, trusting that such bothersome technicalities as funding will resolve themselves over time. Her confidence in the machinations of fate inevitably proves well-founded: “I felt I had only to decide something and it would happen. I have a single superstition — that the gods are for me and that anything I want will happen if I play at it hard enough. I can’t say work at it because anything I work at never seems to come out right” (13). Together with her friend the Baroness, Anderson belongs to that group of modernist women who “argued an aesthetics of the individual and irrational (and perhaps even the eccentric) against Eliot’s claims for tradition and logic” (Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 34).

Throughout her autobiography, then, Anderson manipulates the behavioral stereotypes assigned to her as a woman, and particularly as a literary woman. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out, literary women have for centuries been

associated with neurosis and madness (*Madwoman in the Attic* 60); Anderson revels in assorted manias and neuroses.<sup>20</sup> Modernist men frequently responded to female achievements by portraying women as garrulous, babbling creatures (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land* 1: 232); Anderson's speech is a "code" comprised of "gasps, gaps and gestures" (41) and echoed in the breathlessness of her autobiographical voice. This curious code aligns her with Irigaray's "she," who is

definitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious ... not to mention her language in which "she" sets off in all directions leaving "him" unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. Hers are contradictory words, somewhat mad from the standpoint of reason, inaudible for whoever listens to them with ready-made grids, with a fully elaborated code in hand. ("This Sex Which is Not One" 28-9)

Anderson's code, like that of "she," can be read as an example of Irigaray's concept of mimicry: "an interim strategy for dealing with the realm of discourse (where the speaking subject is posited as masculine), in which the woman deliberately assumes the feminine style and posture assigned to her within this discourse in order to uncover the mechanisms by which it exploits her" ("Notes on Selected Terms" 220). Anderson appropriates the postures bestowed upon her by the patriarchal literary order as a means of exploring and resisting her oppression. In *My Thirty Years' War*, those postures simultaneously offer an alternative to the "cultural ventriloquism ...

<sup>20</sup> In *The Strange Necessity*, Anderson is told, "You must be neurotic. You're full of manias" (102). Without hesitation she replies, "Exactly. My life has been based on those manias and nothing is going to change them."

that requires the [female] autobiographer to speak like a man" (Smith, *Poetics* 43)

On the one hand, then, Anderson's autobiographical voice subversively reinforces stereotypes of the neurotic, emotional, babbling woman writer. However, this particular cultural construction of the literary woman has traditionally competed with a very different construction: one underpinned by clichés of masculine, rather than feminine, identity. Sidonie Smith describes this second construction as "the unwomanly, egotistic artist;" in the case of homosexual women, it is accompanied by the image of "the physically grotesque and sexually perverse lesbian" ("Who's Talking" 406). This stereotype no doubt underlies the fact that both Clara Laughlin, editor of the *Interior*, and the anarchist Emma Goldman are caught off guard by Anderson's chic beauty when they meet her in person. At the same time, then, that Anderson is reinforcing one image of literary women, she is challenging the other. She demonstrates that her literary career no more prevents her from enjoying, even flaunting, her femininity than does her lesbianism; demonstrates too, as Marek points out, that a "pretty" and "charming" woman can still have something intelligent to say (107).

This point is perhaps best illustrated in the passage where Anderson is approached by a young girl seeking advice. The girl, with "gaunt eyes and the earnestness that would prevent anyone from achieving anything," asks Anderson

what she should do to become a good writer (154). Anderson begins by suggesting that she “disabuse [her]self of the national idea that genius is a capacity for hard work,” explaining that “[t]he meaning of genius is that it doesn’t have to work to attain what people without it must labour for — and not attain.” When the girl insists, “Yes, but what shall I do?” Anderson suggests, “Use a little lip rouge, to begin with. Beauty may bring you experiences to write about.” To her, as to Crosby, lip rouge is not incompatible with literary production, nor does it compromise the artistic integrity of the woman who wears it. On the contrary, it can help unleash a fresh creativity, one rooted in a candid celebration of femininity.<sup>21</sup>

As Anderson demonstrates repeatedly in the course of her autobiography, femininity lends itself to other, more practical, modes of exploitation as well. Like Crosby, she capitalizes on her feminine appearance and manner for both personal and professional gain. For example, she so impresses the head of the Mason and Hamlin piano company with her “emotional attitude about his pianos” that he offers her a concert grand — shipped out to the ranchhouse at his expense (121). When her

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<sup>21</sup> Dane interprets the lip rouge episode thus:

[Anderson] is ironically telling the young woman poet that a woman’s beauty has a direct impact on her experiences in the world. A woman’s beauty will bring her romance; it will bring her heartbreak; and it will cause her to be perceived in ways that are false. But perhaps most importantly, a woman’s physical appearance will impact how she is perceived by the male power structure; critics, publishers, editors. A woman’s looks are her fortune so to speak, and Anderson is thoroughly aware of this fact. (241)

malnourishment begins to manifest itself in “an increasing and uncontrollable thirst for candy” she develops a strategy to satisfy the cravings:

Sometimes I invaded a smart candy shop, asked for the manager, explained that I was uptown without any money but with an irresistible longing for candy. I suggested that he lend me twenty-five cents, which I would repay the next day, but which I would immediately expend for his best caramels. He always seemed happy to meet this demand. Life is not so difficult after all. (205–6)

She adds that Jane rebuked her tendency to “go in looking like a queen and come out looking like a baby” (206).

More significant perhaps than her maneuverings with heads of piano companies and candy stores are those deployed on behalf of the *Little Review*. As Jayne Marek points out, the stereotypically feminine behaviour usually dismissed as frivolity in fact obscures Anderson’s canny resourcefulness (106). It is telling, for example, that the torrent of “tears, prayers, hysterics [and] rages” she unleashes on unsuspecting printers, bookbinders, and paper houses successfully induces them to lend their services to the publication of Joyce’s *Ulysses* despite her inability to guarantee payment. Furthermore, her manner conveniently belies her editorial authority. Because she looks “easily influenced” (read feminine) and Heap appears “solid and redoubtable” (read masculine), prospective contributors prefer to deal with her, and refuse to believe that it is she, not Heap, who issues rejections (153). Moreover, although Anderson modestly refrains from mentioning the fact in so many words,

her physical appeal played a decided role in bolstering support for the *Little Review*. Many of her contemporaries backed her literary efforts "because they were first attracted to her beauty" (Johnson 354). Incidentally, Anderson is not the only one to recognize the worth of her feminine postures. After she publishes an editorial supporting the anarchist cause and concluding with the cry "Why doesn't someone shoot the governor of Utah?" (75), detectives appear at her apartment. She is not at home to greet them, but a male friend is able to assure them that she is merely a "flighty society girl who meant nothing she said" (75).

However, other male acquaintances simply accept Anderson's feminine manner at face value, unable — or unwilling — to recognize in it any underlying motives. A number of the men portrayed in *My Thirty Years' War* are almost absurdly paternalistic in their treatment of her. When Otto Kahn, over to discuss funding for the *Little Review*, asks whether its editors get out sufficiently to "exploit" their "personalities," Anderson points out that "one can't go about comfortably without being well dressed" (227). Her response is a pragmatic observation about the realities of professional life. Kahn promptly pledges four thousand dollars to help defray publication costs and to "provide a few pretty dresses." When Anderson remarks that now she and Heap will be able to "go everywhere ... talk everywhere," Kahn responds with amusement: "Oh, no one really wants to hear any talk ... Let people

see the colour of your eyes and your hair and the way you wear your clothes" (227).<sup>22</sup>

Another culprit is John Quinn, who exhibits the same chauvinistic, bombastic behaviour here as in *Shakespeare and Company*.<sup>23</sup> At the *Ulysses* obscenity trial, he counsels the *Little Review* editors "to remain inconspicuous, meek and silent, and to surround [them]selves with 'window trimmings' — meaning a group of conservative quietly-dressed women and innocent boarding-school girls" (219). His flimsy attempt to exploit their femininity backfires; the two women are eventually found guilty, but not before a judge refuses to permit the contested passages to be read in Anderson's hearing. Regarding her with "tenderness and suffering," he expresses his conviction that "she didn't know the significance of what she was publishing" (221). (Anderson promptly retaliates by playing the feminine role to the hilt. When it is time for her to be fingerprinted, she sends men scurrying around the building in search of towels, soap and a nail brush before finally offering up her carefully

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<sup>22</sup> To add insult to injury, Kahn's donation never materializes. Anderson provides a partial account of the episode in *My Thirty Years' War*; the full story — or at least her side of it — can be found in *The Strange Necessity*, page 111.

<sup>23</sup> Although he found patrons for the review and offered its editors donations from his own pocket, Quinn "did not like the *Little Review*; he said he wished it were back in the Chicago stockyards where it came from" (R. Ellmann 502). There was no love lost between Quinn and the journal's editors; Quinn complained to Pound that during the New York period, they "disregarded his instructions and wishes at every turn, publishing material against his advice and failing to consult him on other matters" (Bryer 280).

manicured digits with cat-like distaste.)<sup>24</sup>

Her male colleagues' refusal to acknowledge her as a serious literary force no doubt derives in part from Anderson's own dismissal of artistic pretensions. She follows Beach and Crosby in embracing the dilettante persona, describing "my career as an amateur — an amateurism so intense that it has served me as a profession" (*The Strange Necessity* 58). That amateurism, she maintains, manifests itself in her own literary output: like Beach and Crosby, this author of multiple books proclaims unequivocally that she is not, nor ever will be, a writer. (Instead, she acts as an inspiration to writers, a muse, "tell[ing] them what they should be" (59) — in itself a not insubstantial claim of influence, of course.) Her amateurism shapes her editorial work as well, but in a way that can only be deemed beneficial. In an early issue of the journal, Anderson announced to her readers, "I have none of the qualifications of the editor; that's why I think the *Little Review* is in good hands" ("Editorial" 2).<sup>25</sup> In

<sup>24</sup> Later in the autobiography, Anderson comments too upon Ezra Pound's treatment of women. She explains, "Ezra had become fairly patriarchal in his attitude to women. He kissed them upon the forehead or drew them upon his knee with perfect obliviousness to their distaste for these mannerisms" (244). Anderson attributes traits that might be described as "feminine" to several of these chauvinistic men, thus unsettling the constructions of gender underpinning modernism's androcentricism. Pound is a "large baby" (243), while Quinn is "better than a prima donna" in that "no woman would throw such obvious scenes, or look around so hopefully for the applause of her audience" (215). Meanwhile, Hemingway, who "becomes violent when the women want to pay their share" of dinner, is a rabbit with a "white and pink face" and soft unblinking eyes (259).

<sup>25</sup> Anderson expands upon the subject elsewhere in the same editorial:

People are always asking me what we are really trying to do. We have not set forth a policy;

place of dry experience and staid professionalism, she offers youth, courage, and “perfectly inexpressible enthusiasm,” qualities which translate into “freshness, reverence, and victory!” (“Announcement” 2) Like Beach and Crosby, she performs her responsibilities as a labour of love: in *The Strange Necessity* she confirms a journalist’s impression that the *Little Review* was “a lot of fun to write for, to read, to edit ...” (111).

That sense of fun is one of many qualities which distinguish Anderson from the “intellectuals,” a group which comes under heated attack in all three volumes of the autobiography. These individuals are recognizable not only for “their sterility and pomposity, their fatuity and posturing” but also for “their unawareness and superiority, their snobbery and gullibility” (*The Strange Necessity* 104). Unforgivably, they lack the crucial first component of the “Emotion plus mind = Art” equation (*The Strange Necessity* 106). Anderson particularly disparages the intellectuals for their neglect of *Ulysses* in the years immediately following its premiere in the *Little Review*. During this period, literary columnists refused to accept publicity notices from the review’s editors and went so far as to take “pleasure in insulting [them] roundly as

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we have not identified ourselves with a point of view, except in so far as we have been ridiculously appreciative; we have not expounded a philosophy, except in so far as we have been quite outlandishly anarchistic; we have been uncritical, indiscriminate, juvenile, exuberant, chaotic, amateurish, emotional, tiresomely enthusiastic, and a lot of other things which I can’t remember now — all the things that are usually said about faulty new undertakings” (1).

purveyors of lascivious literature" (*My Thirty Years' War* 177). Even more inexcusable, from Anderson's point of view, was an accusation by the head of the Herald Tribune's literary section that they bastardized *Ulysses*: an accusation rooted in his "utter negligence" of, and "definite reservations" against, Joyce's masterpiece (175).<sup>26</sup> Later, Anderson underpins her critique of Gertrude Stein's "house-that-Jack-built" prose with a telling remark about her popularity with the intellectual crowd (250–51).

Throughout her writing, then, Anderson contests the devaluation of the "dilettante" relative to the "intellectual," a devaluation particularly pronounced at this time.<sup>27</sup> (In *The Fiery Fountains*, she actually dismantles the hierarchy altogether, noting that the intellectuals "consider my type dilettante and amateur" while "my type considers them dilettante and amateur" (105).) To Carl Van Vechten, regarded as a leading musical authority, she does not hesitate to exclaim scornfully, "My word

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<sup>26</sup> Coincidentally, the man referred to here is Burton Rascoe, author of the scathing review of *The Passionate Years* mentioned in the previous chapter.

Later in *My Thirty Years' War*, Anderson returns to the subjects of *Ulysses*' lukewarm reception. With thinly disguised rancour, she observes that it was not until after Sylvia Beach published the work in book form that her own "three-year propaganda began to have its effect" (226). The flood of *Ulysses* criticism which subsequently appeared "always omit[ted] to mention in spite of our copyright and our trial that it had first been published in the *Little Review*" (227). The passage is particularly interesting when read against Beach's account of the *Little Review*'s involvement with *Ulysses*.

<sup>27</sup> Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace argue that "[t]he professionalization of the arts and of the artist — underway since the later nineteenth century — had a number of effects, many of which reached their apogee in the modernist period" (69). One of those effects was that "the professional was distinguished from the dilettante or the amateur."

... don't you know anything at all about music?" (*My Thirty Years' War* 50)

Elsewhere, she refutes an assessment of H.L. Mencken as "the influence that all young men of the generation found easy, inevitable, and delightful to follow," observing that he has "championed nothing that the exceptional mind seeks out by instinct" (176).

Anderson's confidence in the integrity of her aesthetic judgement is rooted in her perception of herself as a "touchstone." Towards the end of her life she told Solita Solano, "To me a touchstone is the kind of person who can prove that, in his case, the despised term, 'I like,' or 'I don't like,' are important, authentic, 'right'" (qtd. Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 371). In *My Thirty Years' War*, she describes a lengthy dialogue in which Heap attempts to convey this theory to an unsympathetic audience. The discussion begins,

You can't say arbitrarily that this is exceptional and that isn't.  
Why not, asked Jane. Art is my business. I wouldn't attempt to tell you that I know more about your business than you do. But you are perfectly willing to treat me in that way. (134)

Needless to say, the women's claims for an "autocrac[y] of opinion" (135) — that opinion being their own — were not always regarded favourably by their contemporaries. Anderson summarizes the reaction to their brashness thus: "We formed a consolidation that was to make us much loved and even more loathed"

(107).<sup>28</sup>

Brushing off the disfavour of her critics, Anderson delights in “speculation of a type that is not the property of the savant mind (at least has not been in our time)” (155). The privileging of emotional response discussed earlier is one facet of that speculation; another is encapsulated by her claim that “the determining factor in aesthetic and moral judgement was always the personal element” (220). She asserts that her acceptance or rejection of manuscript submissions hinges on only one principle: “art as the person” (134). As Beach discovers the “strange presence” of Joyce in his poetry (175) and Crosby senses René Crevel’s “naive heart” in *Mr. Knife and Miss Fork* (303), so Anderson maintains that the artist is a “marked” human being whose creations are similarly marked (47). Or, stated differently, “A great book is always based upon the difference between its protagonist and the other characters — that is, the difference between the author and the other human beings he knows” (79). Sinclair Lewis’ contention that the average person’s psychology is no less interesting than that of the exceptional person leaves Anderson cold; she is outraged

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<sup>28</sup> Nina Auerbach’s comment that communities of women are “emblems of female self-sufficiency which create their own corporate reality, evoking both wishes and fears” (5) seems pertinent here.

Despite her expressions of self-confidence, there is evidence that Anderson was troubled by the “intellectuals’” refusal to acknowledge her full importance as a literary figure. Shortly before her death she wrote to Solita Solano, “I wish, when critics write of me, they would mention what E[zra] said: No editor in America, save Margaret Anderson, even felt the need of, or responsibility for, getting the best writers concentrated — i.e. brought them together — in an American periodical” (qtd. Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank* 23).

when his *Main Street*, with its “insignificant” photography and “unimportant” truth, provokes comparisons with *Madame Bovary*. (79). Later, she indicts Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms* and Richard Aldington’s *Death of a Hero* for a similar inability to transcend the incidental.

Anderson’s fascination with the artist’s psychology means that, like Beach and Crosby, her passion for her work is firmly rooted in the human element. In *The Strange Necessity* she recounts that her motivation in beginning the journal was a longing to know the people responsible for the nascent artistic movement and to be privy to their conversations (18). Her decision to join the exodus to Paris late in *My Thirty Years’ War* arises from a wish to meet the expatriates W.B. Yeats describes to her. Once in Paris, she focuses upon the psychological makeup of the expatriates rather than upon specific incidents, which she telescopes into a Stein-like litany of mad antics and avant-garde excesses. Anderson’s pilgrimages to a series of prominent figures — “an expected trope of expatriate memoir” (Dane 259) — lead her to conclude that Pound bears the psychic marks of all confirmed expatriates, that Joyce’s “strata of sensitization” (245) is highly developed, that Stein’s reputation benefits from her “heavy physical vibrations” (251), and that Hemingway is so fearful of falling in love that he “doesn’t go about as blithely as he used to” (258). (Like Beach, Anderson stakes a claim in the discovery of Hemingway, describing how the

*Little Review* printed the first two stories of his published anywhere (258).) Her passionate interest in human nature helped make Anderson the centre of a constellation of writers and artists. Echoing tributes to Beach and Crosby, Sherwood Anderson wrote of her, "In Chicago when you came you were most needed ... You gave a lot of queer isolated people a quick and sudden sense of each other... You got us all together" (qtd. Platt 146).

In particular, Anderson's fascination with psychology draws her to Jane Heap, with her "uncanny knowledge of the human composition, her unfailing clairvoyance about human motivation" (122). Heap's arrival on the scene is proclaimed in the same ringing tones that greet James Joyce and Harry Crosby in *Shakespeare and Company* and *The Passionate Years* respectively. "At this moment," Anderson writes, "the most interesting thing that had happened to the *Little Review* — the most interesting thing that ever happened to it — took place in February. Jane Heap appeared ..." (102). Her encounter with Heap is a personal as well as a professional climax: "This was what I had been waiting for, searching for, all my life" (122), she says of their interminable dissections of human psychology.

As Pamelyn Nance Dane notes, Anderson's lesbian relationship with Heap is rendered in terms of the so-called "masculine" discourse of intellectual exchange, not the "feminine" narrative of love and desire. Anderson is drawn irresistibly to Heap's

conversation, which she labels as the “world’s best” (103) and which Robert McAlmon elsewhere describes less glowingly as “breezy travelling-salesman-of-the-world tosh which was impossible to recall later” (*Being Geniuses Together* 37). Invoking Irigaray’s concept of a female discourse imaged by two continually embracing lips, Dane reads the women’s conversations as a code for their sexual relationship, “for conversation is always the embrace of two lips with two other lips” (252). That reading enriches Anderson’s claim that she was “insane with the mental satisfaction of Jane’s presence” (111). Similarly, it reveals a sexualized domesticity, not dissimilar to that of *The Passionate Years*, in the account of how they rearrange their beds to avoid the unpleasantness of holding conversations through closed bedroom doors. Exploring her lesbian identity through Heap’s character, Anderson validates Mary Grimley Mason’s model of the “Other.”

Just as Caresse Crosby inscribes Henry, her Other, into *The Passionate Years* by citing his diary entries, so Anderson periodically permits Heap’s voice to displace her own. As proof of Heap’s conversational prowess, she quotes some of her most memorable comments; elsewhere, a clever little dialogue composed by Heap offers a glimpse into the way the women interact. The autobiography’s requisite collection of celebrity photographs is punctuated by two pages of Heap’s cartoons depicting Anderson in various domestic pursuits. The cartoons and dialogue, as well as a later

dialogue in which Anderson expresses the tensions between herself and Heap, all initially appeared in the *Little Review*. The women regularly encoded their personal relationship in the journal in the form of private jokes, dialogues, and exchanges of ideas (Marek 104). The *Little Review*, in other words, became a sort of precursor to *My Thirty Years' War*.

In her autobiography "proper," Anderson writes, "The quality of the L.R., its personality, the thing that set it apart from other magazines of its type, was its reflection of [the] intense conflicts between its editors" (230–31). *My Thirty Years' War* depicts how those conflicts accelerate as the relationship begins to strain under the incompatibility of their personal and professional aspirations. Anderson becomes increasingly aware that the two should consider "liv[ing] their quite opposed rhythms on opposite sides of the street"; however, Heap's argument that it is opposition which generates her *Little Review* writing keeps her "drudging on" (231). When Anderson finally renounces her claim on the *Little Review*, the passage's fractured typography hints at the agitation provoking and provoked by that decision.<sup>29</sup>

During the immensely productive years of their partnership, Anderson and Heap challenged the literary world to reconceptualize the character of art, its forums, and

<sup>29</sup> This final period of their co-editorship was a time of "considerable argument during which the ownership of the magazine was handed back and forth several times" (Bryer 409). *My Thirty Years' War* provides a disjointed and incomplete account of the final period of Anderson's involvement with the *Little Review* and of her romantic transition from Jane Heap to Georgette Leblanc. *The Fiery Fountains* fills in a number of these gaps.

its proponents. In their hands, the *Little Review* became a “personal magazine” in every sense of the world: a showcase for their most exciting artistic and literary discoveries, a platform for passionately held convictions, and, less overtly, a transcription of the harmonies and dissonances which defined their relationship.

Susan Noyes Platt observed recently that “Margaret Anderson’s campaign was to make a stand for intensity and authenticity in art and life” (148). Unlike so much commentary on the subject, Platt’s remark captures the essence of Anderson’s nature and that of her journal. The woman who would “edit life as [she] would edit a manuscript, to extract the quintessence of its yield” (*The Fiery Fountains* 65) brought to her daily life and her work an uncompromising emotionalism which made no apologies for its unfashionability. The same quest for authenticity which guided her to the most innovative literature of her time informed her examination of the fictions bestowed upon her by male precursors and contemporaries. *My Thirty Years’ War* is Anderson’s own version of her story and it is, as she herself might have claimed, far more compelling than anyone else’s.

Margaret Anderson, Sylvia Beach, and Caresse Crosby have all been fictionalized by writers and scholars more interested in perpetuating popular legend than in reexamining historical fact. For over a half century, their contributions to modernism were distorted, diminished, even forgotten entirely. Only within the past

decade has scholarship begun to revise our perception of these and other women, demonstrating why the group formerly represented as literary “midwives” more justly deserves the title “mothers of modernism.” More work remains to be done.

The most exhaustive survey of the female modernists, Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank*, treats only the expatriates in Paris, and no published study devoted to the female publishers and editors exists at this time. A comprehensive and accurate study of that sort will have to incorporate analysis of the women's self-representational literature. Hitherto neglected, that body of writing offers vital clues to the women's experiences and connections, and helps explain the persistence of the mythology surrounding them. Only by heeding their autobiographical voices can we restore the women owners of private presses and little magazines to their rightful place in the genealogy of modernism.

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