MODERNIST WOMEN IN PRINT: MINA LOY, KAY BOYLE, MARY BUTTS, AND THE PERIODICAL PRESS

by

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(Under the Direction of Adam Parkes)

ABSTRACT

The present study argues that the quick and steady growth of magazines in the early twentieth century informed the availability, popularity, reception, and influence of, as well as shaped the creative and critical work done by, modernist women writers. In particular, it examines the publishing careers of Mina Loy, Kay Boyle, and Mary Butts and posits that the women were able to forge professional identities for themselves through the various periodicals in which they appeared. While all of the authors published books, their careers in avant-garde and mainstream magazines, as well as in newspapers, reveal the importance of the British and American periodical press in developing, maintaining, and sometimes harming their status as writers. By examining the significant impact that their contributions to, and appearances in, periodicals had on their relationships with their peers, their readers, their artistic choices, and, to some extent, their failed canonization, we can further our understanding of the role the press played in fostering contemporary women's modernism and upending our current beliefs of the movement's core characteristics, as well as recontextualize both aesthetic innovation and the politics of professionalism.

INDEX WORDS: Kay Boyle, Mary Butts, Mina Loy, little magazines, modernism, periodical press, publishing

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For Ronnie, Tyler, and Mia

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CHAPTER 1

MODERNISM AND THE PERIODICAL PRESS

I. A Short History of the Periodical Press in America and England

In August of 1924, Kay Boyle wrote to her good friend and mentor Lola Ridge, "I believe you didn't know that Harriet Monroe [of *Poetry*] accepted the Harbor Song—with reservations. I needed the money and agreed to her censorship. She couldn't 'risk' the section entitled 'Whore Street' and she didn't 'dare' retain the word 'buttocks' in the section 'For the Sea'" (qtd. in Scott 153). Boyle's reluctant acquiescence in Monroe's revisions illustrates the position of many modernists, who were torn between the need to see their work published and the desire to maintain the integrity of their aesthetic vision. This was not a novel struggle, of course. For years, writers had been forced to make similar choices and to bow to the stringent demands of censors. But Boyle's situation is noteworthy for other reasons. To begin with, the work was published in Monroe's *Poetry*, a little magazine that boasted an Open Door Policy and was dedicated to showcasing the talents of experimental young writers. Only five years earlier, in fact, Monroe had written, "Art is not static—it must go on or retreat" (qtd. in Scott 241). Thus, her unwillingness to "risk" or "dare" some of the more controversial of Boyle's passages indicates an oft-ignored pressure that editors faced in balancing the demands of their readership with their magazines' competitiveness as fresh artistic venues.[1] Equally important, though, is the fact that Boyle published "Summer," a revised version of the poem with the "Whore Street" section intact, in *This Quarter* a few months after its appearance in *Poetry.* Ernest Walsh specifically chose it for his magazine to emphasize his hands-off stance and to challenge those

editors and publishers who would compromise the authenticity of a work in order to placate either the reading public or official censors.

An open act of defiance against publishing constraints, Walsh's decision was perhaps more significant because of the dialogue that it represented. By responding to Monroe via *This Quarter*, Walsh demonstrated that the little magazines of the early twentieth century were not isolated products with fixed readerships but complex, dynamic facets of a larger network of artistic production. Walsh's objection is just one example of the myriad ways in which writers and editors engaged with one another through the magazines, but it illustrates well what Jayne Marek calls the "material culture" of the era and the channels through which artists were able to shape, define, and ultimately validate the modernist project.[2] This dialogue did not end with avant-garde periodicals either but spread to magazines and newspapers of all sizes and "brows," demonstrating the interconnectedness of the larger publishing culture. An author appearing in *Others*, for example, might be parodied or praised in the New York *Evening Sun*, as was the case with Mina Loy, who was featured there as the ideal "modern" woman but also ridiculed for her upending of romantic conventions in "Love Songs." Or, like Mary Butts, a writer might review for the modernist magazine *Time and Tide* while simultaneously submitting work to a widely circulated mainstream paper such as *The Sunday Times*, disrupting myths of modernist isolation and anxiety over mass market interaction. This is not to suggest that all modernists moved fluidly—or willingly—between the poles of the publishing sphere but to hint at the invigorating entanglement of the early twentieth-century press.

The emerging technologies of the 1800s enabled quicker and more economical publishing and distribution than had previously been possible, and, coupled with social changes such as increased literacy rates and educational reform, these led to the unprecedented growth of

periodicals in the following years. Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and John Plunkett trace this development in "The Pre-History of the 'Little Magazine,'"[3] noting that the early nineteenth-century British press was dominated by "cultural heavyweights" like the *Quarterly Review*, the *Westminster Review*, and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, diverse quarterlies that contributed responses to the most pressing social, cultural, and political issues of the period (35). Despite the magazines' relatively small circulation numbers, their power came from the social prominence of their readers, who were well-positioned to enact change based on the outcomes of the critical debates presented there. But the hegemonic influence of these periodicals was undercut by the "fragmentation of the periodical market" in later decades (Hadjiafxendi and Plunkett 38). This splintering was, in part, a result of relaxed stamp and paper regulations in the 1850s and 1860s that ensured the economic viability of small periodicals and niche publishing. While the changing market and growing number of publications meant increased readership, it also led to fears over the irrevocable loss of an "authoritative cultural center" (Hadjiafxendi and Plunkett 41).

The American periodical press followed a trajectory slightly different from that of its British peer. Slower to ensure widespread circulation given its lack of established infrastructure, America nevertheless early on acknowledged the press's importance not only in fostering political discussion but also in formulating a sense of national culture. Between 1825 and 1850, the first "Golden Age" of periodicals, roughly four to five thousand magazines were probably published in the United States, an astonishing number given the country's still-growing population (Tebbel 48). The Civil War, however, nearly crippled the magazine industry. Unable to procure supplies or maintain a staff, and hampered by high postage rates, the magazines of the South were particularly hard hit. And even those that did manage to stay in business often lost

subscribers from other regions and could not compete with newspapers, which provided more timely updates.[4] But the postwar publishing industry quickly regained its footing, with well-respected magazines like *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Monthly* competing for prominence in the American market at the end of the century. Fueled by trade developments, such as advancements in photography, and by the establishment of railroads that allowed for coast-to-coast circulation, general-interest monthlies enjoyed an explosion of readers. These were joined by those periodicals that carved a special niche for themselves by appealing to readers concerned about the direction of politics, religion, or women's issues.

The periodicals of the twentieth century, including little magazines, were an outgrowth of this segmentation, often catering to specific publics with discernible interests. But if a fragmented market meant the loss of a cultural core, the tradeoff was an overall increase in readership and dialogue between various publications, which retained separate identities and philosophical foundations but often engaged with one another via reviews, editorials, articles, advertisements, and, at times, overt stylistic appropriation.[5] In addition to the cross-pollination of ideas and styles, many periodicals also pushed generic boundaries, making it nearly impossible to establish fixed categories for every magazine. *Vanity Fair*, for example, was a profitable magazine with a circulation of only slightly below 100,000 that catered to an upper-crust public eager for current information about culture and the arts, but it also included work by or about some of the most prominent modernists of the day, including Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, Dorothy Parker, Willa Cather, and Edna St. Vincent Millay.[6] In discussing *Vanity Fair*, Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace warn us to be wary of confusing "*use* of mass circulation periodicals, either to open up new markets or to integrate art and praxis, with *endorsement* or validation of the bourgeois ideology of these publications" (126). While these authors are certainly right to

make a distinction between the two motives, I would argue that the "bourgeois ideology" of such magazines is less static than might be expected. John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman argue that editor Frank Crowninshield's "flair" was merely one part of the magazine's appeal; readers were equally drawn to the literature, including work by T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, André Gide, and other practitioners of the modern (299). Though cultural consumption and profit were central, the willingness of magazines like *Vanity Fair* to include some of the most elusive writers of the time (Stein, for example) indicates their belief in their audience's capacity to accept the intellectual rigors of modernism.

Other types of publications, including critical monthlies and quarterlies, are equally difficult to place. *The Criterion, The Southern Review,* and *The Calendar of Modern Letters,* for instance, are included in the "Supplementary List" in *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*, indicating that they share similarities with many avant-garde periodicals but do not fit Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich's specific criteria for defining little magazines. And while their work is not the final statement on such categorization, its prominent position in little magazine scholarship has shaped the tenor of discussion. Indeed, many of these reviews, while championing through publication some experimental literature and art, enjoyed more stability—but had to contend with broader and sometimes less accepting audiences—than their avant-garde counterparts. And their critical nature meant that they fostered modernism through debate about the theoretical underpinnings of the movement itself, helping to canonize, for better or worse, certain writers and works. Michael Levenson even argues that we should look to the founding of Eliot's *Criterion* as the "mark of modernism's coming of age," for it "exemplifies the institutionalization of the movement, the accession to cultural legitimacy" (213). On the one hand, then, many of these critical reviews dealt with the solidification of reputations rather than

the introduction of new authors and methods. On the other hand, they were still willing to stake a claim by publishing and reviewing authors who were not accepted in the mainstream media.

These magazines and others afforded modernists the chance to see their work in print, for book publishing was a daunting task that required a large body of work from the author and a substantial investment on the part of the publisher. According to Jonathan Rose, after the First World War, which had a significant impact on the industry, a British publisher had to sell two thousand copies of a book to earn a profit, versus one thousand in 1914; moreover, the typical novel length fell by close to 70,000 words, with "economic forces discourag[ing] experimentalism and well-developed narratives in favor of quick and easy formula fiction" (Rose 344). The expanding American market faced its own set of pressures as well. The 1920s and 1930s saw an influx of new publishers—Benjamin Huebsch, Alfred and Blanche Knopf, and Albert Boni and Horace Liveright, for example—willing to support modernist literature, but publishing houses still had to contend with inefficient distribution outside of metropolitan areas, where libraries were scarce (Luey 371-372).

The small presses that flourished in the 1920s and 1930s, especially in Paris, did offer writers some alternatives to the lucrative but competitive mainstream publishing houses. Robert McAlmon's Contact Publishing Company printed William Carlos Williams's *Spring and All,* Mina Loy's *Lunar Baedecker* [sic], Mary Butts's *Ashe of Rings,* and Ernest Hemingway's *Three Stories & Ten Poems*, for example, while Harry and Caresse Crosby of the Black Sun Press published Hart Crane's *The Bridge,* Kay Boyle's *Short Stories*, and Ezra Pound's *Imaginary Letters* and Sylvia Beach of Shakespeare and Company published James Joyce's *Ulysses*. For the most part, though, modernist writers got their start in the periodicals, which offered the flexibility of publishing individual poems and stories, as well as a quicker and more direct

connection with readers. Acknowledging the appeal of these magazines, Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia Smyers write that "periodical publishing—however small, specialist, erratic or partisan—is where writers turn if they're young or experimentalist, and if they're seeking an audience for non-populist forms; lyric poetry, short fiction, essays, plays, literary sketches and polemical pieces. Fees may be small or non-existent, but the chance of an audience is compelling and overriding" (189).

Indeed, magazines such as *Others, The Little Review, This Quarter,* and *transition* prided themselves on both their willingness to accommodate experimental poetry and prose and the speed with which they could ensure readership. In his opening editorial statement, Ernest Walsh called attention to the privileges of aligning oneself with *This Quarter,* noting that one of his goals was to publish work quickly. He also emphasized the magazine's irreverent stylistic stance: "We are fickle, wayward, uncommitted to respect of respect of the respectable established armies strong because many" (260). Eugene Jolas and Elliot Paul noted similar benefits in the first number of *transition*: "TRANSITION wishes to offer American writers an opportunity to express themselves freely, to experiment, if they are so minded, and to avail themselves of a ready, alert and critical audience" (137). It is worth noting that the editors of both magazines are equally concerned with artistic freedom and quick publication, both of which were the purview of avant-garde periodicals.[7] Without such magazines, many writers of the early twentieth century would have had particular difficulty finding themselves in print. As "consumer magazines and large audience interests" started to dominate the market, especially in America, fewer magazines risked an overtly literary focus, especially if that meant departing from late-century realism (Tebbel 213). This shift away from literature in the mainstream periodicals presaged the creation of alternative avenues for the dissemination of new and stylistically experimental work.

Those few mass circulation magazines that did not shy away from literature, however, became extremely profitable ventures for the artists who were successful enough to publish there. Serving a two-fold purpose, the magazines paid writers for their stories and publicized their books. According to James West, for example, "Between 1919 and 1936, F. Scott Fitzgerald earned some $225,784 for his magazine fiction as opposed to only $66,588 for his novels" (qtd. in Luey 371). Indeed it was Fitzgerald's magazine work that best solidified his reputation with the reading public and offered him the professional flexibility he required. Though less famous than Fitzgerald, Kay Boyle was equally adept at profiting from magazine publication. In 1943 alone she claimed $26,761.61 when filing her taxes, $9,357.95 of which came from *Avalanche* royalties (Mellen 280). The novel was serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post* throughout 1943. When it was published in book form by Simon & Schuster in 1944, it made *The New York Times*'s best-seller list with sales in the hundreds of thousands, attesting to the *Post*'s ability to generate publicity for the author (Mellen 293).[8]

II. The Changing Face of Modernist Periodical Studies

Despite the opportunities afforded by the periodical press, magazines have occupied an inferior place in textual studies until recently. Cataloguing the hierarchical dichotomy between books and periodicals, James Wald argues that the former have been thought "venerable," "complete," "univocal," "individual," "authorial," "authoritative," "creative," and "permanent," while the latter have been viewed as "recent," "fragmentary," "polyvalent," "collective," "subjective," "provisional," "derivative," and "ephemeral" (421-422). The implied hierarchy presented here is, of course, largely dependent upon professional interest, and Wald reminds us that the periodical, a "nonlinear assemblage of parcels of text," is not a "book *manqué*" but a

unique genre with its own set of defining characteristics (422). The ephemerality of the periodical admittedly has posed a problem for many researchers, who are stymied by poorly kept editorial records and rare copies of fully intact magazines.[9] But the "recent" and "polyvalent" nature of little magazines has led to an upsurge in scholarly examinations of modernist periodicals and, more notably, a movement away from viewing them as mere repositories to be scoured in search of forgotten authors or works.[10] For Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman, the temporality of the magazine is its most important quality; because they are "of their moment, addressed to the audience of that moment," they shed light on "the culture, the ideology, and the values" of their particular era (144).

Scholes and Wulfman's *Modernism in the Magazines*, an introduction to periodical research largely intended for classroom use, speaks to the new generation of scholars interested in the materiality of the modernist project and the role periodicals play in enhancing our understanding of how authorial self-positioning, interaction, and professionalism affected the choices made by early twentieth-century writers. Of particular interest is their chapter entitled "How to Study a Modern Magazine," which sets forth a series of formulaic but useful points of inquiry for examining avant-garde periodicals, including implied readership, circulation, contributors, contents, editor, format, and history (146-148). Their specific methodology—and the very existence of a scholarly methodology for the examination of little magazines in general—demonstrates the evolution of periodical scholarship from excavation to examination. Moreover, the inclusiveness of their approach, which covers art and advertising as well as literature, indicates that these magazines do indeed need to be studied as "collective" enterprises. Because the usual "history of little magazines is essentially a history of personalities," the collaborative nature of these ventures is often overshadowed by their editors' individuality

(Tebbel 215). Despite even the strictest editorial guidance and control, the periodical is nonetheless defined largely by the exchanges, intended or not, that take place between its various facets, such as advertisements, editorials, articles, letters, and photographs or reproductions.

Advertisements, long overlooked, are particularly important keys for unlocking the nature of any given magazine because they provide glimpses of its readership and the contemporary culture. Throughout "The Rise of Periodical Studies," Sean Latham and Robert Scholes note the importance of advertising in early twentieth-century periodicals and reveal that advertisements were often left out of magazine reprints, which has been at least partially responsible for claims of modernism's anti-commerciality and disengagement. Such textual holes were no doubt encouraged by early modes of inquiry which saw magazines as "containers of discrete bits of information rather than autonomous objects of study" (Latham and Scholes 517-518). But the interactions between these "bits" have recently become subject to large-scale investigation, with scholars unearthing the intricate networks that connected literary modernism to its socio-historical moment. Creating "surprising and even bewildering points of contact between disparate areas of human activity," magazines and newspapers offer the priceless information necessary for situating modernism within a larger cultural context (Latham and Scholes 528).

Moreover, a cover-to-cover experience is imperative if we are to understand how reading practices affect our views about periodicals, either individually or as a genre. Examining six little magazines that were published between the 1890s and 1920s (*The Yellow Book, Savoy, BLAST, The Egoist, The Little Review* and *The Dial*), Edward Bishop argues that we need to read these texts with an eye to what Jerome McGann calls their "bibliographic environment" (qtd. in Bishop 287). In one particularly convincing example, Bishop juxtaposes the advertising in *The Little Review* with Margaret Anderson's self-professed interests and concludes that "this is a

literary, even missionary, venture, not a commercial one" (307). Anderson's shameless inclusion of advertisements, including one for the wildly successful novel *Diane of the Green Van*—which the advertisement boasts is "not a 'problem' or 'sex' novel"— in an issue that posits the editor's belief in feminism, testifies to her need to publish the magazine at any cost (qtd. in Bishop 306). Flippantly unconcerned with the incongruities between the content of her articles and advertisements, Anderson embodied the "haphazard, amateur" face of modernism, one at odds with our prevailing interest in the movement as one marked by "sacred objects" (Bishop 314). Bishop, like Latham, Scholes, Suzanne Churchill, Adam McKible, Mark Morrison, and others who have played a large part in the emergence of modernist periodical studies, calls for a renewed emphasis on viewing the magazine as a primary text, a goal intended to help us reassess our understanding of modernist modes of production and distribution.

The changing nature of periodical studies has been theoretically undergirded by the work of textual scholars such as Jerome McGann and, more recently, George Bornstein. McGann argues, in *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, that the production of literary texts takes place within a "dynamic" social context but that we have long neglected the "dialectic between the historically located individual author and the historically developing institutions of literary production" (81). In this instance, McGann speaks of the difficulties involved when choosing authoritative texts for critical and scholarly editions, but his claim is equally applicable to the production of modernist periodicals, which come to life in a distinct cultural moment under a particular set of social and economic pressures. This means acknowledging, for instance, that Harriet Monroe was constrained by her need to please her wealthy Chicago *Poetry* backers when she edited Kay Boyle's "Harbour Song," or that William Carlos Williams and Robert McAlmon primarily published *Contact* in order to see their own work in print and had neither the finances

nor the flexibility to produce a magazine of high physical quality, despite their good intentions. Such "textual conditions"—to borrow the title of McGann's later book—can alter the nature of our reading practices and provide us with a unique set of contextual details for situating a given work.

George Bornstein argues for the importance of historicizing literary production, too, focusing in *Material Modernism* on the impact that this can have on our interpretation of specific texts as well as on our conception of modernism as a whole. He posits that "examining modernism in its original sites of production and in the continually shifting physicality of its texts and transmissions results in alternative constructions very different from current ones" (1). For McGann, this means reevaluating claims that modernism is anti-historical and "totalizing rather than interrogative" (1). Moreover, it means questioning claims of anti-commerciality, disinterestedness, and literary elitism, those longstanding pillars upon which definitions of modernism have rested. Previously invested in New Critical tendencies to privilege literary works as isolated, self-reflective products, many scholars of modernism are now acknowledging the importance of textual scholarship and the ways in which it expands and enriches the discipline.

A more expansive critical understanding of modernism requires not only a renewed focus on the intricacies of print scholarship, but also a clearer sense of the ways modernism manifested itself outside of the little magazines and small presses. Robert Scholes argues that many popular, widely circulated periodicals were not "blind to new talent" or "opposed to serious art and literature," despite their underappreciated position in modernist studies (6). *Scribner's, The New Yorker, Vanity Fair,* and others may not have been at the forefront of experimental modernism, but they encouraged a number of young writers and provided alternative—and paid—

opportunities for publication. *Scribner's*, for example, published work by Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Kay Boyle and has been partially digitized for inclusion on the Modernist Journals Project website, indicating its status as an important publication for modernist scholarship.

Even those mainstream newspapers and magazines that did not publish original fiction or poetry by modernist writers still helped to publicize them, often by reproducing their work or referencing them in articles, editorial columns, and reviews. In her discussion of modernism in the daily press, Karen Leick notes the rise of literary supplements and columns in the 1920s, including the New York *Herald Tribune's Books,* the *Saturday Review of Literature,* the New York *Evening Post*'s "Literary Review," and the *New York Times Book Review,* which included a weekly "Current Magazines" section that sometimes chronicled the innovative work taking place in avant-garde magazines (127, 129). Column authors were also free, for the most part, to reproduce material printed in periodicals because it was not copyrighted, allowing for layers of circulation (Leick 129). Such reproductions meant that modernist literature was reaching a much broader audience than just readers of little magazines. General-interest mass magazines also popularized a handful of authors previously thought unintelligible. After his work had been parodied by the press for years, for example, James Joyce appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in January of 1934 and again in May of 1939, as did Gertrude Stein in September of 1933 and T.S. Eliot in March of 1950.[11] By publishing photographs of and articles about these modernists, *Time* and other members of the mainstream periodical press brought them to the forefront of American culture, and acknowledging their role in publicizing modernism can help us to better understand how many readers of the time, and not just fellow artists, reacted to the movement's complexities.

III. Modernist Women Writers in the Periodicals

The influx of publications in the early twentieth century meant increased opportunities for writers, who were no longer confined to the aesthetic or political guidelines of a small handful of magazines or newspapers. Women were especially well positioned to take advantage of this growth, which dovetailed with marked changes in social mores and politics and a bold public presence made possible by the suffrage campaigns and the First World War. This visibility carried over into the literary marketplace, where women carved a space for themselves in the feminist press and later contributed substantially to the growth and development of artistic modernism.[12] For the past three decades, women have been lauded for their roles as publishers, booksellers, editors, and salonnières who fostered discussion and debate and made the material manifestations of modernism accessible to the public. They turned to, or in some cases founded, magazines, presses, and semi-public forums as a way to demonstrate their intellectual credibility and devotion to art. While Gertrude Stein (Rue de Fleurus salon) and Natalie Barney (Rue Jacob salon/Académie des Femmes) promoted the exchange of ideas, Caresse Crosby (Black Sun Press), Nancy Cunard (Hours Press), Sylvia Beach (Shakespeare and Company), Harriet Monroe (*Poetry*), Margaret Anderson (*The Little Review*), Bryher (*Close-Up* and Brendin Publishing), Harriet Shaw Weaver (Egoist Press), and others "provided the first material incarnations of an astonishing number of modernist works" and facilitated the transatlantic movement of those products (Bornstein 82).[13] Fueled by a scholarly interest in the structural underpinnings of modernism, studies of these women have proven that they played a transformative role in shaping the canon, creating channels through which art and literature traveled, and formulating still-existing definitions of modernism.

Less well documented, however, are the critical and creative endeavors of modernist women in the early twentieth-century avant-garde and popular press, perhaps because the sheer number of authors and publications makes surveying the publishing landscape a nearly impossible task. Paradoxically, any discussion of women's presence in publishing runs the risk of myopia as well; as Maren Tova Linett has noted, much feminist criticism of the 1980s and 1990s "overemphasized" the differences between men's and women's modernism, making space for the latter by establishing narrow literary criteria and ignoring overlapping interests and concerns (3). Thus the purpose of this study is not to posit that women were differently situated in the periodical press, nor is it to suggest that male modernists were exempt from the pressures that their female counterparts grappled with or the opportunities they were afforded. Instead, I argue that the quick and steady growth of magazines in the early twentieth century informed the availability, popularity, reception, and influence of, as well as shaped the creative and critical work done by, modernist women writers. Moreover, I examine how consciously and effectively these writers negotiated the realm of publishing and how their diverse needs and goals affected their participation in the publication process. Only by acknowledging women's engagement with the periodical press can we begin to understand the myriad ways in which they contributed to the modernist project. This participation in the literary marketplace continues to offer new avenues of inquiry that recontextualize both aesthetic innovation and the politics of professionalism.

Previously confined, in large part, to quickly penned stories in popular women's magazines or sensational dailies or to mass-market fiction, women enjoyed newfound flexibility when it came to the publishing culture of the early twentieth century. They could provide socio-political commentary to *The New Yorker,* fashion articles to *Vogue,* manifestoes to *The Masses,* and free verse poetry to *The Little Review.* And writers like Kay Boyle, who easily navigated the

network of periodicals and became adept at catering to the needs of diverse readerships, found success in nearly every corner of the market. Especially important were the little magazines, which catered to the most courageous of artists by providing a home for otherwise unpublishable work. Although some of these magazines published women writers infrequently, others, including *The Dial*, *Poetry*, *The Little Review*, the *transatlantic review*, and *Life and Letters To-Day*, included a truly astonishing range of women's writing. *Life and Letters To-Day* alone, for instance, boasted contributions by H.D., Bryher, Mary Butts, Marianne Moore, Sylvia Townsend Warner, Gertrude Stein, Nancy Cunard, Violet Hunt, Dorothy Richardson, Elizabeth Bowen, Eudora Welty, Edith Sitwell, Elizabeth Bishop, and Stevie Smith, among others, attesting to its significance as a late modernist publication. Apart from the little magazines in which most modernist women writers got their start are the mainstream periodicals that published their fiction and non-fiction or that featured them as subjects of articles and photographs. These magazines and newspapers provide an equally important means of helping us to understand how modernists situated themselves as writers, as well as how the public perceived both them and their work.

The present study of the publishing careers of Mina Loy, Kay Boyle, and Mary Butts argues that the women were able to forge professional identities for themselves through the various periodicals in which they appeared. While all of the authors published books, their careers in avant-garde and mainstream magazines, as well as in newspapers, reveal the importance of the British and American press in developing, maintaining, and sometimes harming their status as writers. By examining the significant impact that their contributions to, and appearances in, periodicals had on their relationships with their peers, their readers, their artistic choices, and, to some extent, their failed canonization, we can further our understanding

of the role the press played in fostering contemporary women's modernism and upending our current beliefs about the movement's core characteristics.

Although Loy, Boyle, and Butts all lived on the Continent and traveled widely, they are British or American by birth and published, for the most part, in the Anglo-American press.[14] Therefore, this study focuses on magazines and papers that were published in the U.S. and Britain or that were published elsewhere in Europe but primarily intended for readers of those locales, either at home or abroad. The danger of such a limited scope is the possibility of neglecting the breadth and depth of transnational modernism, of dismissing, for instance, the importance of South American, Canadian, or Continental European writers who contributed to the complexity of the movement. But the parameters established here are necessary, in part because the periodical presses in Britain and the United States faced similar obstacles and sets of reading publics and, in part, because I situate these writers within the context of Anglo-American modernism more broadly, often juxtaposing them with their contemporaries for the purpose of establishing professional comparisons.

Chapter 2, "Mapping the Modern: Mina Loy and the Little Magazines," traces the relatively brief but dynamic publishing career of Mina Loy, the most experimental writer in this study. Confined almost exclusively to little magazine publication, Loy strode onto the modernist scene with her brash "Aphorisms on Futurism," published in Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work,* but became most famous after her appearance in Alfred Kreymborg's *Others.* Though Loy's failure to participate successfully in traditional modernist publishing schemas had a detrimental impact on her later positioning as a canonical writer, her magazine publications provide an alternative model of legitimization that acknowledges the impact of the periodical press. Moreover, a large portion of her little magazine work indicates how modernists could combine

polemical discourse with an experimental aesthetic, uniting socio-political commentary with bold new modes of expression. By mapping *modern* concerns onto the *modernist* space of the little magazine, Loy forces us to rethink the conception that modernism is a disinterested and apolitical project and to acknowledge the centrality of the periodical as a vehicle of social dissent.

In Chapter 3, "Holding the Artist Accountable: Kay Boyle in the Avant-Garde and Popular Press," I argue that there is a consistency throughout Boyle's publishing career, though it spanned roughly seven decades and included dozens of different little and mainstream magazines. While many Boyle scholars see a thematic shift in her work when she began appearing regularly in the popular press, I demonstrate that the changes she made to accommodate a broad reading public were largely stylistic and that an underlying coherence, which stems from her ethical engagement, undergirds almost all of her oeuvre. While Boyle certainly took more aesthetic risks in her early little magazine pieces than she did in her later writing, there is an unmistakable interest in what she termed the "functioning world," a desire to investigate and, at times, brazenly criticize the social and political choices that separate us from our humanity. Indeed, in much of the work published in those periodicals Boyle anticipates the themes that she would address more directly in her later stories and novels. And while it harmed her reputation with contemporary critics and perhaps with later generations of readers, the author's open and dexterous manipulation of the periodical press indicates a level of professional investment that surpasses that of most modernist writers.

Chapter 4, "'Hope out of the reviewing business': Mary Butts, Modernism, and the Book Review," focuses on the critical work that Butts contributed to a small set of periodicals in the last decade of her life. These reviews, published in *The Bookman, Time and Tide, The Sunday*

Times, and *John O'London's Weekly*, gave voice to the rich and complex version of modernism that manifested itself in her own creative work. Contributing to the critical culture of the era in an innovative way, Butts used her reviews as a platform to establish her modernist vision, one grounded in our acknowledgment of the past. This engagement is enacted in her fiction via myth, classical subjects, and a nostalgia for a land-owning aristocracy who might serve as spiritual protectors of the English countryside. Butts's backward retreat alternates between the radical and the conservative, thus defying easy categorization. She is skeptical of historical objectivity and accuracy, for instance, but also snobbishly—and sometimes dangerously—elitist with regard to guardianship of rural England. These beliefs, which reach fruition in her fiction, are introduced succinctly in her reviews of the period and provide a complete picture of Butts's aesthetic.

The range and diversity of the subjects covered here is not accidental. The chapters, for example, address fiction, non-fiction, and poetry; works typically categorized as avant-garde and popular; lucrative and short-lived careers; a wide array of reading publics; and mainstream as well as little magazines. And, though there is much overlap with regard to publication venues that points to shared artistic goals and aesthetic concerns, I found the authors' individual negotiation of the publishing culture more useful as a point of inquiry because it speaks to the expansiveness, malleability, and diversity of the periodical press.[15] That Loy, Boyle, and Butts—and many of their female counterparts—continue to remain underrepresented in modernist studies is troubling in light of their active participation in the era's literary culture. Placing them within the context of the periodical press reaffirms how integral they were not only to modernism's material production, but also to the development of its critical discourse. Working through diverse venues and genres, Mina Loy, Kay Boyle, and Mary Butts displayed unique aesthetic visions and had vastly different publishing experiences, but their careers attest to the

importance of reexamining the intersection between the early-twentieth century press and the development of literary modernism.

Notes

1. Monroe probably felt this pull more keenly than some of her contemporaries, for she needed to retain the support of the financial backers who enabled her to pay for work and produce a quality publication. She was also more conservative than some of her contemporaries, though she consistently championed new developments in poetry. For an excellent discussion of *Poetry*, see Chapter 2 of Jayne Marek's *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines & Literary History.*

2. Marek distinguishes the "verbal culture" of the salon from the "material culture" of printed products, noting that both were required for the spread of innovative ideas. See "Magazines, Presses, and Salons in Women's Modernism" for more on this distinction.

3. Hadjiafxendi and Plunkett's article provides a useful history of the British periodical press in the 1800s. The authors trace market developments and discuss the ways in which little magazines both conformed to and diverged from the traditions of their predecessors.

4. John Tebbel discusses in detail the impact of the Civil War on publishing in Chapter 10 of *The American Magazine: A Compact History.*

5. See, for example, Michael Murphy's "'One Hundred Per Cent Bohemia': Pop Decadence and the Aestheticization of Commodity in the Rise of the Slicks," which examines *Vanity Fair*'s desire to bring "'elitist' high modernism to the mass market" (69). According to Murphy, editor Frank Crowninshield "professed a conscious intention to appropriate both the spirit and general look of avant-garde journals" (63).

6. Michael Schueth provides this circulation number in his article on Cather's portrait in *Vanity Fair* (54). For more on Millay's relationship with the magazine, see Catherine Keyser's article. Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace examine Djuna Barnes's and Gertrude Stein's

relationship with the popular press, including *Vanity Fair*, in *Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (im)positionings.* Also see Laura Behling for more on Stein's *Vanity Fair* publications.

7. Both *transition* and *This Quarter* were published in Paris. But all of the magazines included in this study, even those published abroad, were printed in English and, in general, were the outgrowth of publishing trends in the U.S. and England.

8. Also see Lisa Dunick's "'I am not a business woman': Kay Boyle's Negotiation of the Literary Market" for a detailed discussion of Boyle's career in the popular press.

9. One of these pressures was partially relieved when the Kraus Reprint Company released reprints of several little magazines in the 1960s and 1970s, though these editions often lack advertisements or other ephemera. More recently, The Modernist Journals Project has undertaken the digitization of some modernist periodicals, such as *Blast, The Crisis, Poetry,* and *The English Review*, making it easier to access complete sets of a handful of magazines. See Chapter 8 ("The Hole in the Archive and the Study of Modernist Magazines") of Scholes and Wulfman's *Modernism in the Magazines* for an extended discussion of archival research.

10. For more on the changing focus of little magazine studies, see Mark Morrison's preface to *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches.*

11. After reading about Stein and Joyce in Karen Leick's article, I searched for other authors featured on the cover of the magazine; these include T.S. Eliot, Amy Lowell, Ernest Hemingway, and Virginia Woolf. See *Time*'s online archive for more information about its cover photos. For a thorough discussion of Joyce's 1939 *Time* photo, taken by Gisèle Freund, see "Joyce's Face" by Maurizia Boscagli and Enda Duffy.

12. This shift from socio-political concerns to artistic experimentation is demonstrated on a small scale by the history of *The Freewoman,* later *The New Freewoman* then *The Egoist.*

13. For more on these women, see Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900-1940,* Jayne Marek's *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines & Literary History,* Hugh Ford's *Published in Paris: American and British Writers, Printers, and Publishers in Paris, 1920-1939,* Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L. Smyers's *Writing for Their Lives: The Modernist Women, 1910-1940,* Noel Riley Fitch's *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties & Thirties,* and Chapter 5 of George Bornstein's *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page.*

14. Mina Loy was born in England but lived and traveled abroad temporarily and became an American citizen late in life. Kay Boyle was born in the United States, spent about two decades in France and Austria, and returned to her homeland at the outset of World War II. After marrying Richard Brault, she technically took his French citizenship for a period of time but did not seem to professionally identify herself as French. Mary Butts, like Loy, was born in England and traveled extensively, but she returned to the Cornish coast and spent most of her later life there. Butts, more than the others, had a noticeable sense of national identity.

15. Both Loy and Boyle published in *Contact,* for instance, and both Loy and Butts published in *Pagany,* the *Dial,* and *The Little Review.*

CHAPTER 2

MAPPING THE MODERN: MINA LOY AND THE LITTLE MAGAZINES

I. Introducing Mina Loy

The career of poet and artist Mina Loy, perhaps more than that of any other modernist, demonstrates the complex role and legacy of the little magazine. While Loy published few books during her lifetime, she was a frequent contributor to periodicals, including *Camera Work*, *Rogue*, *Trend*, *Blind Man*, *Contact*, *Others*, *Pagany*, the *Dial*, the *Little Review*, and the *transatlantic review*, and her appearances in these magazines cemented her position as a prominent modernist and cultural figure of the time. Lauded by many of her fellow writers for her experimental language and syntax and for her willingness to engage unseemly issues like sex and childbirth, Loy fell into relative obscurity after her death. Like the work of many women writers, hers was erased from modernist histories for decades until scholars in the 1980s and 1990s revived interest in her writing and argued for a reevaluation of her poetry.

Loy's descent, to be sure, is indicative of a literary hierarchy that dismissed as trivial work that addressed women's concerns. But it also makes sense when viewed in light of typical modernist publishing histories, where writers often used the little magazine as a preparatory outlet for their work before moving on to more visible and profitable venues. Within this publishing paradigm, Loy's pieces seem like aimlessly scattered ephemera, unmoored from the sturdiness of the book. Her overall body of work is relatively small and difficult to gauge by these traditional standards, for she was never courted by mainstream publishers and her editions quickly went out of print, read only by old friends and a handful of devoted young poets and

critics. Indeed, she would release only three full-length works before her death in 1966: *Lunar Baedecker* [sic], *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose*, and *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables*.[1] Loy's impressive career within the little magazines beckons further examination, however, and offers a point of entry for understanding her poetry and her legacy, as well as for complicating modernist histories that are dependent on inflexible publishing schemas. By disrupting our understanding of the conventions that guide the placement, publication, and reception of works of art, she offers an alternative material model for literary success. Moreover, Loy's early career epitomizes the revolutionary way in which polemical discourse and aesthetic innovation could be conjoined in the little magazine, providing further avenues of inquiry for the burgeoning field of periodical studies.

Reviewing the recently released *Others* anthology in for the *Egoist* in 1918, T.S. Eliot, writing as T.S. Apteryx, praised some of Loy's poetry but was unable "to tell whether there is a positive *oeuvre* or only a few successes" (qtd. in Churchill, 207). Eliot's estimation of Loy was, of course, premature. In 1918, Loy had only been publishing for four years and was primarily associated with Alfred Kreymborg's *Others*, where her thirty-four poem sequence *Songs to Joannes* had recently appeared. But his comments are indicative of the paradoxical relationship many modernists endured with the little magazines. On the one hand, these periodicals were revered as platforms for experimental and independently released work—including criticism, like Eliot's—that would likely be rejected by mainstream editors. On the other hand, they were generally unreliable, providing little in the way of payment, circulation, and, in some cases, editorial consistency. As a result of this instability, the most savvy modernists turned to what Lawrence Rainey calls a "tripartite" publishing structure, overseeing the publication of their work in a little review and then in limited and commercial editions (*Institutions* 99). Such a

program, which relied on the manipulation of both economic and cultural forces, afforded writers prestige and encouraged their canonization.

Unlike many of her contemporaries, Loy participated in no such system, appearing almost exclusively in little magazines. Johanna Vondeling suggests that this had a detrimental impact on Loy's potential for canonization, for she lacked the means, via patronage or personal income, to solidify her own professional permanence through the book.[2] Thus, by the last decades of her life, she had been virtually forgotten. Samuel French Morse observed this phenomenon in 1961, when he noted that the recently published *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables* had received "not a bit of notice" despite introductions by William Carlos Williams, Kenneth Rexroth, and Denise Levertov (13). Morse's article, titled "The Rediscovery of Mina Loy and the Avant Garde," presaged the critical demand for reclamation of her work, a demand that would be met with silence for years to come. In 1967, a year after Loy's death, Kenneth Fields wrote a similar article in *The Southern Review,* aiming to "acquaint" readers with the poet and her work and proposing that she "be read in bulk," but even he acknowledged the difficulty of his quest: "It will be slow work for the curious, carried out in rare book rooms and magazine files" (607). A commentary on the inaccessibility of Loy's poetry, Fields's remark reminds us of the tenuous threads between the publication of a writer's work and his or her literary fate.

Current scholarship in modernist and textual studies has begun to uncover the cogency of these publishing institutions and to rethink the significance of the little magazines in which Loy and others appeared. Crucial to understanding her impact is acknowledging that these magazines were not mere publishing outlets, but dynamic, multi-faceted productions that actively helped shape the history of literature and the formation of the canon, sometimes to a writer's benefit, and sometimes to his or her detriment. Rather than repositories or collections to "mine,"[3] they

are now being viewed as valuable primary sources that contextualize individual works of literature. In *The Little Magazine* Others *and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry,* for example, Suzanne Churchill argues that the magazines "anchor modernist poetry in a social context, situating individual poems in relation to other texts and discourses. These periodicals enable us to see modernist poetry as a product of its time, rather than as an art that transcends or evades time" (2). The embedding of literature within its larger cultural paradigm is necessary not only because it pushes us beyond reified versions of modernism that privilege only a handful of isolated texts, but also because it helps to more fully explicate the vexing relationship between the artistic and the social functions of the little magazine.

Writers who published in these magazines found themselves within an overwhelmingly artistic milieu where they responded, in large part, to other artistic products, embracing, rejecting, or revising the tenets set forth by their peers. And a large majority of magazines, though decidedly vague about their editorial policies, were dedicated above all to showcasing Art and supporting the Artist. Emphasizing "inspiration," "artistry," and "originality," they clearly privileged individual control and creative license over social commentary.[4] This preference did not always come as an explicit condemnation of public engagement but often manifested itself through an all-encompassing focus on some decontextualized notion of the aesthetic that would seem to preclude other concerns. At the same time, however, they offered artists a relatively safe space for presenting socially and politically radical work—on the usually explicit condition that aesthetic integrity would never be sacrificed—because of their status as a new and evolving medium. A bold experimenter with style and form, as well as a writer attuned to the contemporary climate, Loy was uniquely positioned to take advantage of this flexibility, successfully carving a space for contemporary cultural and socio-political concerns within the

ostensibly apolitical world of these low-budget, small-circulation periodicals. While not entirely unique in this respect, Loy was able to unite her interests more successfully than most, adept at seamlessly integrating formal experimentation and social awareness.

II. Loy's Early Publications

Mina Loy's career began in an unlikely place. "Aphorisms on Futurism" and her untitled poem that begins "There is No Life or Death" were both published in Alfred Stieglitz's *Camera Work* in 1914. Though Loy, Gertrude Stein, and a host of other writers would appear towards the end of the magazine's run, the early issues of *Camera Work* focused almost exclusively on photography. In an editorial entitled "An Apology," which appears in the January 1903 number, Stieglitz announces that the time is "ripe for the publication of an independent American photographic magazine devoted largely to the interests of pictorial photography" (15) and notes that the periodical will remain independent despite its function as "the mouthpiece of the Photo-Secession" (16). Indeed, the editors kept their word, publishing photographs; essays on technical processes; notes on various exhibitions; and advertisements, many of which referenced the magazine by name, for photographic paraphernalia, including Kodak cameras, Cooke lenses, and Ansco film. Because of the magazine's specificity, it is often overlooked in discussions of the little magazine; Frederick Hoffman et al. even relegate it to a secondary list in their inclusive, thorough study, noting that the magazines contained in that section should be considered "important but supplementary" (370).

Yet *Camera Work* was not solely a vocational handbook, for it publicized the theoretical and aesthetic concerns that inevitably arose as photography became increasingly popular, verbalizing at an early date some of the main questions of modernism.[5] In one particularly

revealing piece from the July 1905 issue, associate editor Dallett Fuguet addresses the impossibility of any "perfect copy" of nature, concluding that such a goal is more than "paradoxical . . . it is a contradiction in terms" (26). The essay is titled "On Art and Originality Again," an apt acknowledgment that the realistic objectivity of photography was being speedily undermined by those who saw the myriad ways in which the medium complicated issues of perception and representation. A Newman and Guardia camera advertisement two issues later cleverly exploits this debate, quoting part of Hamlet's famous line, "To hold as 'twere *the Mirror* up to Nature," and promising a "dead accuracy" that will leave the photographer "free to consider the *artistic aspects* of the picture." [n.p.; original emphasis.] Though the photographic core of the magazine was never entirely displaced, *Camera Work* gradually became more aesthetically inclusive, and virtually every major study of Stieglitz reveals a foundational shift in his periodical about halfway through its run. In *Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography,* Sue Davidson Lowe notes that the magazine published few photographic prints after 1911 and became a "midwife to a modern and genuinely American art and literature, printing in its pages examples of the avant-garde in satire, criticism, poetry, and commentary, as well as in painting, sculpture, drawing, and caricature" (124). Such expansion meant that modernist writers had a powerful advocate and a well-funded, meticulously edited outlet for their work.

The most convincing evidence of the magazine's new bent can be seen in 1914 with the publication of Mina Loy's "Aphorisms on Futurism." Although Stein's work had appeared two years earlier, it was prefaced by a discussion of the visual arts, suggesting that her merit lay largely in her capacity to guide viewers through the cloudy waters of contemporary painting. In the unnumbered August 1912 issue, the editors address the obscurity and complexity of post-impressionism but note that "if the expression came through an art with the raw materials and

rough practice of which we were ourselves familiar – let us say through the art of literature, whose raw material is words – even an unpiloted navigator of the unknown might feel his way into the harbor of comprehension" ("Editorial," *Camera Work* 3). The idea that Stein's work might help one's "comprehension" is almost laughable, but here the editors of *Camera Work* astutely note that her experimental portraits are akin to the work being done by contemporary painters, laying an early foundation for later Stein criticism. In a second unnumbered issue, published in June of 1913, patron and salon hostess Mabel Dodge confirms this route, arguing, "Gertrude Stein is doing with words what Picasso is doing with paint" (6).

Ironically, although Mina Loy was a successful painter whose pieces were shown in the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Beaux-Arts, her written work did not include any such contextual information. This gap can probably be attributed to Loy's shifting aesthetic, which left little room for any quick, cross-disciplinary comparisons. The focused intensity of her *Camera Work* pieces was, by 1914, already at odds with the Decadent undertone of the paintings she had exhibited less than a decade before.[6] In fact, it was already at odds with some of her poems that were composed the same year. According to Roger Conover, three of Loy's poems, "The Beneficent Garland," "The Prototype," and "Involutions," were written in 1914 and sent to Mabel Dodge, then in New York, for possible publication in Max Eastman's *The Masses* (qtd in Loy, *Lost* 219). The poems never appeared in the magazine, which was due, suggests Carolyn Burke, to their "sentimentality" and "old-fashioned" sound (*Becoming* 158, 159). Although Loy had tentatively begun, in the prose poem "The Prototype," to incorporate dashes and innovative spacing—both of which would mark her later poetry—the other two poems clearly reveal both her attention to rhyme and meter and a relatively conservative vocabulary and sentence structure that she would later abandon.

These poems, unpublished until the 1996 release of *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, help to highlight a pivotal moment in Loy's professional development and demonstrate a complicated relationship between creation and circulation. They suggest a preoccupation with a traditional and, in this instance, stale poetic that was out of step with the overtly political aesthetic of *The Masses*; thus Mabel Dodge's decision to forego publication was probably a wise one given the radical tendencies of magazine's readership.[7] Whether it was Dodge's implicit rejection of the poems that precipitated the change in Loy's aesthetic is unclear, but a change occurred nonetheless. When considered together, Loy's "Aphorisms" and the unpublished *Masses* poems, all composed in 1914, suggest a significant reversal in both artistry and audience.

"Aphorisms on Futurism," which appeared in the January 1914 issue of Stieglitz's *Camera Work,* was Loy's first publication and, in that sense, is an important professional milestone in its own right.[8] Beyond that, however, we can see Loy forging a complex but historic relationship with the little magazines that would continue throughout her career. Of particular interest is the fact that "Aphorisms," arguably her most political work at that point, was published in what might be considered the least political of the little magazines. While *Camera Work* had certainly broadened its repertoire by 1914, proving its new dedication to an expansive version of modernism, that version was, at heart, primarily aesthetic. In fact, the beauty of the magazine itself speaks volumes about its underlying principles; it was, according to William Homer, "[t]houghtfully conceived and printed *as a work of art*, in the tradition of William Morris" (Homer 38; my emphasis). Homer's assessment is supported by the mere price of the magazine. When *Camera Work* was first released in 1903, a single issue cost $2.00, roughly equivalent to $50.00 today, marking the periodical as an art object and necessarily limiting its circulation potential. (By 1917, the price of the magazine had doubled.)[9] Unlike many of the

little magazines, which were thoughtfully conceived but visually unappealing, *Camera Work* was known for its aesthetic beauty, and the editors took pride in the quality paper, the consistent layout, and the carefully produced photogravures and plates that appeared in each issue.[10]

Readers were probably surprised, then, by the publication of Mina Loy's "Aphorisms on Futurism," forwarded to Alfred Stieglitz by Mabel Dodge, to whom Loy sent some of her early work. In a letter accompanying "Aphorisms," Dodge expressed her excitement about the piece, and upon receiving the issue of *Camera Work* in which it was printed, she wrote to him again regarding the energy and profundity of Loy's work. Stieglitz agreed with Dodge about the importance of "Aphorisms" and responded by noting how happy he was to share it with his readers.[11] While the tone of Dodge and Stieglitz's exchange reveals that both readers understood the freshness of Loy's aesthetic, it is Stieglitz's brief comment that indicates his awareness of presentation and reception. Understanding that his readers would need to be nudged in order to accept some of the more radical art and literature his magazine was beginning to showcase in its second decade, Stieglitz released, prior to the June 1913 issue of *Camera Work*, a statement connecting its contents to the traditional motives of the magazine:

> The Number will be an important one to all those interested in the development and psychological analysis of the latest phases of the modern art movement. This movement has a direct bearing upon the final and fundamental understanding of the meaning of Photography. Therefore this Special Number will also be of importance to all those vitally interested in the meaning of Photography; its evolution as a means of expression.[12]

The notice, accompanied by a list of contributors including Mabel Dodge and Gertrude Stein, was clearly meant to prepare readers for a shift in editorial policy. Though it is unclear whether a

similar notice prefaced the 1914 issue in which Loy appears, Stieglitz had already begun paving the way for Loy's experimental work.

Loy was artistically inspired by the enthusiasm—if not the values—of Filippo Marinetti and the Italian Futurists, and adopted some of the outward markers of their most famous form, the manifesto, in "Aphorisms," virtually screaming her way into the homes of American readers with typographical irregularities that included italicized and capitalized words and an innovative use of puncutation.[13] It was the manifesto form itself, suggests Elizabeth Arnold, that enabled Loy to "use shock effects to jar her readers, as well as herself, out of easy acceptance of conventional ideas and behavior" (92). Janet Lyon, however, shies away from labeling "Aphorisms" a manifesto, giving the piece little play in her fascinating study, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (1999), and arguing that the work "significantly, is devoid of any self-identifying pronouns. No declaration of 'we' is involved in Loy's paean to expansive futurist energy; as a painter and a poet she appreciates but does not explicitly represent futurism's revolutionary revision of traditional aesthetics. Her manifestic discourse is limited to futurist-inspired exhortations, such as 'DIE in the Past/Live in the Future' and 'ACCEPT the tremendous truth of Futurism/Leaving all those—Knick-knacks'" (153). While Lyon is right to point out that Loy doesn't embrace the excessive use of the first-person plural pronoun that marks many manifestoes and creates a sense of group identity, Loy's "Aphorisms" does include an important "declaration of 'we,'"—two declarations, in fact. At the end of the piece, Loy ties herself firmly to the Futurists and cements her work in the manifesto tradition: "TO your blushing we shout the obscenities, we scream the blas-/phemies, that you, being weak, whisper alone in the dark" (*Lost* 152). Furthermore, Loy employs other manifestic markers that Lyon outlines, including "martial language" and some variation of the three "argumentative gestures" in which she grounds her

study: (1) the use of a "foreshortened, impassioned, and highly selective history which chronicles the oppression leading to the present moment of crisis," (2) the inclusion of "grievances or demands or declarations which case a group's oppression as a struggle between the empowered and the disempowered, or between the corrupt and the sanctified . . .," and (3) a reliance on "epigrammatic, declarative rhetoric which directly challenges the named oppressor . . . while uniting its audience in an exhortation to action" (*Manifestoes* 13, 14, 15).

To be sure, Loy complicates any neat reading of "Aphorisms" as a manifesto, sometimes meshing with and sometimes breaking from the "gestures" Lyon offers. But the polemical tone and sentiment are faithfully manifestic, and where Loy employs such gestures, she does so powerfully, explicitly politicizing cultural and intellectual myopia. "TODAY," she asserts, "is the crisis in consciousness" (151). For Loy, the crisis at hand is not political persecution or religious intolerance or class-based oppression. Instead, it is "mental lethargy" and a blind preference for "the past on which your eyes are already opened" (149). The passion with which she treats the issue comes through not only in her combative language—her use of "EXPLODES" and "Destroy," for example—but also in her compressed lines, her typography, and her sentence functions. Never wholly abandoning the declarative rhetoric that Lyon associates with the manifesto, Loy nevertheless departs from it at times, turning to the imperative for audience arousal and urging her readers to "FORGET," "*Leap*," "Destroy," "UNSCREW," "CEASE," and "ACCEPT" (149, 150, 151, 152). Perhaps more important is Loy's handling of what Lyon calls the "struggle between the empowered and the disempowered," which means shattering the typical we/they dichotomy of the manifesto by implicating the very people to whom she speaks and holding them accountable for their own victimization: "LIFE is only limited by our own prejudices. Destroy them, and you cease to be at the mercy of yourself"

(150). Slaves, at present, to both their "perceptive consciousness" and "the mechanical re-actions of the subconsciousness," Loy's readers are offered emancipation in the form of Futurism (152).

In many ways, Loy was writing her way out of her own chains. According to biographer Carolyn Burke, "Aphorisms on Futurism" was Mina Loy's "dialogue with herself": "By adopting the Futurists' oppositional stance—the heroic 'we' addressing its adversary—Mina was staging the conflicts of her psyche" (*Becoming* 160). Indeed, writing alone was a move toward personal freedom for Loy. By definition a painter, she spent years working beside, exhibiting with, and, at times, standing in the shadow of her husband, Stephen Haweis, whom she met while studying at the Académie Colarossi in Paris. When she found out she was pregnant, Loy felt that marriage to Haweis was inevitable, but, at the time, it liberated her from her mother's oppressive severity. While the union allowed Loy to pursue painting without worrying about parental approval, however, it simply replaced one type of bondage with another, leaving her resentful of a husband who was a professional and social encumbrance. Futurism helped Loy move in a new direction personally and artistically by separating her not only from Stephen—his lengthy absence and her affairs with Filippo Marinetti and Giovanni Papini ensured that—but also from the painterly conventions that were restricting her. She told Mabel Dodge in a 1914 letter that her painting "ha[d] not evolved beyond post-impressionism," a claim which suggests that her increasingly experimental writing was evolving at a faster pace than her artwork (qtd. in Burke, *Becoming* 160*).* According to Burke, Loy was "energized by Marinetti's assault on language" and "attempted a number of prose and poetic forms, including rhymed verse, prose poetry, aphoristic statement, and . . . the manifesto" (*Becoming* 158). Some of this early writing included the pieces that Dodge rejected, but Loy quickly modernized herself after embracing many of the principals set forth in Marinetti's 1912 *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature;*

heeding his calls for the destruction of syntax and the use of image sequences, Loy was inspired to write and to move beyond a medium which had exhausted her sources of inspiration.[14]

"Aphorisms" clearly helped Loy to battle her own artistic stagnation, but its publication in *Camera Work* immediately created an audience, making it a public proclamation with definite social implications. In the process of politicizing intellectual laziness and adherence to tradition, she raised concurrent questions about the consequences of gender division and the social construction of femininity—themes that appear throughout the body of her work. Despite the somewhat vague language of his 1913 note about introducing the "latest phases" of modernism to his readers, Stieglitz was right to prepare them for a major thematic shift, which would soon include Loy's "Aphorisms." *Camera Work* subscribers surely would have been startled by the radical manifesto since futurism was, in the United States, a hazy and misunderstood movement at the time of publication. Its emphasis on modernity was simple enough to grasp, but the printed manifestations of its ferocity came as a shock to many Americans who had not yet been exposed to the European avant-garde. Furthermore, the political nature of the manifesto form was largely out of sync with the magazine's privileging of the arts thus far. Early futurism was, of course, an artistic program at heart, but the manifesto, suggests Lyon, is "at once political and aesthetic":

> The aesthetic coteries of the historical avant-garde—from symbolists to vorticists, from futurists to surrealists—adapted the manifesto's revolutionary discourse to signal their own radical departures from bourgeois artistic forms and practices. By articulating their programs to the political history of dissent via its most salient genre, avant-garde groups appropriated for themselves a powerful voice that not only declared the precepts for a poetics of 'the new' but also participated in a widespread ideological critique of modernity. (*Manifestoes* 5)

Loy's "Aphorisms" was doubly radical, stylistically enacting a "poetics of 'the new'" and inherently challenging a gendered power structure by giving credibility to a female author.

The inclusion of Loy's work was a revolutionary gesture for *Camera Work* given its focus and readership. An undated subscription list, probably from 1913, includes just over 250 subscribers and indicates that copies of the magazine were sent to clubs (California Camera Club; National Arts Club; Real Sociedad Fotografica in Madrid, Spain; Royal Photographic Society in London, England), libraries (Boston Public Library; Seattle Public Library; Los Angeles Public Library; Library in Aberdeen, Scotland; Mercantile and Mechanics Library), museums (Cincinnati Museum of Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art Library), and individuals, most of whom were not well-known modernists or supporters of modernism—with the exception of John Quinn. Thus *Camera Work* was widely accessible to diverse publics but was generally read by those likely to privilege its photographic content over its literary submissions.[15] Readers were undoubtedly used to seeing political pronouncements in editorial columns and in the overtly socialist, anarchist, and feminist periodicals that flourished at the dawn of the twentieth century. But Loy realigned the boundaries between political and artistic periodicals and the work within them when she published "Aphorisms" in *Camera Work*.

This is not to suggest that there were no existing little magazines with explicit political affiliations; *The Masses* (1911-1917), for example, is a prime example of a magazine with overlapping interests. It was, however, conceived for and marketed toward an audience interested in a distinctly political aesthetic, and political themes were generally emphasized at the expense of the artistic experimentation that was privileged in most other little magazines. Socio-political issues often were separated through genre as well—treated in essays or editorials—or addressed in poems that relied on a traditional rhyme scheme and meter and employed a pre-

packaged ideological vocabulary. *Camera Work* obviously had a much different readership and dynamic. And Loy's inclusion there suggests, if not an authorial act of defamiliarization, at least a desire to maximize the little magazine's potential to unite social concerns with artistic experimentation. The appearance of "Aphorisms" presaged what would become an audacious publishing career, with Loy using the little magazine as an unlikely forum to address what she saw as the most pressing issues of the period.

Loy did not strategically target particular magazines, which is evident in her letters to Carl Van Vechten. In fact, she sent poems to him and to Frances Stevens, a friend and artist with whom she lived in Florence, without hearing that they had arrived safely or knowing where they would be submitted; furthermore, she was sometimes misinformed, though probably not purposefully, about the periodicals in which the poems would appear. Despite these logistical difficulties, Loy almost certainly intended her early work to be published in little magazines, for she sent the poems and plays individually or in small batches and, aside from *Songs to Joannes*, gave no indication of conceiving of them as a coherent whole or as pieces in dialogue with one another. She also repeatedly granted Van Vechten permission to act as her agent and place the pieces accordingly, and she received copies of the magazines from him and from other friends, acquainting herself with the flavor of each. Given her familiarity with the periodical culture, then, she clearly understood the content of the magazines but did not envision their aims as separate from her own. This awareness suggests that the little magazine was, for Loy, an appropriate venue for bridging aesthetic innovation and social commentary, a place where the two need not exist exclusively or hierarchically.

Almost immediately after the publication of "Aphorisms," Loy began appearing in little magazines on a regular basis, publishing in *International*, in *Camera Work* again, and in *Trend*,

edited by her close friend and sometimes-agent Carl Van Vechten, whom she had met at the Villa Curonia, Mabel Dodge's Florence home, when he was sent there by *The New York Times* to interview Dodge (Burke, *Becoming* 149). Unfortunately, little information about *Trend*'s history is available; it is absent from Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich's study, and Roger Conover notes that it "remains one of the most elusive of the many elusive magazines in which ML [Mina Loy] was published" (qtd. in Loy, *Lost* 178, n. 3). Nevertheless, it was an important venue for Loy, for it offered "free reign to experiment with new forms" and rebelled against "stupidity, banality, cant, clap-trap morality, Robert W. Chambersism, sensationalism for its own sake" (qtd. in Loy, *Lost* 178, n.3).

Published in *Trend* in October of 1914, "Parturition" is, perhaps, the poem that most solidified Loy's reputation for boldness. She took advantage of the magazine's penchant for harboring rebellious poets, submitting a shocking poem that was "new" in both form and content, modernist in its fragmented delineation of consciousness, and modern in its wry recognition of ingrained gender codes. The vivid depiction of childbirth, the first of its kind, is rendered typographically and syntactically, with spaces indicating on one level the speaker's contractions and, on another, waves of her burgeoning self-awareness. Loy thus splices the physical act of parturition to psychic enlightenment; the "Maternity/Against my thigh" precipitates the speaker's affirmative declaration of selfhood: "Mother I am" (*Lost* 88-89). Commenting on this interconnected process in her aptly titled article "Mina Loy's Pregnant Pauses," Janet Lyon writes, "The poem presents parturition as a singular event in human experience during which body, intellect and cosmos intersect: maternity, in the poem, is not assimilation into domestic stereotype, but a form of artistic transcendence. It is an act of what might be called, in an alternate lexicon, 'genius'" (387). Lyon calls attention to Loy's rejection of any "domestic

stereotype[s]," and Loy certainly carves a creative, transcendent space for her speaker within the realm of maternity. But the poem simultaneously offers this possibility then suppresses it, closing with a flippant irony, which suggests that the speaker's insight is personal and has no impact on the larger cultural milieu.

Loy's final two stanzas indicate a deep disconnection between the speaker, who has recognized her place within the cosmos, and the other figures, each designated a "woman-of-the-people" whose identity is limited to a decidedly smaller plane (127). The women, "sublimely

unaware" of the "ludicrous little halo" they wear, continue their "hushed service," replenishing humanity while perpetuating the myth of selfless motherhood that the speaker has just unveiled (130, 129, 126; original spacing). Loy's irony evolves into blasphemy in the poem's closing lines: "I once heard in a church/—Man and woman God made them—/Thank God" (131-133). As Marisa Januzzi observes, Loy "juxtapos[es] . . . the typical religious reading of 'the meaning' of birth with the sweaty, polyvocal chaos of what came before it" (426). As a result, Loy confirms the absurdity of any system that would deny woman her role in the life-giving process or reduce its complexity to a mere duty carried out in service to a cultural institution.

During labor, the speaker's thoughts turn to the "Brute" who, it is suggested, has impregnated and then abandoned her. This shift allows Loy to introduce a new dynamic in order to critique "the sexual standards and social customs of her culture" (Januzzi 423). While the woman experiences waves of pain, a

> fashionable portrait-painter
>
> Running up-stairs to a woman's apartment
>
> Sings

"All the girls are tid'ly did'ly

All the girls are nice

Whether they wear their hair in curls

Or—" (128-134) [16]

Although the details of passage would seem to condemn a specific individual, the speaker draws a universal conclusion about the sexes, noting, "The irresponsibility of the male/Leaves woman her superior Inferiority" (38-39). Loy pairs the actions of the man and woman, implicitly mocking the difficulty of the painter's ascent by juxtaposing it with the parturient mother's; while he is "running up-stairs," she is "climbing a distorted mountain of agony" (29, 41). His trek involves taking a man-made path, suggesting that he, if not entirely conforming to social expectations, is merely following in the footsteps of others before him. The speaker's thoughts move to her own anguish at this point, but Loy continues to establish implicit parallels between the man and woman; we can assume that his climax corresponds to the moment the speaker "reach[es] the summit" and waits for "Repose/Which never comes" (43, 45-46). Loy thus criticizes not only the painter, but also the gendered social institutions that would encourage his pleasure while calling for her pain.[17]

Despite the ubiquitousness of this inequality, Loy's speaker seems to be isolated in her recognition of it. The repetition of "I" throughout the poem only reinforces the fact that hers is a personal moment of affirmation and self-awareness. But, exposing at the textual level the chasm between the speaker and the society to which she belongs, Loy reinstates the value of maternity, "proffer[ing] the experiential female body as a laboratory of creativity" and "collapsing the cultural dichotomies of art and morality, production and reproduction, revolution and reform, performance and biology" (Lyon, "Pregnant" 382). Janet Lyon observes that the little magazines

were an appropriate place for such a venture because they harnessed the dialectical tension between avant-gardism and feminism ("Pregnant" 379). Loy embraced this tension in a revolutionary way, replacing some of the traditional tools of feminism (i.e. the editorial, the pamphlet, the cartoon) with the poem and ultimately introducing a disruptive poetic of social dissent.

However, her unabashed exposure of what is sometimes women's complicity in their own subjugation distances her from the rhetoric of commonality that defined much of the literature being produced by the feminist press. Disenchanted with their explicit politics, which were channeled through oversimplified representations of womanhood, Loy turned to the young and versatile medium of the little magazine. That Loy's powerful indictment of troubling and romanticized gender norms was presented in *Trend* speaks to her confidence in the little magazine as discursive space in which perceived wrongs might be addressed via artistic avenues, powerfully linking the polemical language of protest with an exploratory, avant-garde aesthetic.

III. The *Rogue* Years

Significantly, Loy's poems did not appear in the more politically radical little magazines (*The Freewoman* or *The Masses*, for example), making their publication all the more powerful because of their unexpectedness. After "Parturition" and "Italian Pictures" were published in the short-lived *Trend*, Loy appeared regularly in *Rogue*, Allan Norton's irreverent and "none too serious magazine" (Hoffman et al. 248). Known for its sophistication, the magazine was branded "The Cigarette of Literature" and included contributions from a wide range of modernist artists and writers, including Loy, Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes, Charles Demuth, and Clara Tice. The editors immediately established the magazine's witty, sarcastic tone in the

first issue, published in March of 1915. They acknowledged *Rogue*'s marginal position by asking for advertisers with the slogan, "Advertise in ROGUE—*It doesn't pay*" and anticipated the public's response to the publication by including a humorous list of "Letters Not Yet Received" that both condemned and praised the new magazine. This was followed, in the next issue (April 1915), by a fictitious letter from *Vogue* complaining about the appropriation of "all the letters of our name but one" ("Letter" 3). "Rogue's Review," a revealing editorial in the March 1915 issue, foreshadows the *Vogue* joke but also demonstrates, albeit satirically, Norton's awareness of the divide between the mainstream media and little magazines: "ROGUE is an outgrowth of the recent agitation for the National Defense . . . What was really needed was a fund for defense against newspapers and magazines. Something had to be done and someone had to do it. Here ROGUE took up the battle" (4). That the editorial adopts the language of war is telling; the little magazine's contributors envisioned themselves as "battling" what they took to be a cultural conformity perpetuated by popular, widely circulated periodicals. A clear note of elitism reverberates throughout this and other editorials, suggesting that the division was not unwanted by the *Rogue* crowd. In a May 1915 piece, "Philosophic Fashions," the anonymous author bemoans the fall of Art, maintaining that she "has prostituted herself to commerce" and longing for the days when "the mob knew not the beauty of a Japanese print nor gave thought to color chords and gorgeous dischords" (16, 17).

This cultural distancing on the part of *Rogue*'s editors and authors was reflected in a general distaste for social and political engagement as well. The June 1915 issue includes an obvious critique of politics in which the author, with his or her feigned unawareness, attempts to undermine the immensity of the war: "I am not very much interested in politics, but I have been told there is a war on. That seems silly. War is silly!" ("Dame Rogue's Review" 4). Furthermore,

in that same issue, the fight for suffrage is mocked by a call for "Votes for Hermaphrodites." This satirical attack on women's rights is balanced—slightly—by an April 1915 piece in which the writer acknowledges that suffrage is "worth fighting for" but ultimately concludes, "disappointment lies in attainment. The point is that it is not the way we are governed but the way we live that matters" ("Editorial," *Rogue* 4). Although the author offers some support for political enfranchisement, his defeatist tone and vague reference to "the way we live" suggests a lack of true investment in the issue.

Mina Loy had similar feelings about feminism, privileging lifestyle changes over the vote, but, importantly, she offered critiques of the specific practices and institutions that were responsible for women's social inferiority. She wrote to Carl Van Vechten that she felt "feminine politics" in "a cosmic way that may not fit in anywhere," a comment that obviously indicates her dismissal of the suffrage movement's major goal but that also belies her awareness of the roots of gender inequality (qtd. in Burke 187). Calling the contemporary feminist movement "inadequate," she argued in her then-unpublished "Feminist Manifesto" (1914) that "the lies of centuries have got to go," that "NO scratching on the surface of the rubbish heap of tradition" will produce change (*Lost* 153).

These assertions are incorporated in various ways throughout her body of work, and one of her most pointed criticisms, "Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots," was published in the August 1915 issue of *Rogue.* Appearing alongside a Clara Tice drawing titled "Virgins Minus Verse," Loy's poem addresses, as early as the title, both money and virginity, which Loy saw as tools of women's oppression. Exposing the well-concealed economic dimension of partnership, Loy's speaker admits that "Nobody shouts/ Virgins for sale," but she then reveals that marriage is "expensive/ A secret well kept" (*Lost* 32-33, 37-38). For those women who lack "dots," or

dowries, the home is merely a place of confinement, a reminder that they have no access to Love, that "god/ White with soft wings," a falsity that the women nevertheless hope to attain (30-31; original spacing). In her discussion of Loy, feminism, and futurism, Laura Scuriatti rightly notes that, for Loy, virginity is "conceived as a complex economic and social construct, rather than a physical phenomenon . . . . Women's bodies are therefore presented as products in two different ways: they can be bought and sold, and are produced by a culture that manufactures them as specifically female bodies "saturated with sexuality" and places them within a hierarchical and oppressive system" (137). Although Loy never accuses men of constructing such a system, she clearly reveals its resulting inequality. The distance between the sexes is reproduced on the page, where Loy literally separates "we" from "they," and is divulged in her deliberate pairings, which subtly reflect the men's privileges:

We take a walk
They are going somewhere
And they may look everywhere
Men's eyes look into things
Our eyes look out (9-13)

The walking women, wandering without direction just to put themselves on display, are contrasted with the purposeful men who are "going somewhere." Furthermore, the men's ability to "look everywhere" and "look into things" not only suggests that they have no limitations, but also hints that the women are the "things" being examined, the objects of a penetrating gaze. Bolted in by "[s]omebody who was never/ a virgin," the young women have tests to pass, for they have no appeal without their dots and no value without their virginity (43-44).

Virginia Kouidis argues that the "Italian virgin is . . . specifically the subject" of the poem, a claim supported by the subtitle, "*Latin Borghese*," but Loy saw similar restrictions in almost every culture (31). And she establishes the centrality of virginity in her own life in *Esau Penfold*, her unpublished novel about her relationship with Haweis, circling passages of the text that underscore the extent to which virginity was emphasized in her household.[18] Loy felt so strongly about the restrictive nature of virginity, the "principal instrument of [woman's] subjection," that she advocated the "unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population in puberty" (*Lost* 155). This radical proposal was presented in her "Feminist Manifesto," which, according to Roger Conover, she sent to Mabel Dodge in 1914, calling it a "resubstantiation of the feminist question" (qtd. in Loy, *Lost* 216, n. 52).[19] While the reading public was never exposed to this manifesto, and thus to Loy's violent solution to women's subordination, they did have access to her poetry and plays, which were less direct in their treatment of this issue but no less powerful.

In "Magasins du Louvre," the third section of "Three Moments in Paris," Loy continues her exploration of gender roles, calling into question the dichotomous choices provided to women. She begins with an isolated, single-line pronouncement: "All the virgin eyes in the world are made of glass" (*Lost* 67). She immediately establishes in the second stanza a comparison between these virgins and the "dolls" and "composite babies" that fill the Parisian shop, evoking the hollowness of the virgins with the juxtaposition (69, 73). In contrast, the next stanza centers on the virgins' sexual counterparts and their response to the dolls:

> One cocotte wears a bowler hat and a sham camellia
>
> And one an iridescent boa
>
> For there are two of them

Passing

And the solicitous mouth of one is straight

The other curved to a static smile

They see the dolls

And for a moment their eyes relax

To a flicker of elements unconditionally primeval

And now averted

Seek each other's surreptitiously

To know if the other has seen (86-97)

Initially, Loy appears to be establishing a comparison between the cocottes and the virgins/dolls, suggesting that both are subject to an exploitative system in which women are exchanged as sexual capital. The cocottes wear fixed smiles comparable to the glass eyes of the virgins and are themselves dressed up like dolls with their exaggerated, symbolic accessories. Marisa Januzzi reads the poem in this light, as a "dramatization of the economy in which women find that beauty is a standard, commodified form of artifice, and that heterosexual love… is the enforced object of all their expressive creativity. By setting the reader loose with a pair of *cocottes* in the market, she reveals that there is nothing 'natural' about the love or the beauty (the *art*) that is for sale in the "*Magasins du Louvre*" (417). Januzzi astutely notes the economy in which the women function—the setting is certainly no accident. But the moment of recognition that the cocottes share suggests that in some ways they are more "natural" than the glassy-eyed virgins symbolized by the dolls. They are able to "relax" their well-trained eyes for a moment and see themselves truthfully, to distance themselves from the blind dolls to whom they might otherwise be compared. Loy reinforces the magnitude of the moment, for the narrator looks down in

"shame/Having surprised a gesture that is ultimately intimate" (100-101). Here, sight is alluded to once again in the narrator's act, and though she looks away from the women, she, too, has participated in this "intimate" exchange. Moreover, there is something "unconditionally primeval" in the cocottes' eyes that temporarily removes them from the culturally constructed system to which they belong. Returning them to an elemental state, Loy suggests that connection is possible once we are removed from our roles and stripped of their associations.

It is noteworthy that Loy chose to pair virgins and cocottes in her poem, for her body of work reveals that she is aware of how susceptible women are to such categorizing. In "Feminist Manifesto," she emphasizes the few options open to women: "As conditions are at present constituted—you have the choice between Parasitism, & Prostitution—or Negation" (*Lost* 154). Employing expressive typographical features, Loy presents her readers with the three unmistakable alternatives that are surprisingly consistent with those evidenced in her poetry and fiction. Parasitism, the first in Loy's list, refers to the condition of married women who become socially and economically dependent upon their husbands both for their well-being and for self-definition. And the cocottes, strolling through the Parisian shops, clearly represent the second option, though Loy would probably place others in this category as well, particularly people who choose to abandon their cultural and aesthetic loyalties for personal gain. The last, negation, set off with a dash, is emphatically represented as the least desirable of three unpleasant choices. In "Magasins du Louvre," the virgins are indicative of this negation, for they "[s]tare through the human soul/Seeing nothing," and their likenesses, the dolls, are left "Smiling/In a profound silence" (76-77).

In addition to "Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots" and "Three Moments in Paris," Loy's appearances in *Rogue* included a number of satires criticizing Futurist misogyny.[20] Suzanne

Churchill observes that these particular pieces were well placed: "Within the sophisticated, intimate, cosmopolitan community of *Rogue*, readers would have recognized Loy's winks of self-reference and been appropriately amused by her satirical portraits of the Italian Futurists" (188). The readers' amusement should come as no surprise, given the knowing audience and the very nature of satire, but Loy's *Rogue* poems do more than merely entertain and demonstrate basic human folly. Her satires are highly politicized in that they aim to expose the misguided ideologies of a particular group, to illustrate and undermine the culturally constructed misogyny of Marinetti and his followers.

Loy's personal relationships with Marinetti and Papini, and her borrowing of some of their artistic conventions, led to an assumed group affiliation, especially when it seemed advantageous. Van Vechten, for instance, exploited her international connections in *Trend,* labeling her a poet "in sympathy with the Italian school of Futurists" (qtd. in Burke, *Becoming* 177). Loy reacted quickly to his introduction, however, writing to him that she was not "considered a Futurist by Futurists" and suggesting, instead, that he could write, "Marinetti influenced me—merely by waking me up" (qtd. in Burke, *Becoming* 178).[21] Despite her appreciation for the Futurists' enthusiasm and experimentalism, she was deeply opposed to much of their program, which depended upon subordinating the animalistic female in the name of progress. In his 1909 "The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism," published in Paris's *Figaro*, Marinetti disparaged feminism and cited as one of Futurism's major principles a "contempt for woman" (4); he later developed these ideas in "Contempt for Woman," admitting that men and women were unequally educated historically but ultimately claiming that "in her actual state of intellectual and erotic slavery, woman finds herself wholly inferior in respect to character and intelligence" (9). Part of this inferiority was, for Marinetti, based on the notion that

woman was a mere repository of sentimentality and, as such, was detrimental to the Futurist cause. Such claims were obviously problematic for Loy, and her vexed relationship with Futurism is played out in her work of the period, much of which was published in *Rogue*.

"Sketch of a Man on a Platform," Loy's first *Rogue* publication and one of her most explicit satires, was published in April of 1915. The poem is addressed to a ridiculously self-assured character, likely based on Marinetti, who "flex[es] his male fallacies with untroubled superiority" (Conover qtd in Loy, *Lost* 181, n. 6). With her clear overemphasis on the man's strength and, of course, the phallic pun, Loy shows the ease with which physical power can be mistaken for substance. "Your genius," she writes, is "[s]o much less in your brain/Than in your body" (*Lost* 24-25). Given that the very nature of genius is rooted in intellectual rather than physical prowess, Loy simultaneously bestows a compliment and an insult. Her use of "so much less" intensifies her attack, rendering the man unintelligent. Even the man's "projectile nose," presumably an outward indicator of his virility and mechanized efficiency, ineffectually "snuffles the trail of the female/And the comfortable/Passing odors of love" (16, 21-23). By including the word "female," Loy calls attention to the purely biological, reproductive role that women played for the Futurists; the man is not equipped for loving, only for mating. The poet also mocks the Futurists' preoccupation with strength and movement, questioning as early as the first stanza the ultimate consequences of both. While she opens the poem by extolling the man's poise—he is "of absolute physical equilibrium"—she quickly tempers her praise, noting, "You stand so straight on your legs/Every plank or clod you plant your feet on/Becomes roots for those limbs" (1, 2-4). In another context, this rooting might indicate a desired stability, but for a group who "exalt[ed] movement" and affirmed the "beauty of speed" in their founding manifesto, such fixity would have been unacceptable (Marinetti, "Founding" 4).

Furthermore, Loy suggests that the visible energy of the Futurists simply masks an underlying conventionality; despite their rhetoric, they are no more progressive than the backward-looking people whom they scorn. Jeffrey Twitchell-Waas clarifies the nature of Loy's satirical writing in this regard, noting that it didn't constitute an outright rejection of Futurism but was "aimed precisely at the Futurists' betrayal of their own social radicalism," at their "*passéist* collecting of mistresses and their militaristic chauvinism" (113). In a similar vein, Elizabeth Arnold argues that Loy drew important connections between Futurist misogyny and bourgeois constraints in her satirical pieces, demonstrating the hypocrisy of the movement (94). "Sketch of a Man on a Platform" provides one of these implicit comparisons, underscoring the problematic nature of a group that preaches movement while standing still. When movement does occur in the poem, it is forced, awkward, and inadequate, the only outward manifestation of a "genius" that is "happy expressing itself/Through the activity of pushing/THINGS/In the opposite direction" (32-35). It is noteworthy that the genius has to "push," to physically rather than psychically alter his environment, for the force and violence of the Futurists was often more shocking than transformative. Loy further reveals the man's inefficacy with her inclusion of "THINGS," which is emphasized by its capitalization and the one-word line. Here the poet argues that only superficial change has occurred. A real ideological upheaval involves the realignment of beliefs and values, not the forceful transference of objects.

Loy sent "Giovanni Franchi," another of her *Rogue* satires, to Carl Van Vechten in July of 1915, noting that it was a piece with personal significance. When she didn't hear back from him, she wrote again to ensure receipt of the poem and to inquire about whether or not he liked it.[22] Loy's language in these letters illustrates the intimate nature of the piece, in which Giovanni Papini is a thinly disguised Giovanni Bapini, and her own quoting and emphasis suggest that her

goal was mockery. Although the intellectual and well-spoken Bapini in this poem has little in common with the exaggeratedly powerful character portrayed in “Sketch,” it is nonetheless a pointed attack meant to strike at the Futurists’ “manliness” and “hysterical . . . defense of virility” (Conover, qtd. in Loy, *Lost* 183). The poem subtly hints at pederasty, questioning the relationship between the “cymophanous” Bapini and his adolescent “disciple,” Giovanni Franchi:

> He listened at the elder’s lips
> That taught him of earthquakes and women
> Of women ----------
> His manners were abominable
> He would kill a woman
> Quite inconspicuously it is true
> And neglect to attend her funeral
> I mean the older man
> And what he told
> Giovanni Franchi
> About those pernicious persons
> Was so extremely good for him
> It entirely spoilt his first love-affair
> To such an extent it never came off (*Lost* 43, 61, 97-110)

This stanza overstates Futurist misogyny, but only slightly. “Pernicious” women, the most dangerous of natural disasters, are paired with destructive earthquakes, indicating the extent to which they are responsible for ruining civilization. Importantly, though, Loy’s long dash in the

third line suggests that Bapini, despite his impressive oratory, has no understanding of women and no real knowledge to share. The result is that he spews hatred, so successfully teaching Giovanni Franchi to despise women that his chances for heterosexual love are nearly ruined. The implied consequence is a closer connection to his mentor, from whom he receives guidance and "phantom secrets" (145).

Although Loy's poetry is generally critical of Futurism, and of Marinetti and Papini in particular, two plays published in *Rogue* reveal that she was, in 1915, still in the process of sorting out her conflicting indebtedness to and disapproval of the various tenets of the movement. The August 1915 issue of the magazine included *Two Plays*, consisting of two short pieces entitled "Collision" and "Cittàbapini." In a rare discussion of the plays, Julie Schmid aptly notes that they "reflect Loy's response to and reappropriation of a futurist theatrical vocabulary in an attempt to find a voice through which to comment upon the movement, as well as an excitement about the formal innovations that futurism had introduced to the theatre" (6). Marinetti specifically addressed the dramatic medium in "The Variety Theater," published in various forms in 1913, condemning contemporary theater for being too focused on character psychology and extensively outlining the benefits of the Variety Theater, most of which meshed with the larger goals of Futurism. In particular, Marinetti in the essay "EXALTS" the Variety Theater for its focus on dynamism, astonishment, action, spectacle, and surprise (34-38). Loy's two plays probably weren't performed, thus limiting the extent to which she could take full advantage of all that Futurist-inspired theater had to offer, but they employ, even on the page, a number of the conventions set forth by Marinetti.

Like "Aphorisms," in which Loy employed Futurism's stylistic conventions in order to jar readers, "Collision" and "Cittàbapini" clearly rely on a disruptive syntax—what Schmid calls

"telegraphic language" (4)—and a vocabulary indicative of the Futurists' celebration of technology and violence. "MAN," the only character on stage in "Collision,"

> Stares blankly into arc-light—presses electric button—shattering insistant [sic] noise surrounds room—intermittently arc-light extinguishes—vari-colored shafts of lightning crash through fifty-nine windows at irregular heights—the floor worked by propellers—rises and falls irrhythmically—the disymetric receding and incursive planes and angles of walls and ceiling interchange kaleidoscopically to successive intricacies—occasional explosions irrupt the modes of
>
> DISHARMONY**.** (qtd. in Schmid 8) [23]

Despite the cacophony taking place, MAN is at ease, notably "calm[ing]" as "the pandemonium of sound and motion increases" (qtd. in Schmid 8). For MAN, and perhaps for Loy, the commotion provides reassurance that a revolutionary kind of "CREATION" is taking place (qtd. in Schmid 8). However, Schmid suggests that MAN "rather than being central to the performance . . . becomes tangential to it" (4), and this reordering has serious implications for a humanity who has lost control of its environment.

While "Collision" raises questions about the relationship between man and his surroundings, Loy envisions a more serious disconnection in "Cittàbapini." Through the play's central character, a "greenish man" likely based on Papini, Loy reveals the damaging effects of Futurist misogyny, which not only separates men and women, but also creates a tear in the larger social fabric. After "execrating a passing woman—'You are not a man—,'" the greenish man immediately sees another man pass and concludes, "Horrific resemblance to myself—I am not—unless—disparate to the neighbors—I am to prove myself unique—" (qtd. in Schmid 9). His

denunciation of the woman based on her sex is inherently problematic, but it also opens the door for an equally dangerous self-distancing in which identity formation ends not in celebrating individuality but in deepening the schism between one person and the next. The repercussions of this division are indicated in Scene 2, when the man, gripping a "stylograph and a bouquet of manuscript," declares, "Now I shall never see anything but myself—" (qtd. in Schmid 9). Schmid suggests that here "literary production becomes a means for self-glorification," for the man "uses his manuscript to bolster his sense of self" (5). I would argue, though, that his manuscript also hints at the same kind of myopic self-imprisonment that Loy condemns in "Aphorisms." In her discussion of Mina Loy and the Futurists, Elizabeth Arnold writes that Loy "saw as a real threat the degree of passion that would separate individuals from the actual world, be it a passion for political power, fame, or another human being. She saw the effects of passion on the Futurists, and feared its effects on herself, a believer in the expansion, not the narrowing, of the human psyche" (117). Though written in response to Pound's praise for the aridity of Loy's verse, Arnold's comments are equally applicable to the small body of dramatic work that Loy produced, and to "Cittàbapini," in particular. The greenish man, who sees nothing but himself and is "not at home" in the city, is an exaggerated but nonetheless potent reminder of the dangerous consequences of any constrictive ideology.

One might assume that the size of the *Rogue* community negated any effective critique—thus destabilizing the arguments set forth in the poems published there—but a small primary audience didn't keep Loy's work, or her image, from circulating widely. Little magazines were often passed from reader to reader or made available in central hubs (bookstores, for example), eliminating insularity and generating various circles of interested parties who constantly recontextualized the contents. Furthermore, the magazines were subject to a kind of layering that

took place when a writer made note of an author or published piece in his or her own work. Djuna Barnes, for example, increased Loy's potential audience exponentially when she briefly mentioned her in a sketch on bohemian life for the *New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine*:

> There are many evenings in the studios, blue and yellow candles pouring their hot wax over things in ivory and things in jade. Incense curling up from a jar; Japanese prints on the wall. A touch of purple here, a gold screen there, a black carpet, a curtain of silver, a tapestry thrown carelessly down, a copy of *Rogue* on the low table open at Mina Loy's poem. A flower in a vase, with three paint brushes; an edition of Oscar Wilde, soiled by socialistic thumbs. (qtd. in Elliott and Wallace 138-139)

Although Loy's work is presented as a decorative element, as part of a composite picture of Greenwich Village existence, the very mention of *Rogue* in a widely circulated periodical was enough to generate interest in a poet who could lend would-be bohemians cultural credibility.

Rogue received notice from other corners as well. On March 21, 1915, Henry McBride wrote a New York *Sun* piece announcing the periodical's release and examining Gertrude Stein's "Aux Galeries Lafayette." Allen Norton gratefully acknowledged the article, writing to McBride to thank him for the publicity. Norton's self-deprecation, evidenced in his letters, suggests his reliance on the mainstream media to spread the word about *Rogue*.[24] Commenting on the periodical culture of the era, Karen Leick argues that modernist works were, in fact, more widely disseminated that one might expect: "It seems impossible that an everyday American reader could know about the obscure little magazines, none of which achieved a large circulation. But mainstream readers had not only heard of these publications, they were familiar with many of the

writers who were published there" (126). Leick goes on to note that readers were introduced to modernist artists via the literary columns in newspapers and popular magazines. While this exposure often resulted in a superficial familiarity with a poem or story, it also meant that the modernists were not writing for their peers alone.[25]

Modernism was often mediated by writers and artists who could successfully interpret it for the broader public, especially in America. For instance, Djuna Barnes, the author who refers to Loy in the *Telegraph* piece, had impressive cultural capital as a member of the avant-garde but frequently wrote for the popular press, providing sketches of bohemians, expatriates, and well-known but enigmatic modernists. Most famous is her *Vanity Fair* profile of James Joyce, which wavers "between romantic celebrations of artistic genius and a very slight and sly undercutting of the masculinism of such traditions" (Elliott and Wallace 130). With an expert understanding of her readership, Barnes reinforced Joyce's iconic status while making accessible the most inscrutable of writers. That this was a frequently used media tactic underscores the messy interconnectedness of the avant-garde and popular press. Largely thought to be exclusionary and elitist by nature, modernists actually depended on the public for its commercial buying power. And this meant that the mainstream press had to ensure that their readers were broadly familiar with what the modernist project entailed.

IV. *Others* Fame

Proof of Loy's growing fame was provided quickly, about a year and a half after she began publishing, when she was unknowingly chosen by Alfred Kreymborg and Walter Arensberg to serve as the face of their new little magazine, *Others*. In an event that demonstrates the pervasiveness of the publishing culture at the time, the two men became acquainted through

Allen Norton, the editor of *Rogue,* and devised an immediate plan to begin a magazine of their own. Kreymborg had become familiar with Loy's work via *Rogue,* and he and Arensberg knew from the start that they would need her for their new venture; when Arensberg told him, "We'll have Wallace Stevens and Mina Loy to begin with," Kreymborg concluded, "They alone would create the paper we have in mind" (Kreymborg, *Troubadour* 221). The men's comments reflect Loy's burgeoning reputation and a shared respect for her artistry, but in spite of their initial agreements about the magazine's objectives, the two quickly revealed divergent aesthetic tendencies, managing only "to find mutual preference among the poems of Mina Loy at one extreme and those of Mary Carolyn Davies at the other" (Kreymborg, *Troubadour* 223). Ever a patron of the arts, though, Arensberg graciously agreed to fund the magazine for a year.

Unlike many little magazines of the era, *Others* was clean and spare when it appeared, containing few advertisements, editorials, or illustrations, and relying on the poetry to speak for itself. According to Kreymborg, the guiding editorial practice was "merely to print the work of men and women who were trying themselves in the new forms. A principle of rigid privacy was determined upon. There was to be in no sense of the word a group" (*Troubadour* 222). Ironically, the *Others* poets did establish a collective identity, meeting regularly to discuss art and poetry at Kreymborg's home in Grantwood, New Jersey, and later in New York City. While the loosely defined group consisted of innovative modernists like Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, and William Carlos Williams, it was Loy, with her bold poetry, who was quickly associated with the magazine's experimental tendencies and, consequently, crucified by the conservative readers who came across the magazine. Loy became so synonymous with the magazine that when she published her first poems in *Pagany* in 1931, over a decade later, she was introduced in the contributor's note as Mina Loy "of the *Others* group" ("Notes" 108).

Others had a small circulation, but that didn't keep the mainstream press from discovering and lampooning it upon its release.[26] Kreymborg notes that a "small-sized riot ensued" after the first issue was unveiled: "News columns . . . seized upon the contributions with hilarity. Before the second issue came off the press, 'the little yellow dog,' as someone hailed the paper, had earned a reputation bordering on infamy. Travesties, ballyragging, every conceivable form of ridicule appeared far and wide. The two favorite victims of these attacks were Mina Loy and Orrick Johns . . ." (*Troubadour* 235).[27] Kreymborg probably exaggerated here, displaying the same kind of gusto and self-aggrandizement one might expect in any retrospective examination, but that the magazine caused a stir was certain. In fact, in July of 1915, Kreymborg wrote to Van Vechten about the extensive publicity *Others*—and Loy's work, in particular—had garnered. [28] Writing at roughly the same time, Louis Untermeyer corroborates Kreymborg's claim, acknowledging that *Others* caused "wild enthusiasm among free-verse writers, slightly less enthusiasm among Sunday Magazine Section reporters, and really quite a stir in the country at large" (qtd. in Burke, "New Poetry" 44). The "stir" resulted in a variety of parodies and attacks, some of them pointed directly at Loy for her outrageous "Love Songs," but Kreymborg embraced the attention. In fact, Suzanne Churchill argues that "*Others* championed Loy precisely because she generated the social uproar they craved to certify their identities as rebels and outsiders. Loy stood outside and above the avant-garde she epitomized" (179).

For the most part, Loy didn't seem to view herself as a "rebel" or her writing as intentionally provocative. Though she knew she had moved beyond the kind of bourgeois poetry that her parents would have approved of, she wrote to friends like Dodge and Van Vechten on a number of occasions to ask for their opinions about her work. Eager to confirm that it was of high quality, she admitted to Van Vechten that she was not equipped to judge her own poetry.[29]

She was genuinely unprepared for the strong reaction readers had to her work as well. While initially composing "Love Songs," she thought that they were a bit too sentimental and maudlin for *Others*.[30] Few readers, of course, agreed with her self-criticism, and even some of her fellow writers disapproved. Amy Lowell, for one, was rumored to have been so outraged by "Love Songs" that she vowed never to grace the pages of *Others* (but appeared in two separate issues). When Loy heard about Lowell's response, she was baffled and wrote to Van Vechten for an explanation.[31]

"Love Songs" appeared in the July 1915 issue of *Others* alongside work by Kreymborg, Mary Carolyn Davies, Horace Holley, and Orrick Johns. Recalling the public's response to Loy's work, Kreymborg explains, "In an unsophisticated land, such sophistry, clinical frankness, sardonic conclusions, wedded to a madly elliptical style scornful of the regulation grammar, syntax and punctuation (paging E.E. Cummings), horrified our gentry and drove our critics into furious despair" (*Singing* 488-489). After outlining these transgressions, he astutely settles on the underlying cause of readers' derision, which had little to do with Loy's stylistic choices: "Had a man written these poems, the town might have viewed them with comparative comfort. But a woman wrote them, a woman who dressed like a lady and painted charming lamp-shades" (*Singing* 489). A variety of articles appearing in mainstream publications at the time bear witness to Kreymborg's claims. In the *Evening Sun,* Don Marquis seized on the first part of Loy's poem, turning her "trickle of saliva" into a parody in verse: "Trickle, trickle, little syrup/ You're a grocer's staple/ Seldom, seldom seen in Yurrup" (qtd. in Burke, *Becoming* 196). The *New York Tribune* reported on the rise of free verse and the *Others* phenomenon as well, but reporter Margaret Johns was more receptive to the potential of free verse and the advantages it offered poets. Remarking that "A notable feature of the movement is the early prominence taken in it by

women," Johns also called attention to the role women like Loy played in establishing and publicizing modernism (qtd. in Burke, *Becoming* 197).

Indeed, it was Loy's position as a woman poet that accounted for much of the negative publicity generated by her *Others* work. Loy acknowledged the tradition she was writing out of in a letter to Carl Van Vechten, dismissing her early insecurities about the songs and comparing the latter sections to Sappho's work.[32] For Rachel Blau DuPlessis, this reference isn't a mark of lesbian or bisexual lineage but instead shows Loy "claim[ing] Sappho as the necessary precursor in the frank and free treatment of sexual matters" (58). Breaking from the genteel poetess tradition of her recent ancestors and calling upon the more explicit poetic of Sappho, Loy repositioned the love song by publicizing intimate exchange and incorporating graphic depictions of the body. She saw sex as an inescapable and vital part of human interaction that had to be addressed in her poetry. And responding, presumably, to Van Vechten's plea that she rethink her content, she told him that sex was virtually unavoidable.[33] Loy's prose in her letter, the fact that she had to search out more neutral and acceptable topics, reveals that she saw her highly sexualized poetry as a natural manifestation of the world around her, of life itself.

In her letter to Carl Van Vechten, Loy also outlined plans for the publication of *Songs to Joannes*, indicating her desire for these poems to be published together as a unit and, more specifically, to be published in a little magazine.[34] Loy was clearly aware of the visual impact she wanted her poetry to have and objected to much interference, often complaining to Van Vechten if editors corrected her punctuation, spacing, or spelling. *Others*, though, was more accommodating than some of the other magazines in which she appeared, offering poets more space and fewer restrictions. The editors' hands-off approach may account for Loy's desire to see the entirety of her work published in *Others*. Moreover, Loy was practical enough to know

that the profit-conscious publishing industry would be unlikely to heed her demands or to accept such a controversial work.[35] While her spatial plans for the poem, outlined in her letter to Van Vechten, weren't completely realized, she did see the revised and expanded version, *Songs to Joannes,* published in April of 1917 and comprising by itself an entire issue of *Others.*

In the 1917 publication, Loy traces fully the intense, failed relationship between the speaker and Joannes. Forsaking the celebratory impulse of the lyric, Loy charts the collapse by moving between remembrance, angry condemnation, and mournful recognition of lost possibilities. The poem opens with an immediate criticism of the romantic, reducing the god of love to "Pig Cupid his rosy snout/ Rooting erotic garbage/'Once upon a time,'" and revealing fairy tale visions of romance to be dirty and mundane (*Lost* 3-5). Loy's contemporaries were shocked by her opening lines and the swiftness with which she dismantled the tradition of love poetry, responding with the charge that her work was merely "swill poetry" or "Hoggerel" (qtd. in Burke, "New Poetry" 45). In *Love Songs,* sex, too, is subject to critique, presented either as trivial sport, in which "feathers are strewn" after "[s]huttle-cock" meets "battle-door," or as aggressive confrontation: "Only the impact of lighted bodies/ Knocking sparks off each other" (101, 99, 163-164). Even Joannes, the beloved, is pictured metonymically as a mere "skin-sack," "[s]omething the shape of a man" (19, 23).

But these attacks are tempered by the sections that explore the relationship through the language of loss. The speaker's "amorous failure" with her beloved is compounded, DuPlessis argues, by a reproductive failure as well, making the relationship doubly painful (61-62).[36] In section III, for example, the speaker poignantly shares the alternatives she has envisioned:

> We might have coupled
>
> In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment

Or broken flesh with one another
At the profane communion table
Where wine is spill'd on promiscuous lips

We might have given birth to a butterfly
With the daily news
Printed in blood on its wings (31-38)

The repetition of "might have" in these stanzas brings together the two narratives outlined by DuPlessis. Implicit in the language of the first stanza is the thin line separating the sacred from the profane. Had the erotic coupling been more successful, the result would have been the "birth" desired by the speaker. Instead, she is forced to admit, "The procreative truth of Me/ Petered out/ In pestilent/ Tear drops" (268-268). Indicating the speaker's centrality and claiming the female subject position, Loy capitalizes "Me," evidence of Margaret Johns's observation that women were becoming increasingly visible—here both authorially and typographically—in the poetry of the early twentieth century. More important are Loy's diction and syntax, which tie the speaker's identity to procreation, presenting it not as a separate ability or capacity but as her "truth."

Part of what was so striking about *Love Songs*, then, was not only Loy's quick deflation of romantic ideals—many had adopted that as part of the modernist project—but also her privileging of women's concerns via artistic avenues. Situating Loy's poetry within the discourse of early twentieth-century feminism, DuPlessis argues that the poet drew equally from two very different camps in her presentation of sex and the female body. On one side were the social purists, whose "hegemonic" system denied women's right to pleasure and envisioned marriage

as a way to combat the "victimizing potential" of sex; on the other side were the radical feminists, who were "committed to pleasure" and "encouraged female autonomy and sexual expression" (53). In *Love Songs,* Loy complicates the neat distinction between these two dominant groups, writing unflinchingly about female sexuality but linking it to reproduction, adopting what DuPlessis calls a "potentially conservative position" (61). That Loy refused to align herself entirely with either group demonstrates her unwillingness to undermine her beliefs for the sake of an easy audience. Indeed, though the speaker of her long poem appears genuinely disturbed by her failure to bear children with Joannes, "Parturition" indicates that Loy in no way had a romantic vision of motherhood.

V. The Modern Woman

Although Loy had only a handful of publications by 1917, in February of that year she was the subject of a New York *Evening Sun* profile, suggesting that her pieces were fairly well known among American readers and that the little magazines in which she appeared were a target of interest for the broader public. *Rogue, Trend,* and *Others* are mentioned by name in the article, and Loy is presented as someone who might easily mediate modernism by providing a symbol for the masses. Singled out by a writer hoping to locate *the* modern woman, Loy is touted as having the perfect combination of intelligence and sophistication. The unidentified writer perceptively catalogues Loy's skills—her use of free verse, her familiarity with futurism, and her ability to design clothes, for example—pointing out her talent and artistry without making her appear too intellectual or aloof. One can easily imagine the paper's readers being impressed by Loy, perhaps even intimidated, but certainly not threatened. Thus her appearance in

the *Sun* attests to the ease with which a personal and professional identity could be constructed and circulated within the periodical culture of the early twentieth century.

Important, too, is the fact that the *Sun* profile forges a gendered connection between modernism and modernity. "Some people think the women are the cause of modernism, whatever that is," he or she writes. "But then, some people think woman is to blame for everything they don't like or don't understand. *Cherechez la femme* is man-made advice, of course" ("Do You Strive" 10). In this revealing passage, the writer seems to disregard modernism as trivial ("whatever that is"), or at least impossible to define, but also engages the terminology in a meaningful way. Here the modern woman is a somewhat more desirable version of the New Woman, that caricatured scapegoat of the late nineteenth century. Encapsulating concerns about the blurring of gender codes and a breakdown in the sexual spheres, New Women were often blamed for various problems occurring around the turn of the century, from the rise of industry to perceived tears in the social fabric.[37] Equally problematic for many of Loy's contemporaries was the rise of modernism, which undermined traditional conceptions of artistry, and of representation in particular. Eager to understand the methods and motivations of avant-garde artists and writers, they turned to the press for explanations, which were sometimes oversimplified or condescending. The writer's suggestion that women are the "cause of modernism," intended here to be a fairly explicit insult, nonetheless speaks volumes about the role women played in developing fresh new ways of seeing the world, chronicling experience, and communicating with audiences (i.e. the little magazine, the small press, the salon).

Loy's position was doubly significant in that she accomplished all of these things with a socially critical poetic, disrupting critical myths of modernist disinterestedness. In her discussion

of New Women and early modernism, Ann Ardis argues that there was a clear distinction between the protest work by turn-of-the-century women and the high modernism that followed: "The modernists—if not initially, then certainly by 1922—presented their reactionary politics as apolitical formalism, insisting upon the dissociation of art from the rest of the culture" (171). And literary critics made a concurrent attempt to distinguish real Literature from New Women novels in the media, praising aesthetically formal modernist texts that were superior to "highly politicized and controversial works" (Ardis 4). But Loy complicates the division that Ardis presents in her work, probing the interstices between politically tinged rhetoric and experimental aesthetics. Although it is impossible to read Loy neatly as a New Woman, either temporally or theoretically, the polemical nature of her work and her representative position as "modern" suggest affinities. The *Evening Sun* article, though it just skims the surface of her radical views, reveals Loy's interest in the intersection of gender and modernism. After explaining her impressionistic response to a recent concert, a "modern" gesture by the *Sun* writer's standards, Loy explains what a "modern woman is *not*" by telling a story about young Italian women from Bellona who are married off early and given dolls by their fiancées "so that they may hide their blushes in play with them during the courtship" (10). Here Loy defines the modern woman as one with forward-thinking views on sexuality and independence and hearkens back to the more critical views of virginity expressed in her little magazine poetry.

Others have questioned the clean distinction between art and culture, offering alternative histories that pave the way for more firmly situating Loy as a canonical and influential modernist. Even Andreas Huyssen has pointed out that his theory of the Great Divide between modernism and mass culture has been misunderstood as a "static binary" rather than a "powerful imaginary insisting on the divide while time and again violating that categorical separation in

practice"; thus the opposition between "social and economic modernity and aesthetic modernism," he argues, is not always a useful interpretive schema ("High/Low" 366, 367).[38] Little magazines are especially fertile ground for exploring the ways in which poses of cultural disinterestedness were both encouraged and violated.[39] Consistently promoting themselves as platforms of a new aesthetic, they nonetheless housed poets such as Loy, who successfully insinuated her disruptive social poetic into their program of formal experimentalism. That Loy was well regarded by most of her contemporaries suggests that they never faulted her for this. Moreover, Roger Conover reminds us that her work appeared numerous times in "the inaugural issue of an American magazine dedicated to experimental writing" (qtd. in Loy, *Lost* 194, n. 16). Loy was in high demand as a poet, then, someone with the talent to oversee the birth of a new modernist magazine.

Even the more prestigious and widely circulated *Dial* used Loy to usher in their "Modern Forms" section. Her play *The Pamperers,* which was probably written about the same time as "Collision" and "Cittàbapini," appeared in the July 1920 issue of the little magazine and was highlighted for its distinct and untraditional style (Schmid 5). Longer than her two *Rogue* plays, *The Pamperers* is another futurist satire, this time a face-off between woman (Diana) and genius (Loony). Gender is highlighted from the very beginning of the play when, in the midst of snippets of dialogue, we hear, "and what is your opinion of the sex question?" (qtd. in Schmid 10). This background conversation soon becomes more focused, and one character reveals that Ossy has "discovered a genius," a Vitalist by the name of Loony (10). The Futurist reference here is thinly veiled by the explicit mention of Futurism elsewhere in the play, with one man praising Marinetti not for his philosophies but for his propriety: "I am willing to accept the creed of any man who wears a clean collar" (12). Loy uses his ridiculous justification to suggest an

affinity between Futurist ideology and bourgeois morality, a connection that she makes elsewhere in her poetry and drama.

When the conversation returns to Loony, his genius is juxtaposed with Diana's femininity. Possessing a "perfect yawn" and "virgin eyelashes," she is contrasted with the forceful Looney, who is carried into the room on a "throne chair" and boasts that he can "make *Life* out of cigar-ends" (11, 12, 13). The two become locked in a head-to-head battle, with Loony declaring, "I hang out with God and the Devil" and Diana responding, "I am Woman" (13). By the end of the play, the others "*evaporate,*" and we are left with Diana and Loony gazing at their bare feet; "You see after all they're very much alike," Diana tells him, heightening their connection so that she can reign in his genius and teach him how to speak and act (16). Julie Schmid argues that the symbolic Diana might be understood as "feminine essence and Loy's response to Marinetti's attempts to do away with feminized *amore* and moonshine" (5). And by the final lines, Diana is certainly in control, breathlessly telling Loony, "you'll DO" (17). That loaded line suggests not only that Loony is acceptable for Diana's cause, but also that he'll literally do, or act, as she sees fit, for she has appropriated his genius.

By 1920, Futurism had retained little of its influence in the international literary world and was quickly becoming aligned, instead, with Italian Fascism (Rainey, *Modernism* 2). The play's late publication date suggests, then, that the editors of *The Dial* saw its enduring significance beyond mere satire. Indeed, Loy's placement alongside the other works printed in that issue of *The Dial*, including some by Rimbaud, Joyce, Ford, and Kenneth Burke, warrants looking at the author within the context of literary modernism more broadly. Loy's own version of the "sex question," *The Pamperers* displays the author's condemnation of misogynistic codes

that would strip women of their femininity or power, as well as a her dexterous appropriation of theatrical modes to meet her own needs.

After the publication of *The Pamperers,* Loy continued to appear in *The Dial* as both a poet and visual artist. Suzanne Churchill has observed that the tone and focus of her poetry there shifted slightly to align with the "detached, impersonal, and technically refined aesthetics of high modernism" (24). This might seem to be the case with "Brancusi's Golden Bird," which was notably published in the *Waste Land* issue of *The Dial* and engages debates about the nature of abstraction and representation. Importantly, though, the poem's underlying ideology is consistent with the views Loy expressed, albeit more directly, in her earlier work. By emphasizing "the act of construction more than static definition," Loy dismisses as inherently problematic what Ellen Stauder calls a "politics of the absolute" (359). The poet uses a series of intense, forceful verbs—"rubbed," "lopped," "licked," "shrills," and "strikes," for example—to highlight the process of creation and call attention to the physical manifestation of artistic genius (*Lost* 5, 12, 23, 27, 29). Thus the closing lines referring to the "immaculate/ conception/ of the inaudible bird" are undermined by the messiness of what comes before (31-33). The birth of the bird is also called an "act/ of art," stressing the materiality of the endeavor and Brancusi's hands-on role as the "peasant God" (16-17, 4).

While there is some disagreement about the exact version of Brancusi's "Golden Bird" Loy saw,[40] her familiarity with his work complicates readings of the poem that would privilege artistic detachment and demonstrates the interconnectedness of little magazine culture at the time. A year before the publication of "Brancusi's Golden Bird" in *The Dial,* Loy published "Psycho-Democracy" in *The Little Review,* and the pages of her manifesto are literally divided by photos of Brancusi's sculptures. Looking at the works side-by-side, we can clearly see Loy's

rejection of absolutes enacted in Brancusi's simple, fluid design aesthetic. Arguing that we must "move away from all fixed concepts in order to advance," she anticipates the active nature of Brancusi's sculpture in her later poem and simultaneously posits a social theory grounded in the idea of constant evolution ("Psycho-Democracy"15). For Loy, this ideology is a blending of the intellectual and the socio-political. Appropriating Marxist language to gauge the extent of control by the "Dominator," she argues, "Every social upheaval has been the evolutional phenomenon of the recruiting of new material to the dominating class," which is a "psychological nucleus progressively absorbing all similar elements into itself" (17). Psycho-Democracy is Loy's solution to this cycle of subjugation and is defined as a "Democracy of The Spirit, government by creative imagination, participation in essential wisdom" (14). Artists, and practitioners of the modern in particular, have an explicit place within this democracy because they can substitute "*Creative inspiration for Force*" and supply the necessary "intellectual heroism" to ensure its success (15; original emphasis).

As is the case with "Aphorisms on Futurism," Loy does not tend to particulars here and is concerned less about "questions of governance" than about "the spirit of postwar life" (Burke *Becoming* 270). Burke suggests that the author was inspired not only by Wilsonian rhetoric as she drafted the manifesto, but also by the ethics of Arthur Cravan, her second husband and true love (270). Indeed, it must have been an intimate exposition in some respects because it was initially published as a small pamphlet in Florence (1920) and sent to Mabel Dodge, Carl Van Vechten, and other of Loy's close companions. The following year, however, it was published in *The Little Review*, immediately enabling public consumption and entering a broader social and cultural nexus. Though the tone is slightly less aggressive than that of her other manifestos—relying, for instance, on italics rather than bold font for emphasis—it is one of her most explicitly

political works, which is especially noticeable in its little magazine context. Taking to task reified "institutions" that have "outlast[ed] the psychological conditions from with they arose," Loy outlines an alternative a state of consciousness that embraces the adaptability and flux necessary for social change (16).

These condemned social institutions, Loy suggests, directly impact both our intellectual freedom and our physical bodies. She observes that the symbolism and rhetoric of militarism are "*psychically magnetic*" and maintain the "*belligerent masculine* social ideal" that embraces confrontation (18; original emphasis). Understanding that pacifism as it has been conceptualized thus far is inadequate, for it "leaves a void in social psychological construction, without providing any adequate suggestions as to how this void should be filled," Loy urges her readers to establish an alternative "*new social symbolism*" (18; original emphasis). An explication of this symbolism is never provided, but Loy is clearly aware of the real-world implications of her argument and of the potential consequences of maintaining the status quo. At the end of the work, she acknowledges that Psycho-Democracy is still a "nebulous" idea but argues that "strength and originality of conception will concrete a vital ideal as the basis of International politics" (19). While Loy's use of "concrete" as a verb appears at odds with the inherent flexibility of her philosophy, it is balanced by the word "vital," which indicates a constant rethinking of ideals that is impossible under current systems of government.

Printing Loy's manifesto to bookend the photos of Brancusi's work would seem to disengage it from its socio-political context. Paradoxically, though, its placement alongside his abstract sculptures heightens the impact by providing a tangible example of the very evolution that undergirds the tract's ideology. How purposeful this editorial interpretation was is unclear, but Pound's essay on Brancusi, printed in that same issue of *The Little Review,* suggests that he

may have seen important affinities between the two artists. In his essay, Pound, then the magazine's Foreign Editor, frames Brancusi's work by observing that "every emotion presents itself to the vivid consciousness in some primary form. It belongs to the art of that form" (441). It is hard to imagine that Pound would have overlooked Loy's own insistence on reinvigorating human consciousness given the interpretive gesture we see here. Moreover, the "form" he writes of speaks to Loy's desire to capture the "vital ideal[s]" of Psycho-Democrats, provides a physical vehicle for her conceptual process. Important, though, is acknowledging Brancusi's own preoccupation with Platonism and interest in essence rather than final form, which Loy reflects in the continuous shaping process that takes place in "Brancusi's Golden Bird." While we must ultimately have a form, or a finished product, it is the "act/ of art" that the poet finds so appealing. And "Psycho-Democracy" evinces a similar focus, urging practitioners to evolve by forsaking "fixed concepts."

The Little Review was, of course, an ideal venue for sharing "Psycho-Democracy" with readers. Boasting "no compromise with the public taste" on their masthead, the editors were driven by little more than a desire to present fresh new poetry and prose that was unwelcome elsewhere and espoused the kind of adaptability and open-mindedness Loy would have found refreshing. During its fifteen-year run, the magazine also garnered submissions from an astonishing range of writers and artists, showcasing work by modernists who would later come to be accepted by the mainstream press and publishing industry. Moreover, Loy's manifesto appeared only a few months after the widely covered *Ulysses* trial, which catapulted *The Little Review* into the national spotlight and *Ulysses* out of magazine publication. "Psycho-Democracy" has received little attention from Loy scholars, overshadowed by discussions of her poetry, but it deserves a significant place in her oeuvre. And its little magazine publication

illustrates the vastness of the modernist networks, where context provides new avenues for understanding texts within both their art historical and socio-political moments.

Loy's full-length works minimize the impact of her polemical aesthetic by reframing bibliographic codes.[41] In fact, "Psycho-Democracy" is not even included in the recently published *Lost Lunar Baedeker,* her most widely circulated collection, and "Brancusi's Golden Bird" is placed in a section with poems for or about Joyce, Stein, Wyndham Lewis, Jules Pascin, and Nancy Cunard, privileging the author's modernist affinities over her ideological consistency. While both are starting points for fruitful interrogations, the divergent trajectories illustrate how imperative it is to examine Loy's periodical publications. These provide us with an alternative publishing model founded on dialogic relationships between writers, artists, editors, and readers, the consequences of which are still being unearthed. Loy's work is crucial to this endeavor. While her experimental poetic and social awareness demonstrate the need for understanding the expansiveness of the modernist project, her publishing history testifies to the varied means through which it was enacted, reminding us that there are no "fixed concepts" when it comes to theorizing modernism.

Notes

1. See *Lunar Baedecker* (Dijon: Contact Publishing Co., 1923); *Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose. Contact Collection of Contemporary Writers* (Paris: Three Mountains Press, 1925. 137-194); and *Lunar Baedeker & Time-Tables* (Highlands, N.C.: Jonathan Williams, 1958). Two of Loy's major collections also appeared posthumously: *The Last Lunar Baedeker.* Ed. Roger Conover (Highlands: The Jargon Society, 1982) and *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*. Ed. Roger Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996).

2. See Vondeling's "The Manifest Professional: Manifestos and Modernist Legitimation."

3. Suzanne Churchill and Adam McKible use this term in their introduction to *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches,* and Mark Morrison uses it in the preface to the same work.

4. For example, in the first issue of *The Little Review,* published in March of 1914, Margaret Anderson writes, "Finally, since THE LITTLE REVIEW, which is neither directly nor indirectly connected in any way with any organization, society, company, cult or movement, is the personal enterprise of the editor, it shall enjoy that untrammelled [sic] liberty which is the life of Art" (2). Eugene Jolas and Eliot Paul were equally general in the opening number of *transition,* published in April of 1927: "No rigid artistic formulae will be applied in selecting the contents of TRANSITION. If the inspiration is genuine, the conception clear and the result artistically organized, in the judgement [sic] of the editors, a contribution will be accepted. Originality will be its best recommendation" (137).

5. See Michael North's *Camera Works* for an excellent discussion of photography's impact on literary modernism. Stieglitz's *Camera Work* is treated there in detail.

6. A number of critics have remarked on decadence in Loy's poetry as well. See, for example, Kouidis (100); Nichols (221-222); and Roberts (133, 141).

7. Dodge's decision may have been a result of her personal tastes, though, as letters indicate that she did not like all of Loy's work or understand her stylistic choice, particularly the poet's lack of punctuation. Additional references to poems Dodge disliked—"Virgins Plus Curtains Minus Dots," for example—reveal a disconnection between the two women's artistic leanings as well. See Mina Loy, letter to Carl Van Vechten, undated [probably late 1914 or early 1915] and Mabel Dodge, letter to Carl Van Vechten, October 14, 1914. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

8. Roger Conover (qtd. in Loy, *Lost* 215, n.51) notes that the January 1914 issue wasn't actually released until June of the same year.

9. By 1922, in fact, complete sets of the magazine were already being sold by prestigious auction houses. A catalog for The Anderson Galleries lists *Camera Work* alongside rare books and papers being sold on December 4th and 5th, 1922, for example. Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive.

10. Letters from Stieglitz to Frederick Goetz, who worked for the German company that reproduced plates for *Camera Work*, indicate the former's desire for, and appreciation of, quality workmanship. See Stieglitz's letter to Goetz, dated October 11, 1913, for instance. Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive.

11. Mabel Dodge Luhan, letters to Alfred Stieglitz, [April 1914] and [July 1914]; Alfred Stieglitz to Mabel Dodge Luhan, July 7, 1914. Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive.

12. Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive.

13. Loy was not the only modernist who used this Futurist-inspired format. Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis, though sure to distance themselves from the program of Marinetti and his followers, relied heavily on the vitriolic language and "visual radicalism" that typified Futurist publications (Gasiorek 296). For more on Pound, Lewis, and *Blast*, see Andrzej Gasiork's excellent article "The 'Little Magazine' as Weapon: *Blast* (1914-15)."

14. For a more detailed discussion of Marinetti's manifesto and its influence on Loy's poetry, see Kouidis (56-59).

15. This list of *Camera Work* subscribers, located in the Stieglitz/O'Keeffe Archive, is assigned to the same folder as the 1913 notice and may be from roughly the same time.

16. This is likely a reference to Loy's first husband, Stephen Haweis. According to some accounts, Haweis was visiting his mistress as Loy gave birth to their daughter, Oda Janet (Burke 95).

17. I want to thank Valerie Morrison's Twentieth-Century American Poetry class (The University of Georgia, fall 2008) for their insightful comments during our discussion of "Parturition," and Amy Sunderland, in particular, for noting Loy's pairing of the stairs and the mountain.

18. The draft of *Esau Penfold* can be found in the Mina Loy Papers.

19. Whether Loy intended the piece to be published is not clear; Conover makes no mention of potential publication, but, since Dodge placed some of Loy's work in little magazines, Loy could have sent it to her as an agent.

20. Roger Conover reads "Three Moments in Paris" as a satire, but I'm unconvinced. The poem's first two sections, "One O'Clock at Night" and "Café du Néant," are somewhat satirical, particularly the first in its evocation of Futurist misogyny and condescension, but the

last section is notably direct in its treatment of gender roles, revealing a clear line between the virgin and the whore.

21. On March [22nd], 1914, she also wrote to Haweis that she was not a futurist *per se*, despite the movement's appeals. Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers.

22. Mina Loy, letters to Carl Van Vechten, July 1915 and [late 1915]. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

23. All parenthetical citations for "Collision" and "Cittàbapini," as well as for *The Pamperers*, refer to the pages of Julie Schmid's article "Mina Loy's Futurist Theatre." Original and reprint copies of *Rogue* are difficult to locate, and the copy I requested from Yale University was missing the pages that contained these two plays. Schmid reproduces the three works in full in her article.

24. Allen Norton, letters to Henry McBride, July 19, 1915 and undated [probably late 1915]. Henry McBride Papers.

25. In a Chicago *Evening Post* column (September 25, 1914, p. 7), for example, George Cram Cook introduces his readers to Papini and Marinetti and calls Loy "the woman who split the futurist movement" (qtd. in Burke, *Becoming* 176).

26. According to Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, the circulation hovered around 300, though it did grow to almost 1,000 at times (47).

27. Coincidentally, Loy, after looking through an issue of *Others*, wrote to Van Vechten twice praising Johns's work. Mina Loy, letters to Carl Van Vechten, July 1915 and undated. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

28. Alfred Kreymborg, letter to Carl Van Vechten, July 8, 1915. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

29. Mina Loy, letter to Carl Van Vechten, undated. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

30. Mina Loy, letters to Carl Van Vechten, undated [probably early 1915] and undated [probably late 1915]. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

31. Mina Loy, letter to Carl Van Vechten, undated [1916]. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

32. Mina Loy, letter to Carl Van Vechten, undated [probably late 1916]. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

33. Mina Loy, letter to Carl Van Vechten, undated [1916]. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

34. Mina Loy, letter to Carl Van Vechten, undated [probably late 1916]. Carl Van Vechten Papers.

35. In 1923, Robert McAlmon's Contact Publishing Co. eventually published thirteen of the sections from "Love Songs," fewer than half, in *Lunar Baedecker* [sic]. In his notes on the poem Roger Conover argues that these revised songs lack the "body heat" of, and are more "suggestive and abstract" than, those in the longer version, and he suggests that this was due to Loy's fear of censorship (qtd. in Loy, *Lost* 224).

36. A number of Loy scholars agree that a child is the absent presence in the relationship. Selinger argues that "a loss of a child, whether aborted or never conceived, lies at the bitter heart of the *Love Songs to Joannes*" (38); Schreiber similarly claims that the "traumatic loss of a child through abortion" is "the epicenter of this romance gone wrong" (91).

37. Ann Ardis makes this point in *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism.* For more on the New Woman, also see Patricia Marks's *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press.*

38. Huyssen does suggest, however, that re-theorizing the divide may be useful as scholarship expands to consider transnational modernisms, including work in "'peripheral,'

postcolonial, or post-communist societies," because it exposes important "cultural hierarchies" (367).

39. See Mark Morrison's *The Public Face of Modernism* for an excellent discussion of the nuanced relationship between little magazines and mass culture.

40. See Stauder for more on the historical context. There are two sculptures and two photos, though Stauder notes that the differences between them are "negligible" (358, n.3).

41. Jerome McGann distinguishes bibliographic codes from linguistic codes in his influential work *The Textual Condition.* George Bornstein employs McGann's terms in a modernist context in *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page.*

CHAPTER 3

HOLDING THE ARTIST ACCOUNTABLE: KAY BOYLE IN THE AVANT-GARDE AND POPULAR PRESS

I. Reexamining Kay Boyle's Publishing Legacy

Unlike Mina Loy, whose longstanding non-canonicity was a product of her failure to ensure the permanence of her work by conforming to structured modernist publishing standards, Kay Boyle has suffered neglect, paradoxically, because she manipulated the publishing culture too effectively. Boyle was present in an astonishing array of periodicals for almost three-quarters of a century, from her 1922 appearance in *Poetry* with "Monody to the Sound of Zithers" to the republication of her short story "Rest Cure" in a 1991 issue of *Story Magazine.* During her long and atypical publishing career, she wrote successfully for a variety of publics and supported her ever-expanding family with her earnings. Equally at home in *This Quarter* and *Harper's Bazaar*, *Contact* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, Boyle was conscious of her readers' expectations and adept at fulfilling them. Moreover, she was able to meet the demands of two publishing cultures often thought to be diametrically opposed: the modernist avant-garde, with its ever-blossoming array of little magazines and small publishing houses, and the mainstream media, with its widely circulated periodicals and lucrative book deals. In the first two decades of her career alone, Boyle published stories, poems, or criticism in over thirty-five different periodicals, and she appeared in some, such as *The New Yorker*, *The Nation,* and *transition,* dozens of times throughout her life.[1] Aware of the various audiences for whom she wrote, Boyle often directed her agent, Ann Watkins, to submit particular pieces to the magazines she thought were most

appropriate, so her impressive bibliography speaks not only to her stamina as a writer, but also to her versatility and business acumen.

Importantly, however, Boyle saturated the periodical market so thoroughly that she became difficult to place, losing much of her potential for avant-garde credibility during her mainstream publishing career. For some contemporary critics, moreover, the explicit politics evinced in much of her popular work seemed to be out of step with the aesthetic formalism of high modernism. Boyle is overtly polemical, even didactic, in many of her stories, novels, and poems, speaking out unapologetically against the various forms of social and political oppression, from racism to fascism, that she felt were most destructive. In a 1978 interview, she even told Elizabeth Bell, "What most people don't recognize, and I wish they would recognize, is that my work has always been political. I think all my short stories are political, or most of them. Actually, I can't think of any that aren't" (qtd. in Bell 94). What Boyle noted retrospectively here, and what makes her oeuvre so remarkable, is a consistent trajectory throughout her career that has generally been overlooked. While her political aesthetic is less pronounced in her little magazine pieces, overshadowed in part by experiments with style, the work she published in those small-circulation periodicals anticipates her later themes and shows her continuous interest in engaging with the outside world.

Until recently, little magazines like those in which Boyle appeared were thought to be vehicles through which modernists separated themselves almost entirely from mass culture, disengaging from the socio-political and cultural issues of the day. Indeed, many of the magazines, often short-lived and commercially unsuccessful, were created as a direct counterpoint to contemporary mainstream periodicals that catered to a broad reading public. Declarations indicating as much pepper some of the best-known little magazines. On the

masthead of the *Little Review*, for example, Margaret Anderson famously announced that her magazine would make "no compromise with the public taste"; over a decade later, Eugene Jolas and his *transition* peers signed a 1929 "Proclamation" that concluded by damning the "plain reader" (qtd. in Boyle, "Proclamation" 13). Ernest Walsh went even further, stating that one editorial premise of *This Quarter* was the need to "detach the artist from his group, to present him alone, without the benefit of the prestige offered by group strength" (Editorial 259). Responding to the influx of newly minted artistic groups, each with its own manifesto or set of principles, Walsh wanted to present each artist's work in isolation, to distance it not only from the demands of a large-scale readership, but also from the self-imposed limitations of the "ism." Harriet Monroe alone seemed to consider the importance of cultivating an extensive readership, choosing as the tag line for *Poetry* Walt Whitman's famous proclamation, "To have great poets there must be great audiences too" (Whitman 324). Ezra Pound was appalled by this inclusion and repeatedly told Monroe that it was out of step with the magazine's goals, but she held firmly to her position. The seemingly democratic ideals of the magazine—with its famous Open Door policy—are subtly undermined, though, by its reliance on "great" readers alone.

These distancing measures are acknowledged in early studies of the little magazine but have recently received more critical scrutiny. In *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*, Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich point to "rebellion against traditional modes of expression" and the evasion of the "commercial or material difficulties" that accompany experimental work as the key goals of the little magazine (4). Moreover, the authors frame the "rebellion" as an artistic one, suggesting that the primary focus of the little magazine was the development of a new aesthetic. Dividing avant-garde periodicals into six major categories—poetry, leftist, regional, experimental, critical, and eclectic—they imply that any

social and political concerns are deserving of a separate "leftist" signification.[2] Later studies of the periodical culture have questioned this neat divide between avant-garde publications and the broader cultural milieu, suggesting a kind of entanglement that enriches our notion of how the modernist project was enacted in the press.[3] Mark Morrisson has offered one of the most cogent protests against any clear division, arguing in *The Public Face of Modernism* that many early modernist magazines—his study spans the period between 1905 and 1920—relied on commercial tactics and looked to the mainstream press for inspiration. He situates himself in direct opposition to Andreas Huyssen[4], revealing that "the institutional adaptation of promotional culture by young modernists suggests an early optimism about the power of mass market technologies and institutions to transform and rejuvenate contemporary culture" (6). More importantly, Morrisson sees this borrowing from mass culture replicated in the very ideological underpinnings of the magazines. Examining the *English Review,* the *Little Review,* and the *Freewoman,* among others, he observes that despite their differences, they all shared the "bedrock assumption that art must have a public function" and "tended to see the social role of art as an issue related to the nature of public discourse" (6). Morrisson's study, along with others by Jane Marek, Suzanne Churchill, and Adam McKible, for example, has paved the way for new investigations into modernist publishing practices.[5] These authors have challenged our reified notions of modernist elitism and explored the intersections between the sometimes rampant aestheticism of the magazines and the markers of social and political modernity they were originally perceived to have rejected or rebelled against.

Kay Boyle is a useful point of departure for this exploration, for she herself straddled two very different worlds, appearing in both little magazines and mainstream publications, sometimes simultaneously. She began her career in the little magazines, though she would

eventually become best known for her *New Yorker* stories, first appearing there in 1931 and publishing over thirty times in that periodical alone. In late 1921, she submitted to *Poetry* a letter to the editor about the pitiful state of contemporary music and, the following year, published two book reviews in the *Dial.* But most significant was her first creative work, "Monody to the Sound of Dithers," which appeared in *Poetry* in 1923 and presaged a successful avant-garde career. For the following decade, Boyle would publish almost exclusively in little magazines, including *Forum, Broom, This Quarter, Contact, Blues, transition,* and *Hound and Horn*, and would become an advocate of the experimental work being done by their writers. In the 1930s, however, Boyle began appearing frequently in the mainstream press, contributing work to an astonishing array of magazines; these included general-interest magazines, such as *Harper's Magazine* and *The Saturday Evening Post*; women's magazines, such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Woman's Home Companion*; political magazines, such as *The Nation*; and literary and cultural magazines, such as *The New Yorker*.

The most practical explanation for this shift is financial. These magazines simply paid more than their modernist counterparts, some of which struggled just to break even, and as Boyle was married to men who by choice or circumstance did not work steadily or hold well-paying jobs, she did her part to care for her large family and generate a fairly consistent income. Lisa Dunick has persuasively argued that Boyle's popular and avant-garde publishing careers are part of the same professional trajectory and that we should not view any shift on her part as a betrayal of modernist loyalties.[6] Boyle's dexterous handling of her business affairs indicates that she well understood the benefits offered to her by each type of periodical and was able to manipulate her writing stylistically—sometimes to her aesthetic disadvantage—to meet the needs of the contemporary publishing culture. But equally important is the fact that her work shows a

thematic consistency that supercedes these variations. Her avant-garde magazine pieces, written in a less turbulent social and political climate, are not as polemical as much of her mid- and late-century writing. A harbinger of what would come, they reveal, nevertheless, an artist heavily invested in the ethical dimensions of her work, an artist willing to explore creatively while maintaining her moral integrity and fierce desire to protect humanity.

Boyle's underexamined little magazine work also shows that political and social concerns could be paired with artistic experimentation and successfully incorporated into such magazines. Some of the work Boyle published in the little magazines explores how class- and sex-based stereotypes hinder our ability to connect with one another in a meaningful way. Sandra Spanier argues that Boyle "attacks repeatedly . . . a narrow-mindedness which blinds an individual to the inherent dignity of others—an egotism that in the plural becomes bigotry and chauvinism" (4). Boyle began this attack early in her career, making her poetry and fiction in *Contact, Broom, transition,* and other avant-garde magazines an integral part of her canon and complicating versions of modernism that would delineate these venues as unilaterally concerned with art. While her earliest published work is less overtly political than her fiction of the 1930s and 1940s, it also reveals a writer who understood clearly the dangers of pure aestheticism, the consequences of allowing art to dominate one's life at the expense of social interaction and interpersonal relationships, for many of her speakers and characters are consumed by art to a dehumanizing extent.

Given Boyle's constant presence in the literary world throughout her life, it is difficult to comprehend her absence from studies of modernism. Representing the "glamour and achievement of the Paris expatriates," Boyle was interviewed by reporters for the *World-Telegram* and *New York Herald Tribune* and photographed by the Associated Press upon her

1941 return to the U.S. (Mellen 257). And soon thereafter, her photos appeared in the *New York Post* and *Harper's Bazaar*, attesting to her celebrity status.[7] Despite this early popularity, Boyle makes only cursory appearances in even the most inclusive studies of modernist women's writing, including Shari Benstock's *Women of the Left Bank*, Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism* and *Gender in Modernism*, and the recently released *Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers*. In the preface to *Kay Boyle: Artist and Activist*, one of the only full-length studies of Boyle's work, Sandra Spanier explains the dearth of material on Boyle, concluding that her absence from the canon of "twentieth-century literature is to some degree a political issue. Her lack of a wide reputation says more about the way our literary tastes and judgments are formed than it does about the 'quality' of her work" (xiv). The same has been said of many women writers whose works had been virtually forgotten until reissued and recontextualized by feminist critics over the past few decades. [8] Boyle, though, unlike many of her counterparts, published prolifically and stayed in the public eye, as an artist, a teacher, and a conscientious world citizen, for most of her life.[9]

II. Boyle's Little Magazine Poetry and the Dangers of Aestheticism

Despite her sporadic formal education, Kay Boyle began writing at an early age, encouraged by a mother who taught her that political activism and artistic experimentation need not be exclusive of one another.[10] She thus developed a political aesthetic that would manifest itself in various forms throughout her career. Between 1916 and 1918, for example, she wrote a number of antiwar poems, including "Mother," "The Battlefield," and "The People's Cry." The teenager's work is stylistically clumsy and melodramatic, but it is sure in purpose, endorsing views of democracy grounded in civic responsibility rather than destructive power. Moreover,

the poems' early dates demonstrate that the author's interest in politics was not simply a by-product of her later relationship with the mainstream press. While Boyle did not always have a firm historical or theoretical understanding of the politics of her day, sometimes even endorsing contradictory beliefs, she was nonetheless aware of individual suffering and was fiercely committed, even as a young women, to exposing duplicity, malice, corruption, and the consequences of violence.[11]

When Boyle became actively involved with a number of avant-garde publications, she was able to reconcile this awareness with her desire to hone her writing skills. In 1922, she left Cincinnati for New York and arrived on the East Coast with an unquenchable enthusiasm. In the heart of America's artistic production, Boyle began her relationship with the little magazines, writing two unsigned reviews for *The Dial* and getting a job with Lola Ridge, the New York editor of *Broom*. Boyle's time with Ridge, though brief, had a tremendous impact on her artistic career. In addition to supporting her work and introducing her to other writers, including Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams, with whom she would form a long-lasting friendship, Ridge exposed her to the inner workings of an influential little magazine. She also gave Boyle a clearer sense of how to reconcile her divergent social and artistic interests. In *Being Geniuses Together*, Boyle recalls, "Lola's causes became mine, and when I wrote my poems now I borrowed from her conscience and her poetic vocabulary" (McAlmon and Boyle 15). Picking up where Boyle's mother left off, Ridge showed the young author that she need not sacrifice her aesthetic or ethical principles and could, in fact, engage in writing of the sort that would be complimentary to both.

If Boyle wanted to dive headfirst into the waters of modernism, *Broom* was certainly an appropriate platform. The magazine's colophon, containing a figure with a broom, indicated the

sweeping away of restriction and convention in the arts. And Harold Loeb and Arthur Kreymborg, who published the magazine, took their job seriously. Boyle would later call *Broom* "the handsomest and arty-est of any literary publication of its time" (McAlmon and Boyle 14). It was a beautiful, polished magazine, printed on high-quality paper and formatted consistently, and it included prose, verse, and an admirable array of photos and reproductions. Established writers and artists appeared alongside younger contributors, and the first few issues alone boasted contributions by Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, Amy Lowell, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, Man Ray, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Joseph Stella.

Boyle herself appeared in the magazine's January 1923 issue with her poem "Morning." This piece, however, is still uncollected, as are many of the poems and short stories she published in periodicals throughout the mid-1920s. Justifying Boyle's choice to leave some of these early pieces out of *Wedding Day and Other Stories*, Spanier calls them "rather mannered vignettes" and suggests that Boyle probably felt that "the material was derivative" (36). To some extent, Spanier is correct, for Boyle's early stories and poems are certainly not her strongest. But equally viable explanations are that she valued, first and foremost, the self-expression and experimentation nurtured by those periodicals, regardless of the finished products they housed, and that, as she continued to write, she had a sharper understanding of what each type of periodical could offer her. While the small audience of the little magazines perhaps made them a less useful venue for her increasingly pointed social and political commentary, they also offered her a space to find her creative voice and hone her style, an impossible luxury for mainstream magazines desirous of accessibility and intent on increasing profits and readership.

During her editorial stint at *Broom*, Boyle started her publishing career in earnest, appearing in the December 1922 issue of *Poetry* with "Monody to the Sound of Zithers." It

might seem unusual that an author best known for short stories would begin by publishing poetry, and Boyle herself even acknowledged that her poetry was less successful than her fiction. Throughout her career she wrote poems but struggled to adequately express herself. In 1932, she confided in William Carlos Williams, "Some kind of poetic form has to be found or I'll go crazy. I can't go on taking what you (and others) make possible and beautiful. I think I've got lots to say in poetry and no, no, no form" (qtd. in Williams, *Selected Letters* 129). Williams, an inveterate experimenter with meter, took Boyle's complaint to heart and used his long letter of response to formulate a theory of poetry, dismissing the looseness of free verse but calling for a metrical form that would not be too rigid or controlled. Boyle's poetry, which accounts for a small portion of her oeuvre, has received little critical attention, but it shows a constantly developing writer who was willing to experiment with form and style. Furthermore, it speaks to Boyle's legacy of engagement with and participation in the cultural networks of her day.

An initial reading of "Monody to the Sound of Zithers" might suggest that Boyle had reprioritized her interests after moving to New York, for the poem contains none of the political commentary visible in her World War I poems. Her context for writing had obviously changed, and, with its lyrical underpinnings and poetic diction, the title itself even presages a shift in content. But, while her little magazine work here and elsewhere is noticeably less didactic than much of her later writing, Boyle avoids the kind of insularity that might render art socially meaningless. The early poems and stories she published in avant-garde periodicals demonstrate her ability to pursue beauty and write experimentally while simultaneously recognizing and exposing the dangers of fetishizing aestheticism. The speaker in "Monody," for instance, admits, "I have wanted other things more than lovers . . ." ("Monody" 1). This grammatical construction is repeated throughout the poem as the speaker catalogues her various desires, her old need for

"deep-bosomed contentment," "colors and smells," and "layers of river-mist" (3, 6, 7). Most important, however, was her need to "capture Beauty's hands and lay them on my heart," for all of her other needs were simply different manifestations of this Beauty (8). The present perfect, here used as an ambiguous indicator of time, makes it difficult to tell if and when the speaker's desires were fulfilled, but she closes by revealing, "I have let nothing pass" (16).

At first blush, then, Boyle's poem seems to praise sensitive perception, even brash aestheticism. But Boyle skillfully undermines such a reading, hinting at tragedy in her title and problematizing the privileging of Beauty in her careful use of personification. The speaker yearns for "rain to kiss my eyelids," for "[s]ea-spray and silver foam to kiss my mouth," and for "strong winds to flay me with passion" (9, 10, 11). These lines speak to the necessity of fully experiencing life, but the author's use of such intimate words—"kiss," for instance—suggests that the speaker has failed to find, or perhaps even to consider, the same exhilaration in humanity. Admitting that her "lovers have been strangers," she has substituted Beauty for human contact, has been "soothe[d]" by nature rather than man (15, 12). Such a subtle observation is a far cry from Boyle's later explicitly political commentary. However, it serves as a precursor to her other works that show failed connections by exposing how the privileging of art can perhaps lead to alienation and a turning away from humanity.

"Monody to the Sound of Zithers" was well received and chosen for inclusion in Stanley Braithwaite's *Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1923*, and Boyle continued to publish in the little magazines the following year, appearing in *Forum*, *Broom*, and *Contact*. "Morning," Boyle's *Broom* poem, evidences the same well-wrought figurative language we see in "Monody." Relying heavily on personification, simile, and metaphor, Boyle presents a woman gazing at her sleeping partner in the early morning light:

Morning creeps in across his hair. The pallid fingers

Of an old nun stroking his forehead.

Morning curves and lingers

On the pillow, white as someone dead,

On blue even shadows where his head lay sleeping.

His eyes are new at daybreak,

The smooth wings of a new moth moving in sunlight

On full locust blossom. (“Morning” 1-8)

The image of the man, though he is beautiful at rest and filled the “new,” is unexpected and slightly unsettling. He is caressed not by the speaker, but by the “pallid fingers” of death, and she can only praise the soft delicacy of his eyes when they are closed.

As the poem progresses, Boyle suggests that the observation of beauty is reliant upon a troubling sense of personal detachment and disengagement. Watching the man in the early morning hours, the speaker excitedly acknowledges the picturesque scene’s potential, as if it might be a point of mutual admiration: “The wind is blowing the gold curtain – see!” (12). The gold light turns into a lovely “copper” but eventually casts a “blood-red” glow on the corn in the field as the man awakens (24, 26). An ellipses in line 27 indicates that the speaker, startled by his movement, is unable to finish her thoughts, and she is forced back into the reality of the moment:

His eyes lift,

Shattering beauty on the naked floor;

Once more

I remember things I bore of pain.

. . . . . .

I must sing, make breakfast without surprise,

As someone who sees danger coming,

And cannot move,

And lifts a hand to cover both his eyes. (27-38)

The beauty is "shattered" by the man's psychic presence, and the speaker's vision recedes, lost in the mundanity of her daily routine. Boyle closes with the image of the eye, which appears throughout the poem, suggesting that the "danger" in the final lines might be the speaker's own loss of sight, in this case artistic rather than physical. As she does in "Monody," Boyle presents here an aesthetic vision that can only exist in isolation, can only be captured when one is alone and free of the concerns of everyday reality.

Coming on the heels of her *Broom* appearance, the June 1923 publication of "Shore" in Robert McAlmon and William Carlos Williams's *Contact* was another important moment for Boyle, not only signaling her professional acceptance but also aligning her with poets whose rebellious artistic ideology she saw as compatible with her own. As a young and inexperienced poet who lacked the "marvellous authority" (sic) that other writers seemingly possessed, she was "proud" to appear alongside McAlmon and Williams, both of whom she admired immensely (McAlmon and Boyle 12, 11). *Contact* was an altogether different magazine from *Broom,* its genesis and respective lack of quality speaking to the editors' homegrown dissatisfaction with the current state of American letters. In his autobiography, Williams writes that he and McAlmon actually published the magazine using paper given to them by Pa Herman, Williams's father-in-law, clipping the first few issues together (175). The romantic vision of the two poets compiling the magazine by hand is compounded by the fact that *Contact* was largely conceived of as a way to publish and disseminate their own creative work. Desperate for a publication outlet, their

poems "continuously and stupidly . . . rejected by all the pay magazines except *Poetry* and *The Dial*," the men took the initiative to print and distribute *Contact* on their own (Williams, *Autobiography* 175).[12]

The nature of Williams and McAlmon's publishing venture was significant for Boyle. She notes in *Being Geniuses Together* that when McAlmon "became, with William Carlos Williams, a publisher of *Contact* magazine, he became an element in my own rebellion against my status, fuel to my own fury for independence, and I revered him as a man who . . . exemplified the mounting protest of American writers . . ." (McAlmon and Boyle 11). This is, of course, told retrospectively, with a tidy sense of coherence that her life probably would not have had at the time—and it meshes nicely with McAlmon's opening recollections of rebellion—but Boyle explicitly connects revolution to the little magazines. Indeed, in a much later interview she confirms that she envisioned herself, and her American compatriots, as being engaged in an artistic insurgency:

> It was the *revolt* against all literary pretentiousness, against weary, dreary rhetoric, against all the outworn literary and academic conventions . . . . We had Walt Whitman to turn to. But the most highly respected American authors of the past century, *we gave them no quarter* whatsoever; we were completely against them. We wanted a grandly experimental, furiously disrespectful school of writing in America. And we were going to create it. (qtd. in Bell 96; emphasis added)

Boyle's militaristic language, used over half a century later, attests to the unquelled passion with which she supported the most important causes of her day, in this case defying the constraints established by her literary predecessors.

Also worth noting is that her rebellion in the 1920s is not just artistic. Emphasizing individual freedom and its connection to aesthetic autonomy in the early chapters of *Being Geniuses Together*, she ultimately condemns the socio-political climate in America, writing that she and husband Richard Brault were eager to leave for France, a "country that did not put its socialists in jail" or "harass its writers" (McAlmon and Boyle 14). Boyle's memories were consistent with the ideas she expressed decades earlier in a 1928 *transition* piece entitled "Why Do Americans Live in Europe." Justifying her own decision to escape the stultifying conditions of her native land, she boasted, "I am too proud and too young to need the grandeur of physical America which one accepts only at the price of one's own dignity. I am making a voyage into poverty because I am too proud to find nourishment in a situation that is more successful than myself" (103). Ironically, one of Boyle's proudest moments as an artist came when she published in McAlmon and Williams's *Contact*, which in its first issue contained an editorial statement declaring the importance of "contact between words and the locality that breeds them, in this case America. . . . We believe that in the perfection of that contact is the beginning not only of the concept of art among us but the key to technique also" (Williams and McAlmon 10). Boyle, who snubbed "physical America," was clearly out of step with the stated goals of the magazine, and, in large part, with Williams's belief in the impact of physical and socio-historical rooting on one's aesthetic development.

Nevertheless, Boyle remained loyal to and protective of Williams and McAlmon throughout her life. Her statements in her *transition* article and in *Being Geniuses Together* demonstrate that she had, as did many expatriates of the period, a vexed relationship with the country of her birth. Unable to stomach what she saw as too-constrictive proprieties and political intolerance, she moved to Europe hoping to find the freedom to write. Boyle published primarily

in American periodicals, however, and cultivated long-lasting friendships with native artists and writers, associating herself with the "furiously disrespectful school of writing in America" despite her expatriation. She also aligned herself with Williams in the anti-Eliot camp, though this seems to have been an emotional rather than artistic choice on her part. Much later in life she still held firm to these youthful divisions, noting in a 1969 or 1970 list intended for *Esquire* that she ranked Williams, McAlmon, and Moore among the most underrated writers of her acquaintance and Pound and Eliot as the most overrated (Mellen 477). (This did not keep the practical businesswoman from sending work to Eliot at *Criterion* and Faber and Faber, however.)

Boyle's *Contact* poem, "Shore," was published in 1923, the same year Boyle escaped to France, indicative of the misalignment between the editorial premises of the magazine and its actual content. Strongly imagistic in its reliance on color and clear, crystallized moments, it consists of rhyming couplets, with some exceptions in the closing lines. The speaker, walking down a "path of gold sand" in the "blue of twilight," comes across a bathing girl and voyeuristically stops to watch her movements ("Shore" 1, 2). The poem is not about her, however, but about the act of observation and its effects on the speaker; the girl ceases to be an identifiable individual when, diving into the water, she "cutting through / became a symbol" (8-9). Later, coming to the shore, she leans on the marshy plants and evolves into "white on the rushes," her body "marble" (11). Unwilling, or unable, to move beyond the picturesque moment, the speaker concludes, "I could tell / Of amazing a girl bathing. Nothing more" (12-13). Joan Mellen argues that in this poem, "The image of beauty is its own justification" (57). While Mellen captures in her explanation Boyle's focus on beauty, the poem seems less about justifying its existence than about exposing its dehumanizing potential. After the girl becomes a

symbol, the speaker even admits, “I had lost the meaning / of progression,” suggesting that she, too, had been ossified by the experience (9-10). In this reading, the entire poem becomes a subtle commentary on the alienating effects of art when it subsumes the individual.

The political implications of such insularity and objectification are explicitly addressed in Boyle’s later work, indicating an intensification of, rather than a departure from, her little magazine aesthetic. Her prescient discussion of symbolism in “Shore,” for instance, is echoed in *Death of a Man* (1936), where she explores the Nazi obsession with the swastika. In one particularly revealing scene, Pendennis, an American woman traveling abroad, accompanies Austrian Nazi sympathizer Dr. Prochaska as he lights a mountainside swastika fire:

> Across the valley other fires were lighted, the great flaming crosses set obliquely and at intervals upon the dark, but here by their own supremely shining cross they stood just outside the radius of refulgence, just without the honeycomb of dark and light, suddenly stilled and wondering at the beauty of this thing. They stood like children staring, their eyes fixed raptly on it, their lips parted, watching the separate living worms of flame moving tenderly, vulnerably in the balloons that cupped and magnified their light. (173)

As the enraptured pair gaze at the fire, Prochaska observes the light hit Pendennis’s face until it makes a “symbol or statue or insignia of her,” turning her into a physical manifestation of party ideology (174).

Boyle was well-versed in the attractions and rhetorical gestures of Nazism, which she so thoughtfully examined in the novel that she was accused of being a sympathizer by some contemporary reviewers. Early critics condemned her for what they interpreted as an endorsement of Nazism, and a decontextualized look at passages like the one describing the fire

lighting would seem to support such a reading. One writer for *Time* called the book a "Nazi idyll," while Mark Van Doren of *The Nation* suggested that it tries to "hypnotize the reader into a state of what may be called mystical fascism" (qtd. in Hatlen v). But Boyle's novel is more exploration than approbation, for the author dexterously and thoroughly presents the party's appeal in light of the contemporary political and economic climate.[13] While Boyle presents sympathetic renderings of some pro-Nazi characters, the book itself clearly provides a critical framework for seeing Nazi racism, militarism, and dehumanization and exposes the symbolic means through which party ideology was perpetuated.

III. Isolation and Exploitation in Boyle's Fiction

Shortly after her *Broom* and *Contact* publications, Boyle was invited to submit work to *This Quarter,* edited by Ernest Walsh, who would soon become her lover and the father of her first child. In an editorial statement in the magazine's first issue, Walsh outlined his vision for *This Quarter*; it would be a place where artists could publish work quickly without "literary politics and literary politicians" (Editorial 259). Boasting a hands-off editorial policy, Walsh condemned interference with the artistic process, openly attacking Harriet Monroe of *Poetry* in the second issue. Walsh, angered by her suggestion that *This Quarter* was doing nothing innovative as a publication, criticized her editorial meddling and her magazine more broadly: "I am afraid that because you have kept POETRY going for twelve odd years you take that as proof of its success. Perhaps it would be greater proof if POETRY had failed" ("This Quarter" 308). Ever the audacious artist, Walsh even agreed to reprint Kay Boyle's "Harbor Song," which originally appeared in *Poetry*. Boyle had made a number of revisions at Monroe's suggestion, and Walsh jumped at the opportunity to "us[e] her censorship of Kay Boyle's poem to

differentiate his magazine from hers" (Mellen 75). "Harbor Song" was rereleased as "Summer" in *This Quarter*, and Boyle would forever idolize Walsh as an artist who wrote and edited with passion and integrity.[14]

"Flight," one of the stories Boyle published in *This Quarter*, captures the same social detachment of the artist that we see in "Shore." The author developed her poetic themes in more detail in her short fiction, which is arguably stronger and was more professionally successful than her poetry. Even in those stories that focus on artistic pursuits she unflinchingly exposes the detrimental impact that art can have when its practitioners are detached from their surroundings and unable to function in the outside world. In "Flight," Minot, a pianist who has fled Oxford to teach in a seaside town in France, is acutely aware of his isolation but cannot seem to bridge the gulf that divides him from others. When the story opens, he is alone with his cat, who does not know that her kitten is gone. Boyle never reveals whether the kitten died or was given away, but as Minot looks at the cat his eyes are "dark with shame," suggesting that he is responsible for the separation and that he cannot bear to share his home with even one more creature ("Flight" 167). In fact, the intensity of this shame seems to drive his artistry, for he finds the scene "beautiful" and retreats to his piano, his "angular hands [fleeing] up and down the keys" (167).

As Minot continues to play, he observes the local sea-men from his window and makes an explicit comparison between their station and his own, recognizing with an acute sense of pain his own disconnection from the outside world. He is jealous of the men's laborious work and their singular focus on the task at hand:

> Out of the water the chain emerged, drawn like a miracle from strong rings of sea. The men as they worked were suspended and mindless, with the individualized intensity of a nostril momentarily bleached, a lip contracted with strain. Their

> palms opened and reopened to feed out the raw flow of chain, their flesh deep with rust and the cushions of the thumb and the knuckles scarred white. (168)

Yearning "rather delicately to be one of them, dark and obliterated in work, instead of self-destroyed in isolation," Minot acknowledges the dangers of both professions (168). Ultimately, though, he finds theirs preferable, for the obliteration is physical and communal, affecting all of the men similarly. By repeating the plural pronoun "their," Boyle subtly emphasizes that even corporeal pain is shared and equally distributed.

Such a lifestyle is impossible for Minot, who lacks the sea-men's stamina—his fingers "drooped from his palms, the bones curved in fatigue"—and capacity for collective work (169). Given his profession, he must interact with others, but this leaves him "without substance, like a wraith," and once his pupils depart he "open[s] the windows to dispel the alien breath, diluting the warmth and odor with thin shafts of rain and sea" (169). Able to tolerate his pupils during the span of a lesson, and even to treat them politely, he is noticeably disconcerted; the one woman who comes to visit in the story "loom[s] heavily and vigorously" so that he feels "himself diminished, stepping aside like a shadow drifting across the window" (170). Though "Flight" is certainly not the first story to treat what Spanier calls "artistic souls in exile," it rather uniquely criticizes the artist's need for this isolation (36). Minot's own discomfort and desire for change, his fervent plea for his hands to "burn with rust," suggest that while alienation might enable him to play, it also leaves him emotionally malnourished, desirous of a more complete life, and unhappy with his self-imposed exile (168).

Boyle delivers one of her most pointed criticisms of our capacity for exploitation in the name of art in "Kroy Wen," published in *Front* in 1930. Edited by Sonja Prins of Amsterdam, *Front* was one of the more political little magazines in which Boyle published and, short-lived,

ran only four issues between December of 1930 and June of 1931. While it began as "a literary magazine with leftwing tendencies, but interested primarily in literature *per se*," it came to recognize the "urgent necessity for a socially informed literature and art," ultimately privileging writing with a potentially transformative impact (Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich 295). While Boyle's "Kroy Wen" is certainly not a didactic proletarian piece, the story does, nevertheless, expose certain prejudices that would come to be chief concerns for many writers of the 1930s. Importantly, the story was reprinted in *The New Yorker* the following year, heralding the start of Boyle's lengthy relationship with that magazine. The publication of "Kroy Wen" in both *Front* and *The New Yorker* reveals the practical recycling of the author's work for profit as well as the messy interconnectedness of contemporary publishing.[15] That a work could appear in two such different venues reinforces the presence of artistic modernism in the mainstream press and social commentary in the modernist magazines.

The story chronicles the descent of a movie director, Mr. Wurthenberger, who is so obsessed with his craft that he dehumanizes the very people whose experience he is trying to capture. Traveling to Italy by ship, he is on a doctor-prescribed break from his work, ordered to escape the "art and humanity" that plague him as a creative being (*Fifty Stories* 45). As the narrative opens, he is on the ship's top deck, looking down at an Italian couple confined to the steerage; from his superior vantage point, the artist in him takes over. "I could *use* those two," he announces, particularly excited by the woman's pregnancy (45; emphasis added). Noting how far along she is, he wants nothing more than to record her agony, the "big human crisis" of giving birth unprepared and unaided on the ocean (49). As a director, Wurthenberger has a very particular idea of what such a "crisis" should entail and chastises the woman when she won't scream aloud.

Needing an outward expression of pain consistent with his views of "art and humanity," he forgets that the two are not actors, mindlessly telling the woman's husband, "She can't just sit there kind of mooning and dozing along . . . . After all, you aren't doing it for the love of the thing" (49). Relying heavily on irony and symbolism to capture the director's self-righteousness, Boyle writes that "every human emotion was as clear to him as the day" (47). What is clear, though, is that the director, void of any sympathy or respect for the laboring mother, can only capture emotion through a creative lens, and he becomes increasingly impatient with the couple's failure to cooperate. Presented as an ironic Christ, he fights the "[b]eads of anguish . . . lying like a crown of thorns upon his head," having sacrificed his own humanity for his art (48). Boyle captures his perversion of art symbolically, too, by attributing to him a unique symptom: in his nervousness, he sees words spelled backwards, hence the "Kroy Wen" of the title.

"Kroy Wen" engages with important social problems as well. Through the story's details, Boyle suggests that Wurthenberger's dehumanization of the pair is enabled at least partially by their class and foreignness. Admiring the picturesque "wops with their pretty skins," he is nonetheless appalled by the scent of their garlic, "part of their own breath to them," without which "their tongues and nostrils repined" (44). Though a narrative observation, the comments are indirectly attributed to the director, who watches the pair and, later in the story, can hardly tolerate the overwhelming scent of garlic in their tiny cabin. He does so only because he is intent on capturing the birth of their "bambino" (47). It is clear, too, that the director has been successful financially as well as artistically, for the "gems of his fingers" glisten in the sun as he gestures toward the couple from his elevated vantage point early in the story (45). The less wealthy couple—the husband is an acrobat—is "struck" by the refraction, the "blade of fire" that cuts through and divides them from Wurthenberger (45). Boyle was sensitive to ethnic and racial

stereotypes throughout her life and willing to expose them, and other damaging social injustices, through her activism as well as her writing, which became increasingly polemical over time.

A number of Boyle's later stories in the mainstream press attest to the dehumanizing potential of racism and prejudice as well, showing a consistency in her values that transcended publishing concerns. For instance, "Black Boy" (*The New Yorker*,1932), "The White Horses of Vienna" (*Harper's Magazine*, 1935), "They Weren't Going to Die" (*The New Yorker*, 1940), and "This They Carried with Them" (*Harper's Bazaar*, 1942), dissimilar in setting and context, expose the various ways that prejudice manifests itself and inhibits human connections. In "Black Boy," Boyle historicizes racism by calling attention to the generational divide between the narrator and her grandfather, Puss. Establishing the scene in the opening paragraphs, the narrator notes, "My little grandfather, Puss, was alive then, with his delicate gait and ankles, and his belly pouting in his dove-gray clothes" (*Fifty Stories* 50). The conservative older man obviously loves his granddaughter but disapproves of her friendship with "the black boy" who pushes the rolling chairs down the seaside boardwalk. The phrase "the black boy" is repeated throughout the story, robbing the young man of his personal identity and turning him into a racialized caricature. As the two young friends spend time on the beach talking to one another, Puss consistently warns the narrator away from her companion, telling her that he might "do you some kind of harm" or "steal money from you" (53). The "black boy," however, truly cares for the girl, as evidenced by his distress when she falls from his horse; calling her his "little lamb," he picks her up, soothes the "knot of pain" in her head, and carries her home in his arms (55). In the climactic final scene, Puss misinterprets the act and shockingly slaps him "square across the mouth," signaling disgust and attempting to put the boy back in his place (55). Though the story

ends abruptly at that point, with no additional reflection from the narrator, it is clear that Puss's prejudices have blinded him to the pair's friendship and to the boy's very humanity.

The dehumanization we see in "Kroy Wen" and "Black Boy" is amplified in the midst of political turmoil in many of Boyle's other stories. "They Weren't Going to Die," another *New Yorker* piece, is set during World War II and records the experience of a group of Senegalese soldiers who have been sent to fight for the French. Housed at a Count's estate, they are clearly unprepared for the realities of war; their uniforms, having "nothing to do with their bones or their gait . . . had all been made for somebody else, for some other race of man" (*Fifty Stories* 288). The feminine, childlike soldiers are mere cannon fodder, and though they have been ordered to "Kill Boche," they lack the organization, training, and resources of the German army (292). When the Germans arrive six weeks into their encampment, they easily pick off the Senegalese with their tanks, blowing in the Count's garden wall. Instead of fear or anger, however, the Count sees the German officer, who apologizes for the damage, and thinks, "*Gentlemen, actually well-bred men this time*" (294). More concerned with social class than with political loyalties, the Count is indicative of civilian defeat at the hands of the German army. In "They Weren't Going to Die," Boyle exposes not only the utility and base exploitation of the racialized Senegalese, but also the arrogance and disingenuousness of many French citizens. These stories—and many of her others—demonstrate Boyle's desire to publicize the disastrous nature of personal detachment, as well as both the deep roots and the alarming consequences of dehumanization. Writing for periodicals as diverse as *Front, The New Yorker,* and *This Quarter,* the author proved that consistency of belief was possible despite variations in venue and reading public.

IV. Undermining the *transition* Proclamation

Although Boyle cultivated relationships with a number of magazines, one of her longest-lived was with Eugene Jolas's *transition*, rather surprising given its privileging of aestheticism at the expense of social engagement. Indeed, shortly before the publication of "Kroy Wen" and "Black Boy," Boyle was the first signatory of *transition*'s "Proclamation," which concluded, "The Writer expresses. He does not communicate" (13). Romantic in its Blakean roots and emphasis on imagination, the proclamation announced, among other things, "Pure Poetry is a lyrical absolute that seeks an a priori reality within ourselves alone" and "Narrative is not mere anecdote, but the projection of a metamorphosis of reality," (13) positing the precise sort of modernist insularity that critics such as Georg Lukács found so troubling.[16] In her discussion of *transition* in *Women of the Left Bank,* Shari Benstock calls the magazine's underlying principle, expressed in the "Proclamation" manifesto, one of "Word-worship, the most extreme example of the Modernist faith in the Logos" (374). A glance at the table of contents of any issue of *transition* reveals Jolas's dedication to linguistic experimentation. In addition to surrealist literature—prose by Philippe Soupault and sections of Andre Breton's *Nadja,* for example—*transition* regularly featured work by Gertrude Stein, including *Tender Buttons*, and sections of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake,* then titled "Work in Progress." Jolas remained remarkably consistent in his views, declaring in "Frontierless Decade," published in 1938,

> Throughout its ten years of existence, *Transition* has faithfully adhered to a belief in the primacy of the creative spirit. Nor did it climb on the band-wagon, when a split occurred in the ranks of writers everywhere simultaneously with the world-depression in 1930, but took its stand on the side of a metaphysical, as opposed to a materialist-economic, interpretation of life. (9)

Most of Boyle's poetry and fiction, even at her most experimental, is at odds with the sentiments expressed by Jolas throughout his *transition* editorials and in "Proclamation" specifically. And years later she would directly contradict herself, asking "Writing *is* communication, isn't it?" (qtd. in Spanier 2). Spanier suggests that the two statements are compatible, that at every point in her career Boyle was concerned, first and foremost, with the "moral responsibility of the artist" (3). Another, less poetic, possibility is that Boyle supported the spirit of the *transition* endeavor rather than its practical application. Joan Mellen notes that the author's "politics were highly emotional" and that she was prone to sign letters and petitions without much thought to their underlying principles, a practice that caused her much heartache during the loyalty hearings of the 1950s when investigators dug up documents attempting to prove her Communist sympathies (354).[17] In an interview with Boyle in 1978, admittedly many years after the author's *transition* days, Elizabeth Bell asked her about the appeal of Jolas's Revolution of the Word; Boyle replied rather vaguely that she had been excited about the beginning of "a new tradition" (qtd. in Bell 93). "I liked the ideas of The Revolution of the Word; that really made sense about the whole thing he was doing," Boyle noted. "But a lot of what he wrote about and talked about I couldn't enter into. But we admired each other very much, and we had a great love for each other" (qtd. in Bell 92). Boyle's hazy use of "ideas" and "the whole thing" may be indicative, to some extent, of her inability to recall the details of her youthful *transition* years. More importantly, though, they suggest that she was interested in the revolutionary goals of the proclamation rather than it its concrete manifestations.

As was the case with the political causes that she supported, Boyle's interest in "The Revolution of the Word" appears to have been a reflection of her personal loyalties and emotions rather than a well-wrought aesthetic ideology. Similar to her appearance in *Contact* and

friendship with Williams, her interaction with the Jolas was likely based on her feelings toward him and her eagerness to assert herself as an artist. Elizabeth Bell has argued, too, that Boyle "signed the proclamation and agreed with its general intent to revitalize literary language," but that "her writing did not typically adhere to the principles outlined, especially the last two [those that "damn" the "plain reader" and advocate expression over communication], which struck at the heart of her storytelling talents" and that she "seldom distorted language to the extent that communication with the reader became secondary" (15). Boyle appeared repeatedly in *transition* throughout the late-1920s and early 1930s, publishing over twenty pieces of critical and creative work there, including a number of stories that would appear in her 1930 *Wedding Day and Other Stories*. This collection was favorably reviewed by many critics, most of whom noted, rather ironically given her self-positioning, Boyle's ability to communicate with her readers.[18] In a review for the *London Mercury,* for example, Helen Moran, no fan of Boyle's, "grudgingly" admitted the "sharp clarity and crisp beauty" of her stories and her ability to "write with a certain controlled strength and disarming simplicity" (qtd. in Bell 138). And Katherine Anne Porter, writing for *New Republic*, noted that Boyle's stories were somewhat uneven but that her best were marked by "the beginnings of objectiveness, a soberer, richer style" (qtd. in Bell 137).

Boyle published poems as well as stories in *transition*, and some of these explicitly address the political concerns that "Proclamation" would have authors ignore in favor of an "a priori reality." Supportive of her *transition* peers and their experimental work, Boyle nevertheless refused to conform—despite any manifesto signatures to the contrary—to group expectations. "The Only Bird That Sang," published in June of 1930, exposes the dangers of war and the blind patriotism that can accompany it. Joan Mellen even calls the piece Boyle's "most powerful antiwar poem," a bold declaration given Boyle's active role in protesting and writing

about the Vietnam War later in her life (142). The poem reveals the thoughts and actions of a dying corporal in Albert, France during the First World War, commenting generally on the destructive power of war and more specifically on American perceptions of their efforts.

Using powerful natural metaphors and images throughout the poem, Boyle writes that "Pneumonia cool as edelweiss/ Was the last thing blooming into song for" the corporal and calls the war the "only bird that sang" for people that century (*Collected Poems* 11-12, 15). Two stanzas later spring appears and is particularly painful for the young soldier:

> Spring came
> Without pulpit flowers
> Or boiling tubs of sassafras
> A long time
> Since spring had come in a new way
> The cannons bucked like goats
> Along the edge of it
> The veins broke wide and flowered
> The corporal at Albert
> Fell into decay (23-32)

Lineation shifts throughout the poem, and this particular stanza recalls Williams's short lines in *Spring and All*, published only a few years before "The Only Bird That Sang." Moreover, it is difficult to disengage Boyle's discussion of spring from what we see in Williams, though hers has an intensely ironic bent in which the soldier's death encourages natural growth. The unexpected pairings of "spring" and "decay" and "cannons" and "goats" also suggest,

paradoxically, not only the disruptive effects of war, but also the quickness with which people might come to see it as a natural, cyclical process.[19]

What is most unsettling for Boyle is the corporal's attitude about his position. He dies on foreign soil "happy to have had/ A flower nourished by his nine red yards/ Of clogged intestines planted where he fell" (50-52). Empowered even in death, he continues to serve instead of being buried in a unmarked mass grave where hundreds might "be disposed of without a loss to history" (56). Throughout the course of the poem, we see that civilians are happy to send their sons and daughters to fight, too, idealizing their roles abroad while remaining safe at home:

> The towns were proud the trains the sky liners
> Staterooms wharves the skyline proud
> The army proud to wear them strong as hyacinths
> The surgeons were happy and proud
> The wings of airplanes and proud the sheets
> The pillows bedpans congressmen the subways proud
> The president the frigidaire turned proud
> We are proud of our girls who are over there. (36-43)

By running nouns together with no punctuation or syntactical patterns and by pairing people with inanimate objects, Boyle renders "pride" an empty and overused term, suggesting the mindlessness with which people cling to their beliefs and repeat their mantras during war. And that the stanza notably ends with "over there" implies a measure of distance that perpetuates such romanticized notions.

While condemning war, "The Only Bird That Sang" offers no clear alternative and closes with a startlingly prophetic claim that gestures at the next approaching World War: "There will

be more sons/ More husbands fathers/ To breed for another springtime" (77-79). The last lines of the poem go on to argue that war is a part of our very being, that we are unhappy without it: "Now we are stricken with peace/ We are stricken with peace/ We are stricken" (83-85). Boyle's use of "stricken" clearly frames peace in a negative way in the first two lines, and the progressive repetition, ending with "We are stricken," provides a broader commentary on the human condition. The poem ends rather bleakly, expressing the need for a core behavioral change, not merely new leaders or political practices.

The work's 1930 publication is significant, for it directly undermines Jolas's claim in "Frontierless Decade" that *transition* favored a "metaphysical" aesthetic after the "split" caused by the depression. While not the sort of proletarian protest poem Jolas was likely referring to, "The Only Bird That Sang" nevertheless demonstrates Boyle's awareness of the human toll of politico-military engagement and the resulting exploitation of citizens in the name of blind patriotism. Despite her bold endorsement of *transition*'s romanticism only a year before, Boyle continued to cultivate her political aesthetic in practice, reveling in the rebellious nature of the magazine venture but publishing stories and poems meant to speak to rather than damn the "plain reader."

V. Boyle's Covert Feminism

In addition to the dangers of militarism, Boyle attacked chauvinism, examining its various manifestations and presenting strong female characters who run counter to narrow social views of femininity. Despite her penchant for supporting cause after cause, Boyle found political feminism itself problematic: "I think the women's movement is a reactionary movement, and they want what the man has, and I don't happen to want what that man has . . . I don't want a

good paying job in a bank . . . I want a total revolution where everybody is equal" (qtd. in Mellen 488). Unwilling to consider any counterarguments that the movement was neither separatist not reactionary, and perhaps comfortable with her own success, Boyle remained firmly convinced of its irrelevance. Her fiction, on the other hand, shows clear feminist tendencies in its portrayals of independent women and investigations of socially constructed notions of gender. It is "revolutionary," for instance, in its ability to "undermine the singularity of gender ideology" and question "the stabilities of identity" according to Suzanne Clark (160). Clark cites "Episode in the Life of an Ancestor," "Wedding Day," and "On the Run" as key examples of Boyle's disruptive fiction.

"Episode in the Life of an Ancestor" was published in 1930 in *Hound & Horn*, a well-produced Harvard little magazine that paid for its contributions and was known for excellent critical essays and reviews in the tradition of *The Dial* (Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich 209, 285). With no established group or political loyalties, the editors privileged artistry and creativity over adherence to ideology or social policy, writing that "a sound philosophy will not produce a great work of art and a great work of art is no guarantee that the ideas of the artist are sound. Consequently our standard for judging the arts is technical. We demand only that the given work should be well done . . . . We may feel that certain false ideas mar a work of art . . ." (qtd. in Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich 207). "Episode" certainly met the technical requirements of the editors when it was submitted. It is the story of an independent young woman, based on Boyle's grandmother, and her relationship with her narrow-minded father. Pitting the two against one another, it is fresh in its method, shifting perspectives throughout and pulling even the woman's horse into the narrative scaffolding to reveal her emotional state.

Indeed, much of what we learn about the woman is provided via her treatment of her favorite horse, and Boyle's careful use of projection is indicative of her style and certainly one of the traits that marked her as a successful and innovative fiction writer. While out with her horse on the prairie one night, the grandmother becomes bored with their quiet ride and kicks him into gallop. The passage, long but worth quoting in its entirety, conveys her power and control through the horse's response:

> This was tame idle sport, suited to ladies, this romping in the milkweed cotton across the miles of piecrust. Suddenly he felt this anger in the grandmother's knees and it caught and swung him about in the wind. Without any regard for him at all, so that he as in a quiver of admiration and love for her, she jerked him up and back, rearing his wild head high, his front hoofs left clawing at the space that yapped under them. To such a frenzy of kicking she urged him that he was ready to faint with delight. Even had she wished to now she could never have calmed him . . . . It was a long way to travel back, but he never stopped until his hoofs thundered into the barn that had shrunk too small for him. There he stood in the darkness, wet and throbbing like a heart cut out of the body. (*Fifty Stories* 23)

Both Spanier and Clark have noted the sexual imagery of this passage and especially the woman's mastery over the animal.[20] According to Clark, "The wildness of the horse seems to represent some kind of primeval vigor and sexuality. . . . It is, however, an energy both shared by and directed by the woman" (161). All "a quiver" and nearly fainting "with delight," the horse is endowed with the characteristics of a passionate lover, excited by the grandmother's bold and callous dismissal of his well-being. Boyle also comments on the gendered language of social

norms in the passage, contrasting the gentle cantering of “ladies” with the powerful “thunder[ing]” that incites the horse’s admiration.

Damaging social biases are evinced most clearly, however, through the father in “Episode,” a man who is widowed and reliant on his daughter. He yearns for a homemaker and is “concerned with the cooking and the sewing ways that would be a comfort to him and keep him to his own satisfaction” (20). His desire is not merely for his daughter to complete these tasks—she is shown elsewhere in the story to be proficient in the kitchen—but for her to adopt particular “ways,” a lifestyle that would make such jobs enjoyable and essential. He is also terrified by the thought of her as a sexual being. Coming into her room while she is out riding, he discovers a book left open to a suggestive section of *Paradise Lost* given to her by the local schoolteacher, whom he assumes she is out with, and immediately thinks of her vulnerability. When his daughter returns, he wants to question her but is intimidated by her presence and embittered by her actions: “Where have you been to, he wanted to say to her, but he could not bring himself to speak” (23). Observing his daughter’s defiance, the father wavers between anger and self-pity, but these emotions finally evolve into concern for the schoolmaster, “who was such a timid fellow . . ., who might get into harm’s way” (24). Through his allegiance with the teacher, the father forsakes any semblance of control in the relationship and acknowledges his daughter’s fierce independence. Though the piece endorses no clearly wrought feminist politics, it unmistakably asserts female power and sexuality, as well as critiques the gendered norms that would deprive women of their freedom and identity.

Boyle’s entire oeuvre is full of stories complicating our preconceptions about gender. Her 1935 “Astronomer’s Wife,” published in *London Mercury,* is one of these pieces.

Brooker and Thacker call the *London Mercury* "non- or anti-modernist," and it certainly diverged from the little magazines in some important ways, including its circulation, stability, and self-positioning as a periodical with little tolerance for modernist opacity (15). However, Matthew Huculak, challenging popular "Squirearchy" narratives (after editor J.C. Squire), suggests that we might reconsider the publication within the context of modernism:

> In its pages there was a vast cross-pollination of ideas, advertisements, and authors that spanned not only the British Isles but also the United States. Its often-ignored pages reveal a network of interdependent practices inherent to the periodical form and shared by all levels, or brows, of cultural production in the early twentieth century. (242)

These vital connections between the *London Mercury* and other periodicals more widely accepted as little magazines make a discussion of Boyle's work there necessary. A number of her stories, including "Friend of the Family" and "Major Alshuster," were accepted by the magazine in the mid-1930s, just as Boyle was expanding her publishing interests. Her appearance there attests to the astonishing variety of periodicals that she used throughout her career to cultivate an image of herself as a professional writer.

"Astronomer's Wife," Boyle's first *London Mercury* piece, most clearly displays her interest in gender roles. The astronomer is "a man of other things, a dreamer," while his wife, Mrs. Ames, is dichotomously presented as active and efficient, "com[ing] into her own possession" each morning as she arises (*Life Being the Best* 27). The story centers on a plumbing problem at the Ames' house and the couple's divergent reaction to it; while the astronomer stays upstairs in his room, above the day-to-day chores of the household, his wife accompanies the plumber into the drains to see about the stoppage. When the plumber asks Mrs. Ames if her

husband would like to come down with them, she replies, gesturing at the sky, “He likes going up” (32). Importantly, she sees his inaction as indicative of men in general. She is confused by the plumber’s ability to speak plainly and directly about the clogged pipes and “stunned” by the realization that men might be “divided into two bodies,” those that go up, like her husband, and those that go down, like the plumber (33).

This epiphany of Mrs. Ames’s is further complicated by the fact that she sees his concrete knowledge as the province of women, ultimately feminizing his conduct: “Here was a man who spoke of action and object as simply as women did!” (30). Boyle subtly undermines well-established gender roles by attributing action and decisiveness to women. Robyn Gronning argues that Boyle uses this intertwining to exhibit a concept of androgyny that successfully combines feminine and masculine traits, painting the astronomer as sexless but demonstrating in Katherine and the plumber “the essence of the modern androgynous as the condition in which virtues can be shared by both male and female” (52). Whereas the astronomer provides Mrs. Ames with nothing but a “continuous query,” the plumber is capable of “true answers” (33). And her ephiphanic meeting with him leaves her excited and shaken, suddenly aware of a broader spectrum of knowledge and interaction than she had previously thought possible. Suggesting that such an androgynous coupling might be desirable for humanity, Boyle ends “Astronomer’s Wife” with Mrs. Ames and the plumber entering “the heart of the earth together” (34).

While “Astronomer’s Wife” and “Episode in the Life of an Ancestor” comment explicitly on the need for less restrictive gender norms, they are by no means the only works in her canon that do so. Boyle was known for her self-mythologizing tendencies, and, indeed, many of the women in her stories and novels resemble her both physically and emotionally. Enamored of the men in their lives, they nonetheless display a strength and self-sufficiency that transcends

established social boundaries. From Kerith, the protagonist in *Process* who flees America in search of a place where she can reconcile aesthetic innovation and political activism, to Nan, the young woman in *The Crazy Hunter* who brazenly defies her parents by training her blind gelding, Boyle's women—like nearly all of her characters—resist the status quo to take a stand against the myriad forms of injustice they encounter.

VI. The Writer and the War

During the late 1930s and 1940s, Boyle's aesthetic turned increasingly political. Expanding on the depictions of isolation and detachment that foreshadowed her later work, she focused on exploring the growth of Fascism, clarifying American misconceptions about European politics, and exposing the immediate and remote effects of war in a practical, straightforward way. *Primer for Combat* (1942), *Avalanche* (1943), and *A Frenchman Must Die* (1946) are among some of her most explicit World War II pieces, and the lucrative *Avalanche* was even bought in bulk by the Armed Forces "so that airmen bailing out over France might be aware of the resistance and its dynamics" (Mellen 293). In a short *Ladies' Home Journal* article advertising Boyle's work, Bernadine Kielty observes, approvingly, that *Avalanche* and *A Frenchman Must Die* "are a departure for Kay Boyle, the intellectual, whose books used to be of the long-haired variety. Before the war she was one of the small esoteric group of literary experimenters who appeared regularly in Transition, the Paris-American Little Magazine. She wrote poetry and short stories, beautiful but sometimes baffling" (qtd. in Spanier 144). Accurately placing Boyle at the heart of avant-garde production, Kielty nonetheless exaggerates the author's "esoteric" prose and ignores the consistency at the heart of her aesthetic, mistaking the intensification of her themes for a shift in values.

While Kielty seems to have approved of Boyle's "departure" from her experimental little magazine work, other critics did not. And Boyle herself had trouble reconciling her artistic goals with her keen sense of audience throughout her career. She never sacrificed her integrity, even when she was clearly writing for money alone, but she did make a distinction between the various publications with which she was affiliated and was aware, sometimes painfully, of the demands of her readership. Citing a 1932 letter from Boyle to Bob Brown, Spanier notes Boyle's concerns about the shape of her writing in the 1930s, when she successfully had begun to market herself to a variety of publications: "Every time I write a story that I think is particularly shameful, the better magazines think I'm worth a little money" (qtd. in Spanier 94). Boyle was still grappling with this problem over a decade later as a regular in the glossies. In particular, the publication of *Avalanche*, which chronicles the French resistance, marked a decisive decline in Boyle's reputation. Serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post*, the novel was clearly written for periodical publication, and she admitted that the regular installments required her to "stop being a precious, careful writer" (qtd. in Mellen 293).

Though Boyle defended the ideological underpinnings of her work, arguing that she was attempting to convey a message to the general population, *Avalanche* was criticized by a number of reviewers, including Edmund Wilson. Worth noting in Wilson's 1944 *New Yorker* article is not the ferocity with which he attacked the actual book—many contemporary critics did the same—but the way that he contextualized it within the larger publishing culture, calling it "the usual kind of thing that is turned out by women writers for the popular magazines":

> I have not read much else by Kay Boyle since her very early work, so that I do not have a definite opinion about the value of her writing as a whole; but I know from those early stories, written when she lived abroad and printed in the 'little

> magazines' of the American *émigrés*, that she was at least making an effort at that time to produce something of serious interest. Today she is back at home, and 'Avalanche' was written for the *Saturday Evening Post*. I did not see it there, but I have been haunted since I read it by a vision of *Saturday Evening Post* illustrations. (74, 78)

Dismissing the possibility that one might contribute quality work to *The Saturday Evening Post*, Wilson expresses contempt for the popular magazine as a genre, roping it off as the province of silly lady novelists. His evident cultural bias against ostensibly low-brow fiction manifests in the gender division at work in his piece, in the suggestion that women are responsible for the flippant melodrama he perceives to be at the heart of popular magazines. Moreover, he clearly distinguishes the fiction produced for such periodicals from the "serious" work done in the little magazines. Noting later in the review that *transition* and *This Quarter* contained much "nonsense," he still admits a certain nostalgia for those publications with their worthy goals (78).

Acknowledging the stylistic deficiencies of *Avalanche*, Boyle nevertheless believed in the importance of her content and knew that *The Saturday Evening Post* reached an impressive number of readers, roughly three million at the time.[21] By this point in her career, her priorities had simply shifted, as had those of many people affected directly or indirectly by World War II, and she turned to a wartime context for her work. Living in France and Austria for almost two decades and witnessing firsthand the rise of Fascism and Nazism, Boyle was well-positioned to comment on the impact of the socio-political changes sweeping across Europe. "'[C]ompletely taken aback' at American anti-French sentiment," she felt especially obligated to clarify American misconceptions about the French people (qtd. in Holt 9). Moreover, as Spanier astutely notes, "The fine art of alienation and despair with which Kay Boyle and other serious writers had

battled the unhealthy prosperity and satisfaction of the twenties would have been self-indulgent in the forties, when individuals were being crushed under the weight of a cruel external world . . .” (163). In the midst of a devastating war, the effects of which were felt the world over, Boyle provided some much-needed optimism with her adventure story.

Unfortunately for Boyle, the production of these wartime texts had a detrimental impact on her critical—though not financial—success. Struthers Burt, in a *Saturday Review* article on *Avalanche*, astutely noted the implications of Boyle’s choice to forsake careful attention to craft in order to garner a large readership, anticipating that “a number of Miss Boyle’s admirers, unless I am mistaken, are going to rebuke her for this story, and although they are going to be right technically, they are going to be enormously wrong theoretically and practically” (52). Burt’s prediction turned out to be correct, and Boyle never truly regained her critical foothold despite five more decades of writing. The criticism she faced in the 1940s shaped her reputation as a writer in noticeable ways. When a New Critical turn towards institutionalizing works of technical mastery was helping to solidify the canon, the writer of a book like *Avalanche* could easily be brushed aside, despite years of praise for her stylistic acuity.

Ironically, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, two famous New Critics, had accepted one of Boyle’s most brilliant stories, *The Bridegroom’s Body*, for *Southern Review* publication in 1938. The literary quarterly was well respected during its seven-year run, receiving a broad range of contributions, including some from Katherine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, Wallace Stevens, W.H. Auden, Ford Madox Ford, T.S. Eliot, F.R. Leavis, and Warren himself. Hoffman et al. do not categorize the *Southern Review* as a little magazine, arguing that as “representatives of an intelligent, dignified, critical minority, they are conscious of a serious responsibility which does not often permit them freedom to experiment or to seek out unknown

writers" (2-3). They were also funded by the Louisiana State University and thus could afford to pay contributors generously and maintain high-quality production, even if it meant a financial loss of close to seven thousand dollars a year (Brooks and Warren).[22] In this sense, the *Southern Review* falls somewhere between the avant-garde (i.e. *Contact, transition,* and *This Quarter*) and mainstream (i.e. *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Harper's Bazaar*) periodicals on Boyle's publishing spectrum, revealing not only her professional acumen, but also her consistent values.

Boyle wrote *The Bridegroom's Body* in the late 1930s while her family was staying in the French Alps. Thanks to husband Laurence Vail's inheritance, she "was free to write without regard for the marketability of her work" during this time and was relieved of the professional pressure to meet the expectations of her reading public (Spanier 125). This arrangement clearly benefited the writer. *The Bridegroom's Body* and *The Crazy Hunter,* another novella written during that period, were well received for the most part, with critics praising her subject knowledge, well-wrought style, and thematic intensity. Unfortunately, however, the experimental novella form was not marketable as a book or periodical piece, and Boyle had to return to short stories to bolster her income afterwards.[23] While Boyle's foray into the novella form was short-lived for practical reasons, these works are significant in that they show an overtly political writer displaying complex, more nuanced depictions of the power structures at play in everyday life. Containing no explicit references to the rise of Fascism and Nazism or the socio-political transformations sweeping across Europe—changes Boyle was uniquely positioned to observe while living abroad—these works nonetheless critique comparable versions of masculinity that subscribe to violence and pure utility at the expense of individual worth and human connections.

The Bridegroom's Body, Boyle's *Southern Review* story that was reprinted two years later in *Three Short Novels*, is the story of Lady Glourie, an English woman isolated on an estate

in which “absolute male life” has taken hold; she is faced with the “sound of men, all day, all year without break, the sound of men . . . as if all life itself and right to life were man’s” (*Three Short Novels* 195, 149). Forced to bear the departure of her two children, she has no company save for the birds in her swannery. Her husband, Lord Glourie, is occupied with his companions, and they spend their days and nights hunting, fishing, and drinking in an endless cycle of boisterous violence. Their otherwise ordinary hunting expeditions take on savage overtones when they create a “corridor of poultry-wire” at the mouth of the stream and wait for the unwitting ducks, whose panic is so intense that Lady Glourie can hear the “tremendous wild beating” of their wings from the house (149, 150). No longer hunting for sport or to demonstrate skill, the men merely slaughter the birds who are tunneled into their midst. The routine activities on the estate’s farm and in its swannery are no less violent. Panrandall, a young farmer employed by the Glouries, is responsible for treating a bout of foot-rot plaguing the local sheep population as a result of the incessant rain. As he and Lady Glourie discuss possible remedies, he kneels over a sheep to scrape the rot from its hoof and it “started and writhed with terror between his thighs” (159). The sexual dominance in this scene is mirrored in the descriptions of the swans who lead their “own strong violent life in the lagoon,” the males “cleav[ing] violently” to their mates who are “freshly seduced” each year (143, 146, 145). Moreover, their fierce territoriality plays itself out in a “savage perpetuation of the past” as the cobs skim the water, “slowly and arrogantly tracing the limits of their own domains” (146). Hitches, an aged and tempestuous male, is particularly possessive and has been fighting a younger pair by whom he feels threatened, though it is clear that they have not infringed upon his space; Hitches glares at Lady Glourie as she yells to him, “If that’s your end, then you can leave this end to the young ones, can’t you?” (145). The political analogy implicit in this need for power and control could not

have been coincidental for Boyle, who, while living in Europe, "got a first-hand look at the political forces brewing toward cataclysm" (Spanier 94). Though the novella is set in the English countryside, the setting is far from idyllic, and just under the surface lurks a latent sense of doom that reflects Boyle's desire to engage with the "functioning world" in her art (qtd. in Spanier 92).

Undoubtedly influenced by the male presence on the estate, Lady Glourie has adopted the outward manifestations of masculinity. She wears no make-up or gloves, smokes Gold Flake cigarettes, keeps her hair "cut short as a man's," has sensible "heavy brogues," and writes "in a bold strong man-like hand" when requesting a nurse for her swanherd's pregnant and bedridden wife (150, 148, 147). She clearly controls the day-to-day activities of the estate, too, efficiently solving problems and interacting with her employees regularly. Privately, however, she bemoans her position and has secret, one-sided conversations with the nurse she envisions arriving, hoping that "Miss Smith, Miss Kennedy, Miss Forthright" might not notice that everything around her "has succumbed to the sound of glasses, bottles, guns, to the smell of stone and fish dying with hooks through their gills" (156). The very thought of a female confidante makes Lady Glourie think of the poetry that she used to write, and her desire for communication and connection stands in bold contrast to Lord Glourie and the other the men, who have "lost the power of speech" and can only "howl" at one another, their voices expressing "neither pleasure nor derision" (151).

When the nurse finally arrives from London, Lady Glourie is disheartened not to find an older, more capable woman with whom she might develop a friendship, someone who might serve to counteract the self-perpetuating violence that clouds the estate. Miss Cafferty is everything Lady Glourie is not. Small, young, and feminine, she is out of place and ill-equipped to adapt to her surroundings, unlikely to command change. Though she initially treats her with

derision, Lady Glourie soon understands Miss Cafferty's vulnerability as a "poor little Irishwoman with nowhere to go but to other people's houses in other people's countries" and notes that she likely feels doubly isolated in "this domain of locked, welded mates" where she is "kicked up and down the hill from one wedded couple to another" (173). Unlike Lord Glourie, who is blinded by jealousy and suspicious of Miss Cafferty's alleged interactions with Panrandall, Lady Glourie is able to fully empathize with her and wishes to put her at ease.

In the novella's climactic scene, Boyle reveals that the equally observant Miss Cafferty is protective of Lady Glourie and intuitively understands her position, suggesting that companionship and connection might be found in the most unlikely of places. When Hitches finally confronts the younger cob, Lady Glourie rushes to the lake to quell the violence, only to find the victorious older bird bathing himself, "blotches on his pate and throat" and "feathers scattered like petals" around him (198). While there, she also sees the stricken Miss Cafferty, who had watched the entire scene, simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by the animals' violence. Unable to move during the battle, she rushes into the water to help Lady Glourie recover the dead swan's body and to protect her from the still-enraged Hitches, screaming, "If he touches you, I'll kill him," then crying, "Are you hurt, my darling, are you hurt?" (202). More startling than Miss Cafferty's sudden physical strength and competence, however, is her confession to Lady Glourie: "Don't you think I see you living in this place alone, alone the way you're alone in your bed at night, with butchers, murderers—men stalking every corner of the ground by day and night? Don't you think I know?" (204). Revealing a profound understanding of the estate's atmospheric danger, Miss Cafferty acknowledges Lady Glourie's plight and the manifestations of violence that she regularly suffers through. This brief moment of familiarity and affection is disrupted when Lord Glourie arrives with the swanherd, shining his light "like a

barrier" between the two women and announcing the obvious, that they are "drenched to the skin" (205). The novella then ends ambiguously, with the clearly shaken Lady Glourie looking down at "her own strange flesh" (205). Here Boyle posits intimacy as a possible solution to the women's insufferable lives. She does so only briefly, though, more concerned with uncovering sources of pain and unhappiness than with offering quick solutions and presciently acknowledging the dangers of unchecked violence and insularity. Boyle condemns violence by lacing *The Bridegroom's Body* with excessive masculinity and calling attention to the discomfort that Lady Glourie feels in her own home.

The evocative, tightly constructed work unfortunately has been overlooked by all but the most devoted Boyle scholars, in part, perhaps, because the author's more popular pieces have colored readings of her oeuvre and because the novella itself is an oft-neglected form. Boyle recently has been gaining purchase, however, especially given the increasing interest in politicized and socially integrated versions of modernism. And *The Bridegroom's Body* is an important text for understanding her oeuvre, particularly within the context of late modernism, with its increased attention to the intersection between politics and aesthetics. Moreover, the work's publication in the *Southern Review* speaks volumes about Boyle's ability to court a wide variety of editors. Though the array of publications she appeared in attests to her stylistic flexibility, Boyle remained remarkably consistent in her views, always writing under the mantra that writers should "not separate ourselves from our time" (qtd. in Spanier 3). In a 1942 *New Republic* article she went so far as to posit that Poe, Rimbaud, Dickinson, and others were damned by their failure to recognize "a functioning world to which they could belong" (qtd. in Spanier 92). Boyle made it her mission to reveal both the beauty and oppression of this "functioning world" in her poetry and fiction, explicitly protesting injustices in some cases and

merely hinting at the causes of our isolation and inhumanity in others. Thomas Austenfeld suggests that Boyle's socio-political engagement places her outside of the "modernist coterie," which boasted the "supremacy of aesthetics over politics" ("Introduction" 3). But such a reading minimizes the importance of her engagement with other modernists and her participation in the network of little magazines that enabled the publicizing of avant-garde work. Instead, we might consider how Boyle's writing challenges notions of modernist insularity, particularly in regard to the little magazines, some of which, like *transition*, fashioned themselves as the elite guardians of a detached aesthetic. By publishing work antithetical to the stated editorial policies or ideological underpinnings of these magazines, Boyle disrupted such self-positioning and imposed her own worldview.

Boyle took advantage of the tremendous range of publications that the American market boasted in the first half of the twentieth century. Though circulation numbers rose and fell with the economy and the Second World War, the author consistently retained the ability to produce and disseminate work, marketing it for particular audiences and placing it accordingly. Some of her contemporaries, of course, felt that her mastery of the industry was tantamount to a betrayal of her avant-garde compatriots, or merely a crude ploy for financial game. But Boyle's career shows, instead, a modernist project firmly entrenched in professionalism and, more specifically, in a concrete knowledge of the publishing industry. Consistently writing about the consequences of disengagement, both political and artistic, she understood that the stylistic adjustments required of popular readerships need not mean undermining one's belief system. The liberal politics evinced throughout her oeuvre attest to an underlying coherence that has been questioned by those critics who observed, and rightly so, the intensification of her political themes in the late

1930s and 1940s. But this escalation should be seen for what it is—a more explicit rhetoric and not a reversal of values.

Notes

1. M. Clark Chambers's *Kay Boyle: A Bibliography* has been an invaluable resource as I have studied Boyle's publishing history.

2. While some magazines, *Poetry*, *Glebe*, and *Others*, for example, overlap and appear in multiple categories, *The Masses* and *The Liberator* are set neatly in the leftist grouping, along with the proletarian magazines of the 1930s. Their denunciation of capitalism surely warrants the inclusion of *The Masses* and *The Liberator* in this category, but the need for exclusivity is noteworthy and seems indicative of critical distancing.

3. In *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, for example, Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker trace the complex history of the little magazine, noting its contradictory aims. On the one hand, they write, the magazines "were often opposed to the newness of modernity, conceived as a destructive force in the public realm of politics, mass society, and the economy," but, on the other hand, they "defended and promulgated the new . . . in art and culture and saw this as the harbinger of some alternative order" ("Introduction" 25).

4. See *After the Great Divide*, in which Huyssen argues that modernists attempted to distance themselves from a "consuming and engulfing mass culture"; the various manifestations of this resistance include "modernism's insistence on the autonomy of the art work, its obsessive hostility to mass culture, its radical separation from the culture of everyday life, and its programmatic distance from political, economic, and social concerns" (vii). In the more recent "High/Low in an Expanded Field," however, Huyssen argues that his theorizing of the divide has been misinterpreted.

5. See Jayne Marek's *Women Editing Modernism: 'Little' Magazines & Literary History*, Adam McKible's *The Space and Place of Modernism: The Russian Revolution, Little Magazines*

and New York, Suzanne Churchill's *The Little Magazine* Others *and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry,* and Churchill and McKible's *Little Magazines and Modernism.*

6. "Rather than viewing them as separate spheres," Dunick writes, "the worlds of the *avant-garde* little magazine and the commercially manufactured weekly glossies were part of an overall strategy Kay Boyle used to make her living as a writer" (133). Dunick goes on to suggest that Boyle's negotiation of the marketplace places her "squarely in the tradition of modernist literary production" (133). Dunick's reading is in keeping with much recent scholarship that, like Mark Morrisson's, has rightly questioned the idea that modernism cultivated disengagement from the public sphere.

7. See Mellen pgs. 252-266 for an extensive discussion of Boyle's return to America.

8. Ironically, Boyle's disdain for feminism may have played a part in her legacy. The author was concerned neither with feminism as a political movement nor with women's rights more broadly, a position incongruous with her championing of social and political causes and one that disrupts any neat packaging of her republished works. Moreover, her public comments about and behavior toward women, and especially other women writers, have tainted readings of her work. Joan Mellen suggests that this may have had a negative impact on Boyle's later reputation and positioning as a writer: "When she should have been rediscovered by women seeking recognition for those of their sex whom cultural bigotry had deemed inferior to male writers, Kay Boyle was repaid for her attacks on their fledgling movement by being virtually ignored" (489).

9. Boyle taught at San Francisco State University for sixteen years and, during her time there, actively protested the Vietnam War and various human rights abuses and founded a local Amnesty International Chapter. She also received numerous awards throughout her life,

including honorary doctorates, membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Guggenheim and National Arts Endowment fellowships.

10. Many of the women in Boyle's family were involved in contemporary politics. Her aunt was a suffragist and important political cartoonist, and her mother was an ardent supporter of the labor movement (Mellen 20).

11. Joan Mellen notes Boyle's political naïveté, perhaps a bit too exuberantly, throughout her biography. In her discussion of Boyle's loyalty hearings in the 1950s, Mellen writes, "Indeed, well meaning liberal that she was, Kay Boyle was *au fond* a profoundly unpolitical person. If Houston Lay [of the Loyalty Security Board] thought he was dealing with a sophisticated political operative, he was sorely mistaken. Her politics were highly emotional, founded on, as one informant had said, 'sympathy for the underdog,' and little more. 'Intuition' guided her. Even an attempt by the panel to connect her sympathy with labor to Communist ideology fell flat, because Kay Boyle did not perceive the thrust of the argument" (354).

12. For more on *Contact*, see Paul Mariani's biography of William Carlos Williams.

13. Burton Hatlen has cogently argued that Boyle was primarily interested in exploring the appeal of such a political ideology, its "sexual politics" and "the effects of the will to power" (vi). Jennifer Barker provides a similar reading, asking whether it is "possible to represent the appeal of Fascism without being implicated in its machinations"; the answer, it seems, is "yes," and Boyle does so by exposing "the divide between fascist myth and reality" (45).

14. Walsh died of tuberculosis in 1926. Boyle was profoundly affected, both personally and professionally, by his early death.

15. A number of Boyle's stories were published in at least two different magazines, including "His Idea of a Mother," "Black Boy," "White as Snow," "Career," "Natives Don't

Cry," "Major Alshuster," "Lydia and the Ring Dove," "Rest Cure," and "Defeat."

16. See "The Ideology of Modernism," for example, where he discusses the "negation of outward reality" that is common in modernist literature: "As the ideology of most modernist writers asserts the unalterability of outward reality (even if this is reduced to a mere state of consciousness) human activity is, *a priori*, rendered impotent and robbed of meaning" (36).

17. See Mellen, Chapters 21, 22, and 23 for a full discussion of the hearings.

18. Linda Wagner-Martin sees a similarly communicative quality in many of Boyle's occasional poems, the poems she titled after or addressed to her friends and contemporaries. Wagner-Martin writes that "each poem is less about the friend or friend's concerns than it is the kind of discourse that Boyle might have had with the friend" (234).

19. Boyle found this notion particularly disturbing. According to Boyle, she and Laurence Vail, her second husband, split in part because of his political apathy: "Marriage experts say it's the small things. . . . But with Laurence it was really a monumental political split. He told me that since I had never had a real education I could not understand that history moves in cycles and that the time had come for Fascism to sweep across the world. There was nothing you could to about it but accept it, he told me. I have never accepted that premise. Never" (Holt 9).

20. See Spanier p. 51 and Clark p. 161.

21. This estimate is based on information provided by the *Saturday Evening Post* web site. According to their "About" page, George Horace Lorimer ended his editorial run in 1936 with approximately three million subscribers.

22. For more on the creation and legacy of the *Southern Review*, see Montesi's "The Southern Review" and McSween's "Cleanth Brooks, LSU, and the 'Southern Review.'"

23. See Dunick p.143 on the marketability of these novellas.

CHAPTER 4

"HOPE OUT OF THE REVIEWING BUSINESS": MARY BUTTS, MODERNISM, AND THE BOOK REVIEW

I. Mary Butts, Reviewer

In December 1931, the editor of *The Bookman,* Hugh Ross Williamson, began one of his portrait pieces by asking, "Who is Mary Butts?" ("Mary Butts" 188). He had posed this question to his friends and acquaintances in 1925 after discovering her short story "The Later Life of Theseus, King of Athens" in *The Calendar of Modern Letters*. Subsequent encounters with her work, including *Ashe of Rings, Speed the Plough,* and *Armed with Madness*, continued to pique his interest, but it was not until he met her in 1931 that he was able to establish a clearer picture of the mysterious Mary Butts. What fascinated Williamson about Butts was that "her experience of life and her creation of art made a perfect unity" (188); Williamson appreciated how her fictional accounts corresponded to her own concerns and encounters, resulting in an "intensely individual style" and a "unique vision" (189). Williamson used his portrait to pay homage to an author he admired, as well as to introduce Butts to *The Bookman'*s readers, for she was to become a regular reviewer for the publication until its late 1934 merger with *The London Mercury.* Within the short span of three years, she published over thirty reviews in *The Bookman*. At the same time, Butts also reviewed for *Time and Tide, The Sunday Times*, and *John O'London's Weekly*, writing approximately sixty-five reviews for those three publications between 1933 and her untimely death in 1937.[1]

In part, Butts was in demand because she was, as Williamson noted much later, a member of "a new body of young critics, who were unentangled by the racket and unafraid of it" (qtd. in Blondel 269). Indeed, Butts was not a part of any established literary circles and spent the 1930s virtually isolated on the coast of Cornwall, fiercely loyal to a handful of writer friends but unencumbered by any professional ties that would complicate her position as a critic. More importantly, though, she was a careful, insightful reviewer who displayed the same unified vision in her critical work that Williamson praised her for in her fiction. Her reviews from the 1930s show the evolution of a conscientious critic who adapted her work to fit the needs of her reading public and seamlessly incorporated her own interests. Despite the most well-intentioned attempts at objectivity, the evaluative nature of a review means that it always reflects the preferences and prejudices of a reviewer to some extent, but Butts's seem particularly intimate since the majority of the works she wrote on dealt with topics about which she was knowledgeable and in which she was privately invested. To read Butts the reviewer is to have a clearer picture of Butts the novelist and short story writer. A side-by-side comparison of her creative and late critical work shows a remarkable sense of uniformity and a parade of recurring images, for Butts constantly returned—but always in fresh and meaningful ways—to subjects that mattered to her personally.

Like Mina Loy, Kay Boyle, and nearly every other modernist writer, Mary Butts began her career in the little magazines, publishing work in *The Little Review*, *The Dial*, *Pagany*, *the transatlantic review*, and *Life and Letters To-Day*, among others. But her most significant interaction with the periodical press came in the quickly mastered form of the book review. Although her reviewing career was cut short by her early death—most of her reviews were written in the last six years of her life—it was incredibly fruitful, resulting in over one hundred judicious and insightful pieces. Driven by a variety of interests, from gardening and biography to

detective fiction and history, she treated her critical work as an important component of her overall oeuvre. Specifically, she expanded the generic boundaries of the book review, using it as an unlikely critical platform to establish a theory of modernism grounded in our awareness of and engagement with the past, which manifests itself, in her own creative work, through classicism, myth, and ties to the English landscape.

Butts's use of the book review was a noteworthy addition to modernism's complex critical program, which was enacted via a number of avenues throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Ostensibly evaluations of contemporary work, the reviews served an alternative purpose and provided Butts with a paid means of positing her theories of fiction. She took advantage of the authorial popularity of antiquity as well as growing concerns about the state of England, reviewing dozens of books about the subjects to articulate a framework for writing about the past. Such an endeavor speaks to the diversity and rich interconnectedness of the British press, for Butts's critical aesthetic is present in a range of periodicals, not just those created by and for the avant-garde. Indeed, the fact that much of her work appears in mainstream papers or widely ready niche magazines suggests modernism's permeation of the periodical press.

II. The Critical Culture of Modernism and the Role of the Book Review

Butts's contemporaries, to be sure, did not invent literary criticism. Looking back to Aristotle, Sidney, Dryden, Johnson, Shelley, and dozens of other writers, they sought guidance from and responded to a long line of literary forebears. But it is easy to argue that criticism reached its apotheosis during the modernist era when the proliferation of new techniques and interests warranted clearly articulated explanations. The sheer number of nonfiction works

produced in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries attests to the significance of critical work for that generation. Citing specific examples of this phenomenon, Lawrence Rainey observes that during their long careers, W.B. Yeats and Marianne Moore published roughly 400 essays and reviews each, T. S. Eliot about 500, and Ezra Pound an astonishing 1,500 ("Note" xxxii). Mary Butts, who died at the age of 46, was well on her way to posting such impressive numbers herself, and probably would have continued writing critically for many years to come given the opportunity.

This critical culture of modernism was enabled by a number of divergent forms as its practitioners self-consciously outlined their goals and aspirations. In addition to lengthy, detailed essays, modernists employed pamphlets, manifestos, editorial columns, and other forms of media for publicity, though their ideologies and aesthetic interests varied greatly. This led, as Michael Levenson has succinctly argued, to one of the central paradoxes of modernism: "the need at once to subvert and to institutionalize," to "legitimize new aesthetic doctrine" while simultaneously avoiding "the democratization of art" (218, 148). The tone of these critical documents ranges from measured (Mina Loy's reflections in "Modern Poetry" [1925]) to pedagogical (Ezra Pound's guidelines in "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" [1912]) to frenzied (F.T. Marinetti's bold declarations in "The Founding and the Manifesto of Futurism" [1909]) to hostile (Eugene Jolas's damning of plain readers in "Revolution of the Word" [1929]), but their appearance in periodicals renders them inherently public, illustrating the tension Levenson has described. Thus, even the most exclusionary works, once published and circulated, were available for consumption by a broad readership.

For the most part, this critical work is impossible to disentangle from its larger literary context. One of the most conspicuous aspects of modernism, Rainey notes, is the "unprecedented

production of critical and theoretical writings that were meant to articulate the historical, formal, or ideological grounds for the modernist experiment . . ." ("Note" xxxii). The earliest generation of modernists provided the scaffolding for this culture of exposition by making their critical and creative work dependent on one another. The prefaces Henry James wrote for the New York edition of his works, for example, are in some ways as engaging as the texts themselves, not only providing background about the inspiration for and construction of each work, but also giving readers guidance by implicitly telling them how to appreciate the novels. These were self-interested endeavors, of course, though that in no way diminishes their significance. Indeed, such positioning was commonplace. According to Timothy Materer, T.S. Eliot, like Henry James, "saw his literary criticism as a way of improving the appreciation of his own art" (49). While conscious of the need for structure and discipline within the field of literary criticism, Eliot understood the importance of situating his work.[2] Thus "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) both comments on the place of the individual artist within the literary canon and explains the sense of historical consciousness present in Eliot's own poetry. The same interconnectedness informs the criticism of Ford Madox Ford, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, and a host of other writers whose nonfictional works have become integral and often-studied components of their own oeuvres as well as the modernist canon.

While Mary Butts could boast no full-length essays on an intellectual par with "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1923), "On Impressionism" (1914), or "Pornography and Obscenity" (1929), works routinely studied by scholars of modernism, she conducted her own critical program through her numerous book reviews.[3] Butts's initial response to many of the works she read was spontaneous and emotional, as is indicated by the fact that she sometimes began reviews in her private journals, but these were later honed and polished as final products and,

when looked at in their entirety, constitute an impressive collection. While these reviews do not evince a sustained critical discourse, pieced together they provide a fledgling theory of her fiction and definition of her aesthetic. The flashes of brilliant observation that are often buried under summary and evaluation, requirements of the genre itself, serve as neat, compact introductions to her work, which is never referred to explicitly but is always simmering just under the surface.

Douglas Mao has argued that contemporary Anglo-American reading practices were "shaped decisively" by criticism of the early- and mid-twentieth century, but he focuses on those who "regarded themselves principally or significantly as critics," such as Van Wyck Brooks, Edmund Wilson, and H.L. Mencken, the "most fearsome book reviewer of the twentieth century" (285, 284, 288). Equally well known for their astute readings and their vitriolic attacks, these men grappled with some of the most important literary questions of the period. Butts appears an unlikely bedfellow for these critics and, given the numerous outlets available to authors, her use of the book review to posit her critical views might seem unusual. More surprising than her choice, however, is the absence of criticism regarding the impact of reviews on the formation of modernism.[4] This neglect stems, perhaps, from the review's journalistic associations and the fact that the larger field of journalism has typically been perceived as a "factual, conventional, heavy-handed commercial practice, the antithesis of literature's integrity and creativity" (Campbell 1). Long regarded with skepticism because of its association with mass culture, the periodical press has only recently been acknowledged as an integral part of the modernist project. And book reviews, aside from those published in little magazines, have suffered because of this taint.

Most of the work on the book review as a genre has fallen under the purview of eighteenth-century scholarship. Though rough evaluation has existed for as long as literature itself, the book review as we understand it today has its roots in the English Civil War periodical and achieved its current form during the following century. Newspapers were circulated widely during the war, and discussions of books were part of a larger propagandizing campaign in which papers "availed themselves of contemporary books to substantiate argument, and attacked with equal alacrity books written in the opposing camps" (McCutcheon 694). These propaganda pieces soon were followed by announcements of publication, as well as by notices about books that had been censored or condemned under Cromwell and, later, under Licenser of the Press Roger L'Estrange.[5] In "Criticism and the Rise of Periodical Literature," James Basker explains that political turmoil and an array of licensing acts contributed to the instability of the periodical press during the 1600s but that its expansion became increasingly secure in the following century (316).

The eighteenth century saw an explosion of periodicals. The 1695 lapsing of the Licensing Act, which had restricted subject matter and required government registration of presses, allowed for more freedom within the press, and new, fairly inexpensive periodicals were being launched each year (McIntosh 169). While the expansion of the press and, consequently, the reading public has long been praised as democratizing and liberating in its encouragement of participation within the public sphere, a number of scholars have observed that it simultaneously presented a threat and that the book review performed a regulatory function.[6] The motivations behind such regulation varied greatly, however. On the one hand, Ina Ferris and Paul Keen see reviews as benignly responding to a "crisis of overproduction" by "screening the reading public from a rising torrent of publications they could never possibly get through" (1). In this capacity,

literary reviews—and thus their individual book reviews—merely did the work for readers by sifting through the products of mass production to find the occasional gem. On the other hand, those working for publications like *The Monthly Review* and *The Critical Review*, arguably the two most important periodicals of the era, attempted to establish a "critical hierarchy"; through their "vituperative and satiric attacks" on the majority, they aligned themselves with a limited readership capable of "greater discernment" than the voracious consumers of popular fiction, generally thought to be "young, middle-class, and female" (Bartolomeo 116, 117). These reviewers served as gate-keepers, perpetuating a hierarchical literary distinction that exists to this day.

Although *The Monthly Review* initially hoped to provide a survey function by offering neutral summaries, its reviews quickly took an evaluative tone in order to compete with *The Critical Review*.[7] The assessment of texts became even more important for the reviews of the following century. In an important departure from previous British reviewing practices, the *Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802, aimed for greater exclusivity by choosing to write about only certain books. When Archibald Constable and his collaborators met to discuss the creation of the *Review*, they agreed that "a commitment to the highest *quality* in reviewing was their fundamental principle," that they "should offer commentary on *select* books of the moment" (qtd. in Finkelstein 7; original emphasis). John Murray's *Quarterly Review* and William Blackwood's *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, both founded shortly thereafter, ascribed to similar principles of selection for their literary reviews. And, according to Robert Morrison, *Blackwood's*, despite its fervent conservatism, produced "some of the most open-minded and far-sighted reviews of the age, and many of them directly at odds with its own professions of Toryism" (39).

III. Butts's Chosen Venues

Mary Butts and her contemporaries inherited this reviewing legacy, and the diversity of the early twentieth-century literary marketplace meant that she had to adapt her reviews to fit the goals of the periodicals for which she worked. Some pieces, such as those that appeared in *The Sunday Times* and *John O'London's Weekly* (*JOLW),* were fairly brief and formulaic, consisting primarily of synopsis interspersed with some critical commentary. Those that were published in the latter were the most neutral, as befitted the primary goals of the publication. Discussing the creation of the popular *JOLW,* Jonathan Wild argues that editor Alfred Whitten observed a post-war reading boom and knew that the time was ripe for a publication "pitched towards a readership ready to develop its taste for and knowledge of 'good' books" (51).[8] In order to both provide a real educational service and maintain readerly interest, he blended "a degree of didacticism" with light material, including crossword puzzles, question-answer sections, and announcements about local reading circles (51). Butts's reviews for *JOLW,* often published in the "New Books at a Glance" section, are clearly in keeping with its mission. Concise and straightforward, the reviews always focus on the texts being examined, giving readers a clear sense of the books' faults and virtues. Her *Sunday Times* pieces are slightly more evaluative, though they, too, center primarily on the books under review, with little of the reflective commentary we see in her work for other periodicals. Although all of Butts's reviews provide a sense of her personality and interests, her work for *The Bookman* and *Time and Tide* includes more general discussion that sheds light on her creative theories. Embedded within many of the reviews are critical prose fragments that provide insight into her aesthetic and thematic concerns as a fiction writer.

Time and Tide, though not a little magazine in the traditional sense, was certainly modern in outlook.[9] Subtitled "The Review with Independent Views," the magazine covered a broad spectrum of interests, containing fiction and poetry; guides to plays and films; book reviews; political cartoons; literary supplements; and articles about finance, travel, current events, politics, and foreign affairs. The magazine was founded by Margaret Haig, Viscountess Rhondda, to foster public debate and to spread, in her words, "customs and ideas that could be health-giving and life-saving" following the devastation of the First World War (qtd. in Dowson 530). A champion of dialogic exchange and of women's participation in the public sphere more specifically, Rhondda established a "paradigm of the female intellectual with a social conscience" and included a number of prominent women—Winifred Holtby and Rebecca West, for instance—on the magazine's board (Dowson 530, 536). *Time and Tide* targeted an intelligent, informed readership interested in the day's most pressing social and political discussions, carefully integrating those concerns with literature and with reviews of hundreds of books per year.[10]

While publishing in *The Sunday Times, John O'London's Weekly,* and *Time and Tide,* Mary Butts contributed an impressive number of reviews to *The Bookman,* where Hugh Ross Williamson included his 1931 portrait of her. That Williamson felt it necessary to introduce Butts to *The Bookman*'s readers suggests that the author, who had been publishing for over a decade, was still relatively obscure at the time and had been exposed to much different audiences during her early years as a writer. *The Bookman*, founded in 1891 and published by Hodder and Stoughton, was a popular monthly magazine devoted to promoting literary culture and advertising the publishing industry. It included notes on publications, authors and publishers, and literary events; photos and illustrations; articles about various book-related subjects, including

collecting, colophon design, and literary schools and movements; advertisements, often for pens, books, and stationery; and reviews, ranging from single-line announcements to full-length, multi-page articles, on all genres and "brows."

The Bookman was, then, quite distinct from the little magazines—*The Little Review, The Dial, the transatlantic review, The Egoist,* and *Pagany,* for example—in which Butts had previously appeared, and all of which had a smaller circulation and more avant-garde stance. Alongside the creative work she contributed to these periodicals were a few brief book reviews, three of which appeared in *The Little Review* and one of which appeared in *The Dial.* These marked the start of Butts's reviewing career but are hardly significant when placed in the context of her other critical work, which appeared close to a decade later. While "The Works of Thomas Vaughan" shows some of the irreverence typical of Margaret Anderson's *Little Review,* it lacks the depth and insight that characterize her later prose and relies on a kitschy, popularized version of the East, via an anecdote about China's Red Dragon, that is absent from Butts's broader oeuvre. "Aldington's Images of Desire" and "The Wind-Flowers of Asklepiades, and Poems of Poseidipos," published in the same magazine in 1919 and 1921 respectively, are less audacious, almost entirely devoid of Butts's personality. She quotes heavily from the text in each, letting readers form their own impressions with small nudges along the way.

Butts's last little magazine review, published in the May 1929 issue of *The Dial,* is titled "Mr. Wescott's Third Book." About *Good-Bye Wisconsin,* the article shows a more discriminating Butts but is still marked by the distance and temperance that readers of *The Dial* might expect. The writer astutely observes that there is "a discrepancy between the clean, elegant accomplishment of Mr Wescott's style, the delicate accuracy of his observation, and the barrenness—in conception for no subject is barren—of the majority of his subjects" (427).

Longer than her *Little Review* notices, this article is clearly a more well-developed, thorough, and thoughtful piece of criticism. Furthermore, Butts briefly reveals some of her own preoccupations, asking, "Who would not weary in a land whose colonists in the third and fourth generation have neither guarded their ritual or 'sacra' nor invented them again; thrown over mana—the imagination's first exercise—and all but what is grossest in taboo?" (425). The words "mana" and "taboo" occur frequently in Butts's work, so much so that Nathalie Blondel, Butts's biographer, includes them in a glossary of terms at the end of *The Journals of Mary Butts.* Here, they are used to expose America's spiritual and mystical deficiencies, to explain Wescott's struggle with his native land.[11]

The little magazine reviews published early in Butts's career differ greatly from those that she wrote in the 1930s, most of which were written when she had virtually exiled herself in Sennen Cove on the Cornish coast. After years of wandering through London and continental Europe, living with "a lot of style and glitter" and often in a drug-induced state, Butts settled into Tebel Vos, where she would remain until her death (Wright 100). Though her final years were by no means idyllic, Butts was attracted to the history and magic of the area, calling it "rich and secret and haunted. . . . I quite understand how otherwise respectable writers fall down and write books on Cornwall. And why D.H. Lawrence loved it" (qtd. in Blondel 280). Having grown up in rural Dorset, Butts always adored the country, but she felt betrayed by the changes that had taken place since her childhood and knew she could not return to her youthful haunts (Blondel 284). On occasion, Butts felt out of step with the literary scene in London, detached from her literary acquaintances, but for the most part she was wildly productive during her time in Cornwall, writing over 100 reviews during her five years there. That many of these treated multiple works shows Butts's voracity as a reader. In her first two years at Tebel Vos, she also

saw the publication of a short story collection (*Several Occasions*), two pamphlets (*Traps for Unbelievers* and *Warning to Hikers*), and two novels (*Death of Felicity Taverner* and *The Macedonian*).[12] These were written prior to her move but largely revised and corrected after it. The publications must have inspired Butts, for she began work on *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra*, an historical novel in the vein of *The Macedonian*, in 1933 and *The Crystal Cabinet*, an autobiography of her childhood, in 1935, the same year *Cleopatra* was published.[13]

Butts maintained contact with the literary establishment in spite of her physical distance from it, reviewing extensively for a number of periodicals. She also wrote about her fellow artists consistently in her journals; Djuna Barnes, T.S. Eliot, Bryher, Ford Madox Ford, E.M. Forster, H.D., Robert McAlmon, Ernest Hemingway, James Joyce, W.B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence, Gertrude Stein, and H.G. Wells are all mentioned in some capacity. Interestingly enough, though she knew intimately the fiction and poetry of these authors, she reviewed almost no work by her modernist counterparts during this period. Aside from the *Dial* piece on Wescott and reviews of Pound's *Make It New* and Nancy Cunard's *Negro*, Butts spent little time professionally reviewing the writing of those beside whom she appeared in the little magazines.[14] In addition to a number of biographies, histories, and essay collections, Butts read detective fiction and contemporary novels, reviewing Dorothy Sayers as well as Naomi Mitchison and Daphne du Maurier, both of whom are increasingly being recognized for their contributions to the inter-war literary world.[15] The diversity of Butts's reviews, and of her general interests, made its mark on her writing. Because she was familiar with, but never overwhelmed by, the writing of her avant-garde peers, her fiction avoids the derivativeness that might have resulted from extensive contact with their work.

In 1934, Butts enthusiastically reflected on her place as a critic. "Hope out of the reviewing business," she wrote in her journal, continuing with a long list of periodicals, to most of which she would contribute in the final years of her life (435). This "hope" stemmed, in part, from the financial opportunities afforded by these magazines. But beyond that, Butts had found a new genre at which she excelled: the review. A discriminating reader, Butts understood the nuances required when treating such complex topics as the classical world or the state of contemporary Britain. And she expected the same freshness and insightfulness that mark her pieces from the writers that she reviewed, never settling for sloppy or oversimplified accounts. The flexibility of the format allowed her to maintain a sense of professionalism while bringing her personality into relief. Indeed, these works often examine the books under review only tangentially, reading instead like short treatises on issues that were important to her and that she would incorporate into her own novels and stories.

IV. Modern Antiquity

It was Butts's fiction, no doubt, that helped to establish her reviewing career. Having published only one review with *The Bookman*, she sent her manuscript of *The Macedonian* to Hugh Ross Williamson for feedback in late 1931. Thoroughly impressed by the manuscript, he forwarded it to T.S. Eliot at Faber.[16] Although Eliot declined to publish the piece, *The Macedonian* helped to secure Butts's position at *The Bookman*, where Williamson's portrait of Butts appeared three months later and included a glowing recommendation of the book:

> It is her as yet unpublished work, "Episodes in the Life of Alexander of Macedon" . . . that seems to me to sum up her real genius, for here everything that is essential to it is utilized to the full. Her scholarship, her knowledge of Greek

> life, her intense feeling for family, her archaeological interests, her power of suggesting elemental forces, her irony, her vivid sense of colour; all contribute to make "Alexander" a little masterpiece of its kind. (188)

From this point on, Williamson would become one of Butts's closest literary contacts and a constant supporter of her work.

The Macedonian constituted Butts's first full-length foray into antiquity, a subject on which she was well read and which accounted for a good number of her book reviews. Her love of history was, in large part, a result of her early upbringing. Raised by a learned father who valued her curiosity and intellectual freedom, she had access to an impressive library and was free to explore her interests. As she recounts in *The Crystal Cabinet*, "I was allowed to begin on Scott and Dumas and Ingoldsby and enjoy them; I was not expected to admire Donne or Wordsworth; and when Doré's Dante became a favourite picture-book there was no one to explain that it was bad art, that Blake or Botticelli had done it better" (18). Her reading was supplemented by her father, who gave her "material for a picture of the world" with his "cycles of antique story-telling" (29). Butts's father died when she was fourteen, and shortly thereafter she was sent to Scotland to attend St. Leonard's School for Girls, an institution that emotionally stifled the young writer—afterwards she recalled the "repression and criticism and loneliness"—but also emphasized the importance of women's education, not a commonplace practice at the time (*Crystal* 188). Though by no means perfect, this mixed foundation provided her with a desire to learn that would sustain her throughout her tumultuous life.

Butts indulged her love of classicism, established by her father and nurtured during her early years, both critically and creatively. The classics were tremendously important to many modernists, who found fresh and ingenious ways to adapt historical myths and texts in order to

reflect on the state of contemporary society. The endeavors of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce are well documented, of course, but women writers such as H.D., Bryher, and Virginia Woolf found antiquity equally appealing because it provided a scholarly, well-established means of scaffolding for experimental work. But they also tested the established boundaries of antiquity, forsaking a masculine past to draw on the rich, women-centered legacies of myth. Long regarded as a "miniaturist, the quintessential imagist," H.D. has recently gained purchase among a growing set of scholars who have observed her ties to the past (King 15). Both Miranda Hickman and Heather Ingram, for instance, note the innovative rewriting of Homeric epic in *Helen in Egypt,* calling attention to H.D.'s long-overlooked multi-pronged aesthetic.[17] Ruth Hoberman writes extensively of the interplay between Bryher's lesbianism and her education in the classics in *Gendering Classicism,* noting how historical consciousness manifests in *Gate to the Sea.* And Martha Carpentier, Tina Barr, and Jane Marcus have explored the presence of Themis, Demeter, and Zeus figures in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.[18] Butts thus carved a space for her own unique historical fiction within a larger literary-cultural phenomenon, exposing the ease with which figures like Alexander and Cleopatra could be reconstituted through fiction.

While the classics had long played a significant role in literature and education, they were revitalized in the work of the modernists. The explanations for the early twentieth-century turn to classicism are manifold and sometimes overlapping. The work of the "Cambridge Anthropologists"—Jane Harrison, Gilbert Murray, A.B. Cook, and Francis Cornford—certainly brought ritual and myth to the forefront of literary culture, with Harrison in particular establishing a crucial link between ritual and art.[19] And, though Martha Carpentier suggests that his influence has been overstated, James Frazer, too, helped revive interest in the ancient past with the publication of *The Golden Bough* (37). Butts herself, in addition to the work done by

Frazer, Harrison (*Prolegomena to the Study of the Greek Religion* and *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*), and Murray (*The Rise of the Greek Epic* and *Four Stages of Greek Religion*), was influenced by Jessie Weston (*From Ritual to Romance*). Sometimes pulling directly from these authors' texts and sometimes questioning their omissions or lines of inquiry, Butts frequently came back to them during drafting.

Once reacquainted with figures from the past, modernists began to appreciate their malleability. Jasper Griffin argues that "classical antiquity is the common property of the west" and that its heroes are so appealing, in part, because they are not imbued with the same political and ideological complexes that contemporary historical figures have, thus making them more adaptable (23). Even people like Alexander and Cleopatra, despite their historical reality, become mythical figures in the talented hands of contemporary writers (Griffin12-14). Butts, while she arguably would have agreed with Griffin's reasoning, offered an alternative explanation for the modern fascination with the past. Reviewing Robert Graves's *I, Claudius* for *Time and Tide,* she writes that the newly embraced sense of "historic consciousness" likely has something to do with "our present lack of individual greatness, our almost frantic need of it" ("Scandal or History" 584). Acutely aware of the piteous state of inter-war Britain, Butts looked elsewhere when drawing inspiration for her fiction.

The author's *Bookman* reviews demonstrate, however, that history is the purview of the learned. In "A History of Delos," she professes her educational elitism, writing, "No one expects or wants classical studies to be made too easy, or to be written down to enable the shoddier members of a democracy to acquire a little culture cheap" (212). A fan of some popular fiction—she loved detective novels, for example—Butts was protective of classicism, and of historical fiction more broadly, feeling that the historical truths she sought needed to be pieced together

through careful study. More than a passing interest, she associated classical scholarship with a "past worth preserving" (Hoberman 46). This preservation was necessary, according to Butts, because of the deep and sustained ties between the contemporary world and the ancient one.

Butts's snobbish insistence on excluding the "shoddier members" of society demonstrates a central tension in her work, pushing her into a paradoxical and sometimes troubling space within the milieu of late modernism. Clinging to inherently conservative and elitist views on education and national identity, she also radically called into question standard histories and ways of channeling information in both her creative and critical work. There is a noticeable shift in the literature of the 1930s, when Butts was publishing nearly all of her reviews and much of her best fiction, towards polemical rhetoric and politicized subjects, one that corresponded with the socio-political changes sweeping Europe. Virginia Woolf records this turn of events in "The Leaning Tower," writing that in the 1930s, "it was impossible—if you were young, sensitive, imaginative—not to be interested in politics; not to find public causes of much more pressing interest than philosophy" (77). Ultimately finding fault with the "curious bastard language" in which it resulted, as well as with a noticeable self-consciousness on the part of writers, Woolf understood the reasons for this trend but found the literary "didactic[ism]" troubling (80). Responding directly to Woolf's criticism years later, Samuel Hynes calls the work of W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, and other writers of their generation "functional" but not "didactic" (15). Charging "The Leaning Tower" with solidifying misguided myths about the 1930s, Hynes argues that this period was in reality "a complex, confused, often contradictory time" (15). Nonetheless, he emphasizes the authors' political engagement and the public, active nature of much of the decade's writing.

While studies of late modernism have typically focused on the left-leaning tendencies of the writers discussed by Woolf and Hynes or, alternatively, on the conservatism of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Evelyn Waugh, and Wyndham Lewis, more recent endeavors have attempted to meaningfully situate women writers within this literary context. In *Forever England*, for instance, Alison Light examines the inter-war writing of Ivy Compton-Burnett, Agatha Christie, and other documenters of the "unexamined mainstream of English cultural life," noting the simultaneous existence of both conservative and radical tendencies in their writing, a juxtaposition which no doubt has contributed to their nearly wholesale absence from literary studies of the decade (6). Observing the same "pervasive exclusion" of women "from the dominant accounts of the Thirties," Janet Montefiore argues that it is likely a result of perceptions that women live "apart from the public sphere inhabited by male politicians and intellectuals" (22). Butts's work occupies a unique position within this era, complicating neat political categorization with her backward, often nostalgic retreats to the past. She, like many of her peers, for instance, expressed concern about the rise of Fascism, but she also refrained almost entirely from mentioning politics in her fiction or her reviews.[20]

Instead of placing Butts's work within a traditional inter-war political schema, a more fruitful reading might examine her relationship to the "politics of history," to borrow Jean Radford's term. In "Late Modernism and the Politics of History," Radford reads Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* and Elizabeth Bowen's *The House in Paris* as anti-Hegelian works that question history "by refusing to totalize, by posing the narrativisation of the past as a problem, so that the reader, like the participant in history, must piece together his or her own fragmentary and contradictory grasp of events" (36). Though Radford speaks here of the recent past, her analysis is applicable to Butts's work, too, and especially to *The Macedonian* and *Scenes from the Life of*

Cleopatra. Here Butts uses divergent and sometimes conflicting perspectives to portray her key characters, forcing readers to "piece together" pictures of Alexander and Cleopatra that are necessarily fragmented and incomplete. In doing so, she emphasizes our epistemological uncertainty and asks us to rethink the historical stability of even the most recognizable figures of the past.

In her reviews, Butts noted the overwhelming number of backward-looking texts written by her contemporaries, well aware that she was not the only one engaging the heroes of antiquity in her work. In a *Sunday Times* review of Arthur Weigall's *Alexander the Great*, for example, she writes, "There is a tendency to-day to revalue the great figures of antiquity," and in a review of M. Coryn's *Black Mastiff* in the same paper two months later, she writes that authors "to-day are beginning to realize the possibilities of the historical novel" ("Alexander the Great" 10; "Homage to Bertrand du Guesclin" 8). Such observations pepper her reviews and are generally followed by astute cautions about the dangers of such an undertaking. Butts acknowledged that the exciting, ready-made plots history provided were appealing to many writers, but she also believed in artistic accountability, her impressive knowledge of antiquity making her a formidable and unbending critic when it came to issues of accuracy. In a *Time and Tide* review of October 1935, she argues that "there is a condition attached" to historical writing, one which requires "the most scrupulous attention to ancient sources, even at the cost of drama and situation . . . . That is to say that we are anything but free to say what we like" ("Imperial Rome" 1403). She gave writers free rein when it came to matters of style and presentation but found fault when artistic license interfered with factuality and integrity.

Butts catalogues the gambles of historical fiction writing in other reviews as well. In a 1933 piece on Douglas Sladen's novel *The Greek Slave*, she attributes the genre's popularity to

the publication of *The Golden Bough* and observes that there are "extraordinary possibilities" in "this kind of story telling" ("Antiquity" 137). But she also notes the likelihood of failure, writing that "the story told in the setting of classic civilisation and a reconstruction of antique psychology and ways of life" is "hardly ever done well," often cursed by "sham diction, sham properties, characters in standardised silhouette" (137). And for Butts, Sladen's novel is marked by such offenses. She can excuse the fact that she has "heard this story before" but not the manner in which it is recounted; offended by Sladen's "flatness" and "tepid rhetoric," she concludes that the book is nothing but a parade of overworked clichés, a "shallow stream of wine and olives, satraps and parasangs" (137).

Unimpressed with the genre's voguishness, Butts welcomed only well-written and well-researched accounts that combined both scholarship and artistry. It seems particularly fortuitous, then, that Butts would begin her *Bookman* career with "A Story of Ancient Magic," a review of Naomi Mitchison's *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*. Butts considered Mitchison's text to be seminal in the development of the historical novel and often referenced it as a touchstone in later reviews.[21] "A Story of Ancient Magic" is short but packed with admiration nonetheless. "This is a book of the greatest importance," she writes. "In subject it would seem to be unique, and it is likely to endure as a work of art. As a novel it is one of a rare class—art made out of the material of scientific theory" (210). Attempting to achieve a similar sense of balance in her work, and highly impressed by the infusion of magic and myth in *The Corn King and the Spring Queen,* Butts found a kindred spirit in Mitchison.

Butts attempted, in *The Macedonian* (1933), to maintain both the historical authenticity and sophisticated artistry she called for in her reviews and for which she praised Mitchison. The book was well received, and Butts's own critics acknowledged that she had succeeded where

others had failed in her portrait of Alexander. She was praised not only for her sound scholarship and historical knowledge, but also for her creativity. The book is structured episodically and relies on various perspectives, including first-person narratives, such as the letter from Callisthenes to Aristotle, and third-person accounts that are focalized through a particular character. Commenting on this structure, E.M. Forster wrote to Butts that she "pulled off a most remarkable piece of work. I so much admire (to praise as coldly as I can!) the *form*; the introduction of the Callisthenes letter, all decency and common sense, in the midst of the wildness is masterly . . ." (qtd. in Blondel 332). Reviewers were equally impressed, with one noting that her "vivid, impressionistic style" à la Lytton Strachey, allowed her to "distil, in a succession of subtly contrived scenes, the essence of her subject and his times" (qtd. in Blondel 333). For a writer obsessed with both historical accuracy and artistry, such reviews must have been reassuring.

Indeed, Butts had been terribly nervous about the book's release prior to publication, anticipating the effect it would have on her career. In a 25 February 1933 journal entry, she admitted, "I feel life a suspense till *Alexander* is published. Then, I am certain, my future will be clearer" (416). And by 8 March, she was expecting the worst: "One thing I must be prepared for—the failure of *Alexander*. Instead of joyful, augmenting success, coldness, bewilderment, boredom & disbelief" (418). The following day, still unable to gauge the public's response, she noted that the book would either "pass as incomprehensible" or "give me my place in English letters for good" (418). That Butts was preparing for "bewilderment" and "incomprehens[ion]" was not surprising. She had long been regarded as a difficult, highbrow writer because of her elliptical, poetic style and was, furthermore, portraying a well-known figure, Alexander of Macedon, in a highly experimental way.

Pride and ego aside, it was also important to Butts that readers understand and appreciate what she was attempting to do in *The Macedonian*. One of her most important professional goals was to be able to write historical fiction in a meaningful way. In response to a 1929 *Little Review* questionnaire asking, "What should you most like to do, to know, to be?" Butts wrote that she wanted to be a "person with a perfect historic imagination, able to reconstruct the past and live in it—or in the future—like the present" (Butts, "Questionnaire" 126). This authorial desire was eventually translated into the figure of Alexander himself, a man so awe-inspiring because of his inexplicable ability to live within and without time. Reflecting on Alexander's presence in Persia, Mardios, a local satrap, thinks, "With him it was a present, including the past and future in an idea of One Now, here, there and everywhere, and audible with a sound like fire" (*Classical* 44). This temporal unity is one of Alexander's most striking qualities, and throughout the book he is portrayed as an almost otherworldly character.

Importantly, though, Butts strove to capture his weaknesses as well as power because she knew all too well how easy it was to fall into the backward-looking trap of adoration. For Butts, balance was the key when dealing with history. She demonstrates this awareness in a second particularly insightful review of Arthur Weigall's *Alexander the Great*. Butts praises Weigall's attempt, one made by each generation, she notes, to "retell the story of classical antiquity in terms familiar to us," to forgo an unnecessary emphasis on the "heroic stature" of its men and women and to focus, instead, on their "humanity" ("Alexander the Great" 78). Unfortunately, however, Weigall overcompensates and misses the mark:

> The danger of Mr. Weigall's approach is to be so on the spot as to be nowhere; to fail to make it clear that his events happened in a particular time and place—to a most particular set of human beings, whose actions have notably affected the

> centuries after them.[22] In his dislike of the grand manner, he has omitted grandeur. Yet there was grandeur. And more than grandeur, the daemonism, a turn of the incalculable it is possible to be too light-hearted about. (79)

Butts took history seriously and would not tolerate flippant treatment, even if well-intentioned, of the men and women she strove to portray so carefully in her own work.[23] And especially noteworthy here is her use of daemonism, a concept central to her understanding of Alexander as a man with energy and power. Butts defines the word "daimôn" in her preface to the novel as "a potency, never a god . . . . sometimes as definite as a season personified . . . but usually it is the sheer force that lies behind the manifestations of life—the 'mana' even of a dead man or a tree or the sea or the wind, or in an idea such as Plenty or Nemesis or Luck" (4). The absence of daemonism in Weigall's work results in a frivolousness that Butts sees as incompatible with her vision of Alexander.

Butts's review serves as no empty reproach but, importantly, as an implicit statement of authorial intent. She was helped in the writing of her own novel by the fact that she was not attempting to paint a complete picture of Alexander but to look at him from a particular angle. While his success as a military commander is evident, for example, she includes only brief references to his strategies and conquests, choosing to focus on his spiritual growth. In the novel's preface, she writes that it "seemed essential to show Alexander in relation to his religion, in his reaction to the divine. His attitude to this, with its inconsistencies, its mixture of policy, passion and superstition, with something that looks very like pure mysticism, attracted contemporary and rather astonished notice" (4). True to her word, Butts traces Alexander's divine journey throughout *The Macedonian.* The book's opening chapter introduces Alexander's mother Olympias, a priestess whose "mystical exaltation" stands in marked contrast to her

husband's realism and foreshadows her son's pattern of development (19). By the end of the novel, Alexander has proclaimed himself a godhead, with all of the arrogance, political maneuvering, and personal turmoil that such a move implies.

As Butts captures Alexander's quest, she is careful to strive for the type of balance that she found lacking in Weigall's work; thus the book encompasses both the mundane and the awe-inspiring. On the night of his birthday dinner, for example, Alexander watches his mother get ready and, like any fourteen-year-old, "nose[s] around her dressing–table" looking for a gift (23). And later in India we see Ptolemy, Alexander's usually composed and regal companion, "bitten all over by mosquitoes and other flies, hitherto unknown; his cool serenity utterly vanished" (89). These scenes, however, are juxtaposed with those that speak to Alexander's remarkable legacy and spiritual revelation. One such moment is his trip to the temple of Amen-Ra in Siwa, an Egyptian oasis. Upon his arrival, he introduces himself to a temple priest as "Alexander, the Macedonian," but the priest reverently proclaims his divinity, responding, "Paidios. O Paidios. O Son of God" (40). While in the temple, Alexander undergoes a transformative experience that leaves him shaken: "Alone there, before god-like-a lamb, he had seen the shape of the Companion beside him. Now suitable and propitious words were being spoken over him, in this holiest place; a promise of some stupendous coronation, taking place in him actually, now and then, but not on earth" (41). The moment so overcomes him that he has to ground himself by repeating, "*I am Alexander, in the temple of Amen-Ra in the oasis of Siwa*" (41).

Alexander's physical travels parallel his spiritual quest, and Butts uses each move to signal a new step in his psychic development. From Egypt, Alexander heads to Persia, where he becomes increasingly drawn to the idea of himself as a deity. In part, this is a natural manifestation of the culture's penchant for combining religion and leadership, and Alexander

struggles to reconcile his new identity with his Hellenistic upbringing. His closest friends are eager to acknowledge his natural superiority and position as master of men, but they, too, find it difficult to accept his conversion. In a drunken stupor, Clitus challenges his divinity: "The Hellenes found out that man is not God. Not whatever he does. He can only be a man who is like God. And God is not like us" (57). Spurred on by the insulted Mardios, who quietly hands him a spear, Alexander kills Clitus and temporarily silences the protests.

Despite the barbarity of the moment, Butts does not portray Alexander as a bloodthirsty, mindless tyrant but as a man whose own turmoil and uncertainty are agonizing. In a letter to Aristotle, Callisthenes describes the attack but also notes that afterwards Alexander "was overwhelmed by a grief that was awful to see" (62-63). Like Clitus, Callisthenes questions Alexander's motivations, asking if the change is "all politics" (74). Though Alexander admits that his "worship gives to the Persians their king under a form they know, and one figure whom they can obey and adore," he also reveals a personal struggle: "Since the first moments I can remember, I have had the gods for company, or a god. I called it my daimôn, as Socrates his, until I knew it was not. I and my daimôn are one. Do you not see? I may not be man. I have been shown what God is until it has changed my blood. I have gone into the forms that are shapes of God. That is torture" (75). That Alexander attempts to articulate the internal warfare taking place is in itself an indication of his humanity and concern for his men. In *Ritual, Myth, and Mysticism in the Work of Mary Butts*, Roslyn Reso Foy calls Alexander's wavering between "godhead and rational thinking" a product of his parents' differences, for if "Olympias represents the barbarian, pre-Olympian, pre-Homeric view of the world where the distinction between human beings and gods is blurred," then Philip "represents the rationalism of the Greeks; he is man, not god" (121). This lineage leaves Alexander in alternating states of confidence and frustration. Both politically

motivated and spiritually guided, he becomes, per Butts's artistic vision, a complex and tortured man rather than a monolithic historical figure.

Part of Butts's success in *The Macedonian* stemmed from her modernist aesthetic, which implies the impossibility of truly capturing the essence of another. Cleverly acknowledging the irreducibility of human experience, Butts prefaced her novel with the admission that she had hoped "to give some hint of the final nature of the man, of his complete and actual personality, the sum total of him, with its overload, that property in each man which makes him himself; which is almost indescribable; which cannot be isolated; and which has no name. In this I have not succeeded. I have re-told some interesting stories about him, and that is all I can claim" (3-4). Butts is obviously being modest here, for her novel goes well beyond cataloguing "some interesting stories," but by calling attention to her failure, she implicitly aligns herself with contemporaries whose work questions the validity of empirical knowledge. Butts presents her characters through various perspectives in order to highlight the transience of historical reality and her skepticism regarding mimetic representation. Though not so bold stylistically as some of her contemporaries, she nonetheless achieves the same end, demonstrating that seemingly objective accounts of historical figures are always fraught with tension and imbued with the prejudices of those charged with recording.

While Butts's concerns about representation are certainly evident in *The Macedonian*, they reach a pinnacle in *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra*, which appeared in 1935 and was published, like her novel on Alexander, by Heinemann. As her reviews demonstrate, Butts was troubled by the widespread belief that Cleopatra was a calculating temptress, chastising those who perpetuated what she saw as character inaccuracies. In a *Time and Tide* column on Gunther Birkenfeld's *Augustus* entitled "Imperial Rome," she praised the author's fineness of expression

but observed the usual treatment of Cleopatra as an "ambitious siren," suggesting that Birkenfeld's account is merely another fictional rendering with no unique evaluation of the queen's character (1403). A review of F.A. Wright's *Marcus Agrippa* that appeared two years later is slightly more complimentary. Acknowledging the single-sided presentation of Cleopatra as a "statesman and politician only," Butts admits that this new reading is "preferable to the old stale reiteration of harlotry and lack of intelligence, lack of honour and lack of nerve" ("Eminent Romans" 470). To combat such misrepresentations, Butts took it upon herself to write the life of Cleopatra from a series of fresh new perspectives, her reviews highlighting the stereotypes she hoped to address in her own novel.

Two days before *The Macedonian* was released, Butts asked in her journal, "Is it—is it the idea? Can I write the life of Cleopatra I have so often told myself? (420). She began work on the novel immediately and used writing to distract herself from her family troubles. A few months into drafting, she noted that she would be overwhelmed by "intolerable sadness" but for the book: "However, there is the book" (*Journals* 425).[24] Though at times the writing and revising of *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* became burdensome, keeping Butts from starting other projects, it was a personal as well as professional undertaking, a subject she felt strongly about. In her portrait, Butts, unlike so many others, paints a picture of Cleopatra not as a calculating, exotic temptress but as a true deity incarnate, a woman with all the inherent dignity, grace, and power of a true Lagidae. In Butts's view, Cleopatra understands and embraces—with the conflicting emotions one might expect of a woman in her position—the role given to her by Destiny.

Butts was particularly sensitive to the ease with which historical accounts could be manipulated, especially where women were concerned, and was anxious to offer an alternative to

the dark myth of the queen currently circulating. In the book's afterward, Butts suggests that the stories of Cleopatra's raunchy sexuality and political machinations regarding Julius Caesar and especially Mark Antony were circulated by Octavian and his men in order to justify their military campaigns against Antony:

> For the Octavian of that period and his party no story was too vile; and with grim political ability they pursued the dead, defaming their memory and their honour, destroying their statues with the records of their reign. A legend was fabricated and took root, the kind of legend the vulgar mind loves, based on the phrase "nameless orgies." A tale stimulating to the lower orders of the human imagination; and in the case of a royal woman, a mother and a lover, a slaughtered man and a triple suicide, kindling it to the vilest possible interpretation. (*Classical* 342)

She goes on to argue that in addition to these historical depictions, literary and artistic accounts have further confused our understanding of the real Cleopatra, citing as evidence her portrayal by Chaucer as a "gallant martyr," by Shakespeare as "crowned strumpet," by Shaw as a "merry hussy," and by an Academy painter as "a large black gipsy-woman, half-naked, lolling with an air of insincere despair between crouching slaves; a small snake held firmly to a melon of a breast" (343, 345). Combined with historical accounts, these creative renderings helped to concretize public perception of Cleopatra.

Confident that such extreme depictions must necessarily be fraught with inaccuracies, Butts writes of an intelligent woman who acknowledges the power of her sexuality but never lets it control her actions or impinge upon her rationality. Challenging her readers to see through the historical defamation, Butts asks, via Iras's letter to Philo, "When have men *not* slandered a

woman who is young and alone and a Queen?" (203). That Iras speaks for the author here is clear, for Butts poses the same question in the afterward: "Yet what woman ever lived, conspicuous, gifted, attractive and alone, who is not a common target for such talk?" (342). Butts is careful not to overcompensate in her attempt to refigure Cleopatra, however. Rather than a temptress or an innocent, Butts's queen is a young but confident leader who must negotiate with the only tool she has: her body. As she plans to sneak into Caesar's room rolled in a carpet, she frankly tells Iras and Charmian, "And it is to this man I must go, as a queen, as a maid; as one who must be given something, but who has everything to give. Sit on his knees. Flatter him. It is for this I was made exquisite" (170). Though both women offer to take her place, to be "defile[d]" in her stead, Cleopatra appears less concerned about the loss of her virginity than about the inflexibility of her predicament and the dangers involved (170). Butts's Caesar is not an unwitting dupe who is enchanted by Cleopatra, either. In fact, he almost spoils her "quite unpractised attempt at seduction" by laughing at her, then realizes his advantage: "This was what he had wanted. This the Gods had flung to him" (173). For both parties, then, the partnership was a mutually advantageous act of bargaining, not scandalous debauchery.

Butts took issue with the wholesale vilification of women in her critical work as well, suggesting that her sensitivity to sexualized character attacks extended beyond well-known historical figures. Reviewing Dorothy Margaret Stuart's *The Girl Through the Ages* for *The Bookman* in May 1933, she spends the first half of the page-long review discussing the popularity of condemning attractive young women. Placing the issue in a religious context, she writes, "Since the rise of Christianity there has been one subject that has never failed the man—priest, preacher, parson, monk—set in moral authority over others; one sermon he has always found time to preach—on the wanton, troubling and essentially immoral nature of the beauty of

young women and the ways they choose to enhance it" ("The Girl through the Ages" 110). While the scapegoating Butts mentions here has moral overtones lacking in pre-Christian depictions of Cleopatra, the result is essentially the same. Individual responsibility for one's actions on any scale is expunged, the burden now transferred to the shoulders of the beautiful woman.

Butts was also aware that historical figures—both male and female—were particularly susceptible to exploitation for dramatic purposes. "Historic memory," she writes in the *Time and Tide* review "Cleopatra's Daughter," is "a very tricky thing—as the Muses' Mother, she sways our minds as to what would make good theatre more than we like to admit" (488). In keeping with this realization, her critical work of the 1930s faults those authors who privilege scandal for the sake of book sales, as well as defends the writers who would attempt to balance their character portrayals against readerly expectations of "good theatre."[25] Reviewing books on subjects as diverse as Richard III and Ernest Augustus, the Duke of Cumberland and King of Hanover, Butts is consistent in her belief that authenticity and integrity should never be sacrificed in the name of fiction and that the best writers are those who are equipped to probe, and ultimately expose, how scandalous portrayals can subvert the multi-dimensionality of any subject.[26]

In "Mr. Graves's Rome," a review of Robert Graves's *Claudius the God* and a particularly poignant example of her views on drama, she denounces the "dreadful end of the book," which "assumes the full guilt of Valeria Messalina," Claudius's third and apparently sex-crazed wife, who cheated on him and planned to have him killed (36). As she does with Cleopatra, Butts offers an alternative explanation for Messalina's reputation, one that she chastises Graves for failing to consider; the author, she writes, "gives nothing for the theory that

[Messalina's] death and her reputation in history were the result of a plot on the part of Narcissus and the freedmen, jealous of her influence and fearful of her ascendancy over an ageing and devoted man" (36). Despite such censure, Butts does praise Graves elsewhere in the review for his more measured accounts, noting that *Claudius the God* "depends far less than its predecessor [*I, Claudius*] on the Caesars' appalling family life" (36). In the sequel, according to Butts, Graves rightly emphasizes Claudius's public persona and the work he undertook to better Rome, such as "the building of the new aqueducts" or "his work in the law courts," and she concludes that "it is to Mr. Graves's great credit that he has made these every whit as interesting as torture and incest or the dark agonies of Tiberius" (36). These everyday acts were important to Butts because they indicated a kind of accuracy lacking in many historical accounts, which dichotomously attempted to demonize or romanticize important figures and reduce them to parodies of themselves.

Butts attempted to capture and situate many of these seemingly mundane details in *Cleopatra* by forgoing a typical third-person account of the queen and instead choosing a more experimental style that juxtaposes various first-person observations. Throughout the novel, for example, we hear from Pompey, Caesar, Antony, Charmian, and Iras. In constructing the novel this way, Butts attempts a more complete picture of Cleopatra's life but also, and more crucially, exposes history as a malleable construct. Ruth Hoberman argues that each filtered reality is "obviously incomplete and self-serving," implying that "any single version of history can hardly aspire to Truth" (146). At points, in fact, it is difficult to distinguish who is speaking and about whom. Because pronouns are often separated from referents, readers must "forge connections . . . never made explicit" (Hoberman 141). So while Butts clearly found fault with the majority of existing depictions of Cleopatra, she avoided the temptation to simply replace those with another

seemingly definitive history and chose, instead, to question the very means through which our impressions of the past are formulated.

Butts was not alone in her desire to reinvestigate female historical figures and to question common assumptions about them. Carpentier traces one line of modernist fascination with the gendered past back to Jane Harrison, who studied matriarchal goddesses and female archetypes, those "symbols of power, both creative and destructive," who had a tremendous impact on conceptions of modernist artistry; Carpentier notes that Stephen in *Ulysses* and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*, for instance, have necessary encounters with these archetypes before artistic vision is made manifest (6, 11). And, in her seminal study on women and classicism, Ruth Hoberman notes that, along with Butts, several other twentieth-century writers, including Laura Riding, Naomi Mitchison, and Bryher, "*gender* classicism" in their work, "exposing apparently gender-neutral accounts of the past as stories of male experience" and "entering into a dialogue with their culture's sense of the past" (3, 4). H.D., of course, has similar aims in much of her work, using palimpsestic texts to interrogate the relationship between past and present, often to reclaim women's historical experience. Butts goes a step further in *Cleopatra*, arguing not only that stories about the Egyptian queen are based on "male experience," but also that they were consciously and maliciously constructed to disadvantage Cleopatra by exploiting her sexuality.

If Butts was not attempting to rewrite history entirely, she was, at the very least, hoping to help her readers see it through a different lens. According to Butts, historians often have "a miraculous gift for discovering lost facts, and an equal inability to interpret them" (*Classical* 343). And this interpretation is what she found lacking in so much of the work done by her contemporaries, who merely recounted details without organizing or situating them. Butts expected even authors of non-fiction to go beyond simple excavation. For instance, in her review

"A History of Delos," Butts cites W.A. Laidlaw's book as an example of how "the history of a famous classical locality, shrine or city or both" should "*not* be done" (212). Though the book "contains, one imagines, every known fact about Delos," the study is constructed "without the faintest trace of proportion or selection," without any "architecture" (212). The result is a final product that is useful for neither the everyday reader, who will be overwhelmed with information, or for the scholar, who will likely find fault with the notes Laidlaw has provided throughout.

Butts makes a similar critique of F.A. Wright's *Alexander* in "The Past Lives Again," published in April 1934. Admitting that Wright is "unimpeachably learned and accurate" and that his account is "clear, unpretentious," she nevertheless finds fault with his overall depiction of Alexander (45). In this review, Butts most clearly establishes her requirement for writing about the past: "imaginative sympathy" (45). This sympathy is not a prejudiced regard for or an emotional connection to the subject, but a quality that allows a writer to capture a person's mana, his or her potency, the true energy of a being.[27] Butts concludes the review by astutely noting that summary is "by no means the same thing as historic truth" (45). A month later, in "The Grandeur of Rome," Butts reviewed G.P. Baker's *Twelve Centuries of Rome* and found that Baker had achieved in his account what Wright had failed to. His history is "told with charm, with learning, with elegance; not turned into a romance, but told from that individual point of view without which historic truth may be written but it will never be read" (119).

That Butts repeats the phrase "historic truth" in back-to-back reviews is significant, especially given that she had just completed *Cleopatra* in March. Initially, her use of the term might seem curious; both *Cleopatra* and *The Macedonian* are highly fragmented, non-linear, purposely subjective fictional accounts. But for the author, this style was perfectly compatible

with the portrayal of historical characters, especially those she felt had been misunderstood because of ostensibly objective histories that were, according to Butts, tinged with prejudice and often written for personal gain. Shrewdly exposing the political motivations underlying such depictions, Butts encourages readers of her fiction and criticism to rethink the conduits through which history travels. Her experimentalism allows the infusion of an "imaginative sympathy" that leads to an "historic truth," quite distinct from the Truth, which Butts seems to have considered an impossibility.

While the overall response to *Cleopatra* was positive, some found it too weighty to be appealing to a broad public. One *John O'London's Weekly* reviewer wrote that the "plain reader" might find it too "soaked with scholarship, soaked with extensive historical and mythological knowledge" to be enjoyable (qtd. in Blondel 381). However, Butts probably would have found this claim laughable as a criticism, for she seemed little concerned with the "plain reader" and his or her tastes, despite the fact that she contributed reviews to *JOLW*. As her friend Hugh Ross Williamson wrote to her, "You know all the characters so well that you can't realize that the library-public have probably never heard of them. . . . Anyhow, you don't write for the mob, so it doesn't matter" (qtd. in Blondel 385). Williamson was wrong in his belief that Butts was not familiar with the "library-public's" interests; she was acutely aware of what writing for such a population entailed and how it affected both content and presentation. In fact, it was this awareness that accounted for much of the author's censuring of her contemporaries.

V. Myth and the Modern Landscape

For Mary Butts and a number of other modernists, a large part of classicism's appeal was its intersection with myth. Revived by the anthropological developments of the late-nineteenth

century, "myth interpretation" was "radically altered" and applied to the aesthetic experiments of the following generation, who felt that myths could move beyond allegory to offer an "antidote to the sterility of modern life" (Carpentier 2). In "*Ulysses,* Order, and Myth," first published in the *Dial* in 1923, T.S. Eliot was one of the first modernists to articulate the contemporary possibilities of myth. Specifically noting the influence of *The Golden Bough* on his peers, he observed that Joyce's use of the *Odyssey* not only established "a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity," but also served as a means "of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (167).[28] While Joyce is arguably still the most famous practitioner of modernist myth adaptation, authors as diverse as H.D. (*Helen in Egypt*) and Eudora Welty (*The Golden Apples*) have incorporated myth for structural or revisionary purposes.

Arthurian legend was particularly well suited for such aims and can be seen, in some manifestation, in a variety of modernist texts, such as William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!,* T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land,* and Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop,* as well as in Mary Butts's 1928 novel *Armed with Madness.*[29] Tracing the history of British fascination with the Arthurian legend, Stephanie Barczewski suggests that part of its appeal is that it has little basis in historical reality and thus can be shaped and adapted to fit the ideological needs of the present moment (14). For imperial Britain, troubled by the consequences of industrialization and in need of a clear sense of national identity, this meant looking at medieval versions of the legend as a "potential source of unity" (27). For modernists, however, including those writing in the United States, the legend took on a different significance, having little to do with socio-political unity. Instead, these writers often explored the Grail aspect of the myth, applying it to

their fiction and poetry in order to emphasize modern disillusionment and the importance of the spiritual quest.

Butts, who approved of the ritualistic, almost mystical nature of the quest and chose to focus on its transformative potential in her own work, was particularly drawn to the Grail component. She noted that others were involved in similar undertakings and often mentioned T.S. Eliot in her journal. While working on her novel *Armed with Madness* in 1927, for instance, Butts conceded that it "might well have been called 'the Waste Land.' Eliot always anticipates my titles!" (*Journals* 263).[30] But she ultimately saw her project as distinct from Eliot's, noting in a later journal entry that his concern was the "negative side" of the Sanc-Grail (275). Butts's Grail quest in *Armed with Madness* does not have a happy ending *per se*, but it is ultimately more hopeful than Eliot's appropriation of the myth. Indeed, *The Waste Land* gave voice to an entire generation's despair, providing a "visceral critique of the state of human life" (Davidson 123). Eliot, of course, later claimed that the poem was nothing more than "the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life . . . just a piece of rhythmic grumbling," but for Eliot's contemporaries, the work was of tremendous cultural and artistic import (qtd. in Hynes 27-28). Butts's incorporation of the Grail legend, on the other hand, is rooted in her hope that a ritualistic and community-minded search for meaning could provide some form of healing and regeneration. Ruth Hoberman suggests that Butts's "mythical method" is thus associated with "fluidity, nurturing, and jouissance" (51). While Hoberman slightly overstates the benefits of Butts's approach, she is right to distinguish it from other, less positive applications of myth.

If Butts attempted to convey the regenerative possibilities of myth in her own literature, however, she expressed skepticism about its real-life impact in her book reviews, expressing despair over the state of contemporary society. In "The Dark Tower," for instance, Butts writes

that we "are living in a spiritual chaos for which there is no parallel," bemoaning the fact that man has never before been "in such need of counsel, description and analysis of the appalling situation we are in, the dreadful place to which we have come" (1153). She hopes for an author who might have the capacity to provide this "counsel" but is thwarted at every turn. In Fausset's case, Butts remains unconvinced that in chronicling his own spiritual quest he has found the "Sanc Grail that will turn the Waste Land into a garden again" (1154). Such observations are commonplace in Butts's reviews, for she sees the cultural potential of the Sanc Grail but never its actual fruition.

Butts was also aware of the various levels of myth appropriation, distinguishing between informed classical scholarship and popular cultural lore. In a *Time and Tide* review of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *The Story of Parzival and the Grail,* Butts captures this distinction: "If there is a subject today which the general reader may be said to have heard of, and yet to know nothing about, one supposes it to be the Grail. (Without real knowledge Mr. Eliot is hardly intelligible; Miss Weston and Mr. Machen are not in everybody's hands.) Yet on its non-classical side, it is the very spring of our culture, as Milton knew, the 'matter of Britain' *in excelsis*" ("Parzival" 57). Butts reiterates the present-day fascination with the legend in "The Sanc Grail," a 1933 review of A.E. Waite's *The Holy Grail,* arguing that "the story of Arthur may be considered as our national epic, the 'matter of Britain,' as the Iliad is the 'matter of Troy'; and it can certainly be said that, in art, it has not yet found its final form" (72). If this "final form" is to be attained, according to Butts, it will not be through "Lancelot, nor Guinevere, nor Tristam, nor Iseult," but the Sanc Grail itself, "a not yet exhausted event, in the most secret, passionate and truthful part of the spiritual history of man" (73).

Importantly, Butts was not writing as an eager and inattentive reviewer. She had received Waite's book from the British Museum in May 1925 and had had years to reflect on its contents. After a first reading, she hastily referred to the author as "a sentimental hen reincarnated as a maiden aunt. Dead Waite," but she begrudgingly acknowledged on further reflection, "Waite is not always like a hen. He sees how Logres is an image of our desolate hearts" (*Journals* 216). Her forced admission had clearly turned to genuine admiration and respect by the time of her *Bookman* review, for there she praises both his "summary" and his "interpretation" of the Grail's significance, illustrating her dualistic approach to scholarship (73). Reading Waite's book as she began drafting *Armed with Madness*, Butts saw the potential of the Grail legend and turned to it in her own work, demonstrating its enduring significance in a war-torn world. By 1933, she was able to respond to Waite's work with an insight and self-reflection born of her own struggle to elucidate the Grail legend.

Armed with Madness is set in a remote seaside house owned by siblings Scylla and Felix. While the home and surrounding landscape loosely anchor the pair and their group of friends, Scylla observes that there are larger cultural problems which have left them unsettled to varying extents:

> But everywhere there was a sense of broken continuity, a dis-ease. The end of an age, the beginning of another. Revaluation of values. Phrases that meant something if you could mean them. The meaning of meaning? Discovery of a new value, a different way of apprehending everything. . . . There was something wrong with all of them, or with their world. A moment missed, a moment to come. Or not coming. Or either or both. Shove it off on the war; but that did not help. (*Taverner* 9)

This tension is temporarily offset by the discovery in a local well of an "odd cup of some greenish stone," which is pulled out with a spear (15). Though the find leaves the group members in various states of skepticism and awe—Ross quietly notes the ancient symbolic significance of the cup and spear while the enamored Carston compares Scylla herself to the Grail—it unites them all by providing a "diversion," a momentary break in their routine (15). The appeal of the cup is soon tarnished by the realization that it was planted by Picus, who had stolen it from his father's collection to instigate the Grail quest. Picus's lover, Scylla, is affected most acutely, for she anticipates more betrayals and intuits the mythic significance of his actions. Considering his empty trick, she reflects on the larger Grail story as "the saga *par excellence* that has never come off, or found its form or its poet. . . . There was something in their lives spoiled and inconclusive like the Grail story. It would be her turn next for Picus to insult . . ." (67). Personally offended, Scylla nonetheless sees the larger import of Picus's actions, understanding them to reflect the "dis-ease" and paradigmatic shift she has already observed. Though briefly upset by the betrayal, the others quickly rally in their attempt to uncover the pre-collection history of the cup only to be disappointed again; they alternately hypothesize the cup to be a spittoon, an early English church vessel, and a poison cup, but the cup remains a mystery, its history fluid and unresolved. At this point, Butts provides an important formal shift, what Roslyn Reso Foy refers to as "disorder within the prevailing structure," that reflects the group's sense of loss (70). In the first half of *Armed with Madness*, the chapters are numbered; after their cup-invoked disillusionment, however, the characters scatter geographically, and the chapters are thus titled by character, highlighting the isolation that they each face while attempting to make sense of the events that have transpired.

Initially, the characters are frustrated by what Jane Garrity calls the "hermeneutical undecidability" of the cup, wanting to project upon it a fixed and definite history (*Step-Daughters* 209). Butts ultimately suggests, however, that such certainty is not only impossible, but also undesirable. When Picus and Carston visit a vicar to get a clearer picture of the cup, a man in the library tells them, "The cup may have been an ash-tray in a Cairo club. But it seems to me that you are having something like a ritual. A find, illumination, doubt, and division, collective and then dispersed" (140). The vicar seconds this explanation, confirming that they are on a "moral search" rather than an historical one (140). A number of critics have argued that this ritual is where Butts most clearly departs from Eliot's more pessimistic view of the elusive myth and its contemporary implications. For Elizabeth Anderson, Butts "situates hope for renewal in the shifting multiplicity of meaning; the static is rejected for the possibilities inherent in movement" (246). And indeed, the cup is dropped back into the well at the end of the novel, indicating that the meaning for which the characters search is not inherently connected to the object, or at least not in a way that requires its tangibility.

Thus regenerative potential is not to be found in the cup itself but in deep and enduring ties. In her comparison of Butts and Eliot, for instance, Jennifer Kroll suggests that in *Armed with Madness*, the wasteland's ills may be cured through "empathetic connection with and care for the natural world, . . . love relationships that are simultaneously deeply sexual and spiritual, and . . . living within a community of like minds" (169). This sense of community is illustrated most clearly through Scylla's tremendous act of forgiveness. Driven mad with grief over Picus's relationship with Scylla, and tormented by the war, his loss of religious belief, and "a menace that walked hand in hand with the night," Clarence wants to throw her into the well but instead ties her to a clay sculpture of Picus and shoots the two with arrows (128). Before she passes out,

Scylla experiences pain, contempt, and, finally, "a *clarté* the other side of forgiveness" (146). It is Carston who finds the pair and is able to distract Clarence from his task; handing Clarence the cup, Carston tells him that Picus wants it to be returned to the well. The cup's power, then, is still present but manifests itself in an unexpected way. And when she awakens, Scylla, the "living cup," saves a second life (38). Shamed by his mental collapse, wary of his future, and thinking himself too weak for their "spiritual adventure," Clarence quietly steps to the edge of a nearby cliff, only to be pulled back by Scylla and returned to the others (157).

Many of Butts's reviewers, though praising her style in *Armed with Madness*, failed to view positively the "community of like minds." A writer for the *Times Literary Supplement* sensed neither order nor resolution, writing that the characters were not "armed with madness" but "entirely composed and compacted thereof: their language, their habits, their actions appear alike demented"; the same reviewer goes on to note that the "carnival of lunacy" is presented through a "series of jerks and shocks and abrupt surprises" (qtd. in Blondel 208). While the characters most assuredly demonstrate moments of madness and profound self-doubt, their reliance on one another as they indulge in their ritual and the lucidity with which they reflect on their situation suggest that hope is not lost, even in an era with shifting and fluid values. In fact, it is their desire to work with the world's instability that is most appealing, for even Butts acknowledged the near-impossibility of fixity in regard to the Grail. Scylla's observation that it has not yet "found its form" in literature is almost identical to the one that Butts made five years later during her review of Waite's text. Pairing the two shows a tremendous consistency in Butts's views and reveals an honest writer pointing out her own failure to permanently capture the Grail's significance in her fiction.

If the Sanc Grail itself does not afford salvation in *Armed with Madness*, the land comes close. The novel begins and ends with descriptions of Felix and Scylla's home and the surrounding landscape so that these bookend the events that take place. But Butts is careful to avoid overplayed accounts of English beauty that idealize the countryside. In *On Living in an Old Country,* Patrick Wright argues that the author's emphasis on nature reaches beyond the tropes of Romantic pastoralism to an older and more "authentic" England (103). This authenticity manifests itself in the people who call the land home, and Butts clearly indicates from the novel's first page that only a handful have that privilege. Nature spews out those who are not true inheritors, leaving only a select few who by birth and ancestral right can accommodate themselves to her peculiarities: "The silence let through by the jays, the hay-cutter, and the breeze, was a complicated production of stone rooms, the natural silence of empty grass, and the equivocal, personal silence of the wood. Not many nerves could stand it. People who had come for a week had been known to leave the next day. The people who had the house were interested in the wood and its silence" (3). Instead of a romantic country retreat, visitors to the home often find a terrifying and alienating wood that "laughs" at them because they are not in on the "joke" (6).

Even members of the party, especially the naïve Carston and the psychically wounded Clarence, have difficulty reconciling themselves with their surroundings and leave for Tambourne at the end of the novel, clearly not equipped to prolong their stay. In their stead, Butts introduces Boris, a White Russian émigré whom Felix has taken under his wing and brought back to the house.[31] Though he is an outsider, Butts hints that he has important ancestral claims that attune him to the land around their home. Privileging "mystical ownership" over "legalistic or legislative entitlement," according to Andrew Radford, Butts shows that her

characters' comfort reflects the authenticity of their heritage rather than their national affiliations ("Defending" 135). Upon arriving, the "high born" Boris surveys the home and land, his action sparking a long-buried memory: "And something he remembered: the smell of fruit bubbling in copper pans, in a kitchen—a child with his nurse—in a country house, in Russia, in a pine forest" (161, 162). Geographically displaced, Boris has nonetheless arrived at a kind of second home, one made accessible to him through the purity and natural aristocracy of his heritage.

Scylla, passionate and intense, is the character most in tune with her surroundings, and Butts presents her as a woman who might restore the English landscape and its cultural authenticity. Through her mixed use of Hellenic myths and the Grail legend here and in *The Death of Felicity Taverner*, Butts suggests, according to Jane Garrity, that "women, through their metonymic relation to the land, have *natural* rights of inheritance to England" and that "the future of the nation depends on female cultural intervention" (*Step-Daughters* 190). Because Butts saw national identity largely through the lens of geography, the restorative potential of her female characters has far-reaching cultural implications. Importantly, though, the author avoids tropes of purity and asexuality that would negate the power she ascribes to her female characters, radically aligning them with "sexual excess."[32] Scylla, for example, freely makes love with Picus under Gault Cliff, a terrifying "interlude between the earth of pure stone, and the earth of wood and spring. No interval between the wood and the sea, it was that made the place incomparable" (57). She thinks of the isolated spot as a gift from Picus and reflects, even after his betrayal with the cup, "But under Gault Cliff there had been no parody. That she had to love Picus by, as much of a creation as any growth in nature. Or ritual, or rite produced by the imagination" (68). By situating the pair's act of lovemaking in a natural setting, Butts emphasizes Scylla's regenerative,

"procreative potential," offering her as a conduit through which England might be redeemed physically and culturally (Garrity, *Step-Daughters* 190).

VI. "We are its priests": Preserving England's Legacy and Landscape

Butts's fear that England was a country in need of redemption forms the core of much of her work, including her novels *Ashe of Rings, Armed with Madness,* and *The Death of Felicity Taverner*; her pamphlets, *Warning to Hikers* and *Traps for Unbelievers*; her autobiographical writing; and her numerous reviews of the period. Like her fellow citizens, Butts had to contend with "competing discourses" of national identity in the first half of the twentieth century as the people of England wavered between complex and often overlapping beliefs in patriotic nationalism, social democracy and industrial advancement, and elitist conservatism (Giles and Middleton 6). Discussions about the present and future state of the country took place against the backdrop of two world wars and significant discussions about foreign policy and Britain's increasingly hazy imperial goals. And Bridget Chalk reminds us that these were not the only sources of tension and confusion; passports and other "technologies of classifying citizens" raised the "stakes of national identity" during the period as well, forcing citizens to examine their political and cultural affiliations (55).

As a result of the era's instability, literary representations of England and Englishness continuously shifted to accommodate new political and social realities, thus serving as an index of the values and anxieties of the day. Writers like D.H. Lawrence, E.M. Forster, and Virginia Woolf, for example, all questioned via their creative work what it meant to be English. Lawrence captures the inconclusiveness of national identity in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928*)* while Connie observes the surrounding countryside on a drive: "This is history. One England blots out

another. The mines had made the halls wealthy. Now they were blotting them out, as they had already blotted out the cottages. The industrial England blots out the agricultural England. One meaning blots out another. The new England blots out the old England. And the continuity is not organic, but mechanical" (165). In this moment of narrative reflection, Lawrence pessimistically and self-reflexively catalogues the continuous erasures that take place, suggesting the impossibility of adequately defining oneself within a national context. In *Howards End* (1910), Forster, too, captures a transformative cultural moment, chronicling the decline of liberal England immediately before WWI and questioning to whom the country really belongs.

For Mary Butts, the answer to Forster's question is clear: it belongs, or should belong, to the landed elite. Although Butts was liberal in many ways—as is evinced by her support for women's education, her unconventional relationships, and her work aiding conscription dodgers—her conservatism shines through in her preoccupation with class. Her fierce protectiveness of the land is grounded in a nostalgia for control by landowners, as well as a wariness of the growing and physically mobile middle class, whom she feared could easily contaminate and usurp the countryside. Raised on an estate in storied Dorset, she watched the land she cherished succumb to post-war development by outside interests and, like many of her generation and upbringing, despised the influx from the cities. Ironically, however, she was equally troubled by the impact that the inter-war hiking and cycling craze had on the landscape. A number of interrelated factors contributed to this Outdoor Movement, including shorter work weeks; increases in paid holidays; a surplus of young, unencumbered workers; and changing health and beauty standards (Walker 140-141). Harvey Taylor argues that in addition to the recreational benefits, the movement had an important political dimension, for it was "constructed from a practical and increasingly concerted pursuit of fundamentally progressive, reforming and

social democratic objectives" (3). For a writer like Butts who was adamant about maintaining a social hierarchy based on ownership of and access to the countryside, the movement must have been particularly disruptive.

Butts's obsession with the landscape has little to do with questions of political identity or with England's international relations. She defines England culturally and spiritually, more concerned about local and regional affiliations than national self-definition. Indeed, her class-based worries about the usurpation of the countryside by unholy invaders *within* the state suggest an internal battle with the forces of modernity rather than an external battle with a foreign foe. David Gervais discusses this distinction in *Literary Englands*, noting that "power and empire" were more important for political than literary self-identification; he goes on to argue that "writers have usually been happier seeing England *in petto* than in seeing it whole . . . . One could make quite a good case for saying that the modern writer who seeks to depict England needs to be a regionalist . . . rather than a metropolitan" (76). Gervais here provides a useful entry point for looking at the fiction of Mary Butts, though she does not easily align with typical regionalists who celebrate the beauties and oddities of the local. Instead, she concerns herself with only parts of England, focusing on the preservation of delineated rural areas that are under attack.

In some ways, the land is transcendent for Butts, moving beyond geographical formulations to the mythical and elemental, only manifesting itself in contemporary terms through its spiritual guardians who understand its mana. Thus Butts's preservative ethos is grounded in her depictions of the English landscape as holy; with this type of formulation, she can fashion its caretakers as those who are blessed with special knowledge of the sacred. Believing, like D.H. Lawrence's Ursula Brangwen, in an "aristocracy of birth," Butts privileges

those who by physical and spiritual inheritance are best equipped to protect the land (*Rainbow* 446). But if all "acts of viewing the landscape are ideological," as Roger Ebbatson claims, then Butts's socio-cultural ideology is exclusionary at best, for rightful ownership—either legal or spiritual—necessarily precludes certain classes from enjoying the beauties of the countryside (10).

Butts's romantic, and in some cases naïve, views of land ownership are fully articulated in her reviews of the period. In "The Happy Elizabethan," a *JOLW* column on Marcus Woodward's *The Countryman's Jewel*, she writes longingly of the Elizabethan period, where people even without modern conveniences had "everything that is essential for high civilization" and lived "in circumstances of physical loveliness almost unknown to us now" (19). Her idealism is evident here, for she obviously fails to note that much of the beauty of the Elizabethan way of life was dependent upon the lower classes, for whom pretensions of "high civilization" would have been laughable. The same nostalgic tendency is evident in another *JOLW* review entitled "An Older America." Here Butts praises Dubose Heyward for *Peter Ashley*, his "delicate historical study" of the Antebellum South that describes a lovely "world in flower" (808). Downplaying the horrors of slavery by referring to the landowners' "evolving solution to the slavery question," Butts again brushes aside those workers who make ownership a practicality (808). The author's romanticized depictions of both America and England emphasize her belief in the importance of a birth-based aristocracy, without regard to national affiliations.

The majority of Butts's critical and creative work, however, looks at the invasion of English countryside. During the 1930s, Butts became particularly disturbed by what she calls in *Warning to Hikers* the "cult of nature," a trend wherein the vulgar middle classes fetishize the English landscape during their weekend visits (*Ashe* 277). This pamphlet is the tract in which

Butts most clearly outlines her views on the natural world. Written during 1931 and published by Wishart & Co. in 1932, it is marked by an elitist tone that reflects the author's fervent desire to protect the English countryside. What is particularly important is that she laments not a turn *from* nature, but a turn *to* nature by people who are unfamiliar with it because they have been born and bred in the city. For Butts, these middle-class "barbarians" have lost their true sense of beauty because they have spent too much time in manufactured environments (*Ashe* 273). As a result, they pollute the land with their cars and with their very presence. Particularly disturbing is the class-based, exclusionary nature of her views, which are predicated on a desire to physically segregate those who are unworthy of the country's bounty because they have unnaturally glorified it:

> We have been landed, not in nature, but in a cult of nature; not in the country brought to our towns again, but in our sort of town running wild over the countryside for an escape from towns. And all the time, our new barbarians, bred inside that hideously fabricated world, under conditions that man has never known before, without experience, conscious or unconscious, of man's original life, and until quite recently without any cult for it, have lately heard of the cult. It is their way to help themselves to what is going. They have now heard that here is something to be had free. (277)

Though the country's beauty is "free," Butts clearly feels that the city's denizens are stealing its very essence, dirtying it with weekend visits that give them only momentary glimpses of a different life.

She further distinguishes these city-dwellers from the land-owning classes who by birthright are comfortable in the natural environment. For Butts, "Love of nature is the Bunk.

You are either used to it, part of it and generally unconscious of it, except for some detail or of your own well-being, or you are an outsider" (278). Those who are bred in towns are not "fully *incorporated* into the intricacies of nature" and thus find its true charms and benefits inaccessible (284; original emphasis). In an attempt, perhaps, to temper her tone of disdain, Butts professes pity for the weekend hikers who are clearly out of place during their outings, suggesting that they are a danger to themselves. She observes that one group from Tyneside merely wandered about "quite like mindless sheep. Lost and mindless and in fear" (288). Reflecting on their obvious discomfort, she envisions an ironic new theme "in which the innocent town-girl leaves home and is exposed to all the terrors and temptations of the country-side" (288). Butts clearly fabricates concern in the name of emphasis here, for she cares little about the well-being of the outsiders who have invaded her rural sanctuary.

In her reviews of the mid-thirties, Butts makes equally clear her disdain for those who cater to the predilections of the urban middle class with their travel books and romantic accounts of England. Reviewing Horace Annesley Vachell's *This Was England*, Thomas Burke's *The Beauty of England*, and Henry Williamson's *On Foot in Devon* for *The Bookman* in August of 1933, Butts reinforces the class-based prejudices so evident in *Warning to Hikers*. She begins by defining the books that she finds so problematic, and clarifying that she does not fault the particular set under review. Indeed, Butts devotes only three brief paragraphs to those works, spending the majority of her time speaking broadly about the genre whose focus is "our native land" ("Our Native Land" 252). Butts reveals her frustration in the opening paragraph: "Why do people do it? There are being written to-day far too many books about England. . . . during the last few years, there has been a flood, cheap or costly, of 'books about bits of England,' sentimentalities, whimsical descriptions, scraps of folk-lore, 'trivia' of every sort . . ." (252).

According to the author, these works are not for the benefit of the serious foreign traveler, who would simply buy a Baedeker before his or her journey. Instead, she implies, they are intended for that hated population, the "new 'motoring class' one meets to-day with the summer, rushing through villages, staring and being rude and showing off; a whole new set of people one finds oneself unable to place socially or intellectually" (252). Authorship and intended readership are clearly important to the author. In contrast to the "books about bits of England," she praises Vachell's work because it was written "by a gentleman for gentlemen" (252). While Butts finds no fault with personal reflections on or classic literary depictions of England that pay true homage to its uniqueness, she abhors the kitschy, mass-produced works that encourage frivolous views of her beloved country.

Butts found the idea of promotion particularly distasteful and used the youthful advertising industry to make her point. In a letter to the editor of *The Bookman*, she responds to a reader's complaint that one of her reviews on books about England was too harsh and that the works are, in fact, useful to travelers. Defending her views, she distinguishes "spontaneous expression" from "disguised advertising," noting that the books she criticizes are "often commissioned by the railways, the motor-bus services and the hotels" ("This England" 202). Advertising is given further play in "England," a review of S.P.B. Mais's *Week-Ends in England.*[33] Though the author is well-intentioned in his desire to "get people out-of-doors," he shows a "smoking-room familiarity" with his subject that is analogous to betraying one's partner to others: "Surely it is the business of the lover to respect the modesty, not to advertise the charms of the beloved" (256). Such tasteless appeals are effective but target a populace inherently ill-equipped to appreciate the "beloved." The result, for Butts, is that "one is torn in two by the knowledge that if one half of our people do not get back to some kind of contact with

earth, civilization will perish out of England, and disgust of the kind that comes, mass-trespassing, taking gates off their hinges, cutting through villages at fifty miles an hour, bringing their city vulgarities into the serenest and loveliest places . . .” (256). Her abhorrence of the interlopers is evident in the language that she uses, and the intensity of her review implies that she finds Mais and other authors equally guilty of the “vulgarities” that she attributes to the urban masses.

Butts’s November 1935 *Sunday Times* review of Llewelyn Powys’s collection *Dorset Essays* reveals that advertising of the countryside has turned into outright exploitation. Bemoaning the newfound accessibility of the rural counties, prized for their “picturesque” qualities, Butts argues that travel books and reminiscences that encourage visitation by the masses constitute nothing more than “showmanship” (“Dorset Essays” 16). Like peep-show barkers who entice passersby to test their wares, those who catalogue the country’s glories are merely contributing to the desecration of the very subjects they praise. Passionately defending the land, she writes that “such *sacra* [the counties] were not meant for display” (16; original emphasis). Butts’s use of the word *sacra* is significant, for it illustrates her profound sense of the land’s worth and implies its need for protection.

Butts’s deep connection to and love for England was noted by many of her contemporaries. In a two-paragraph introduction to one of her longer *Bookman* reviews, Williamson, both friend and colleague, again establishes an interconnectedness between Butts’s creative work and her personal concerns, particularly the country of her birth. He writes,

> Her books are, in a real sense, a self-revelation. Dominating everything is a passion for the actual land of England, not in the ‘happy country-side’ sense, but as a concrete expression of mystical and spiritual forces. She apprehends it

> through the great myths, through the story (with all its anthropological implications) of the Holy Grail, through the sublime incoherences of Blake and through the simple 'magics' of place, through our history—and, even more, our traditions. (qtd. in Butts, "Magic" 141)[34]

Williamson demonstrates here not only that he understands Butts's affiliation with England, but more importantly that he sees the various means through which she expresses that attachment. And his observation that she considers the land to be a "concrete expression of mystical and spiritual forces" is a particularly astute one. Though this view is merely hinted at in the bulk of her reviews, which are often more accusatory than reverent, it is made explicit in her novels, including *Ashe of Rings* and *The Death of Felicity Taverner*.

The early date of *Ashe of Rings,* Butts's first novel, reveals that she was preoccupied with the fate of the country throughout her career. *Ashe of Rings* was published by Robert McAlmon's Contact Editions in 1925, though the first few chapters were serialized in *The Little Review* four years earlier. Why *The Little Review* ceased publication of Butts's work is not entirely clear, but a 1921 letter from Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson suggests that Pound's indifference to her work and the editors' fear of censorship played a part: "I have told Mary we probably wont be able to use her novel = Certainly we cant afford to be suppressed at any time during the coming year. =Cost of reprods. forbids. = also 5 times is enough. Let someone else come for'ard. =if you want to do Mary's novel, it wd. mean 32 pages extra per number.= & corresponding increase in price. which wd. make it too high" (Pound 274). The editors were still somewhat wary of censorship given the recent *Ulysses* trial for indecency, and Anderson includes a discussion of the court case in the Jan-Mar 1921 issue, the same issue in which *Ashe of Rings* first appears.[35]

Butts must have anticipated irregular publication, though, for she notes in a May 1921 journal entry, "*Ashe* not to appear—watched myself minding about it" (182).

When *Ashe of Rings* finally was published in full in 1925, it garnered less attention and certainly less praise than Butts's later work. Though Roslyn Reso Foy calls it "perhaps [Butts's] most stylistically innovative novel," the book seems disjointed at times, working largely through dialogue that is ordered but rarely attributed to a particular character (34). Lengthy interior monologues and passages written in a stream-of-consciousness style heighten the mystical quality Butts was aiming for but were difficult for many contemporary reviewers to digest as well. Attempting to situate the author stylistically, some likened her to Dostoevsky, Lawrence, Elinor Wylie, and May Sinclair (Blondel 147-148). And one particularly harsh *Liverpool Courier* writer observed, "If you can imagine the stylistic influence of James Joyce, combined with Miss Richardson's soliloquising method on a writer whose theme has the incoherence of a nightmare, you may realise how bad and mad is *Ashe of Rings*, by Mary Butts" (J.E. qtd. in Blondel, *Scenes* 147). Attempting to be derogatory in comparing Butts to Joyce and Richardson, the reviewer nevertheless implicitly situates Butts as an experimental modernist. And while he or she arguably exaggerates the novel's "incoherence," the author herself, looking back, noted that the book was "passionate" but "ragged": "I was very young—full of prophetic as well as retrospective fury about my mother" (qtd. in Blondel, *Scenes* 36).

Ashe of Rings is certainly rough and impassioned and, in part, this might be attributed to Butts's relationship with her mother. But equally influential are the author's intense feelings about the land itself. The Rings in the novel, Nathalie Blondel explains in the preface, were inspired by Bradbury Rings, "a set of prehistoric concentric earthworks in south Dorset. Mary Butts visited these rings throughout her life and felt them to be her spiritual home" (x). Butts

records a visit to these Rings in *The Crystal Cabinet*, observing that "contact between visible and invisible, the natural order and the supernatural" materialized at that place, "receiv[ing]" her as a "candidate for ancient initiations" (265, 266). The Ashes, loosely based on Butts's own family, serve as guardians of Rings, a source of life-giving energy. Butts is careful to distinguish the Ashes from a typical land-owning family, though, clarifying that Rings is not a regular estate. Trying to explain its significance to her friend Serge, Van Ashe tells him, "It is a precinct, like Eleusis. We are its priests" (*Ashe* 104). Anthony, the family patriarch and primary caregiver, is equipped to appreciate the mythology and history of Rings, and Van follows in his footsteps. A "life worshipper" and mystic, she understands that Rings is "a place of evocation. Where the word is made flesh. That's too poetical—I mean a place where the shapes we make with our imagination find a body" (215, 150). The novel tracks Van's progress as she attempts to return to Rings after her father's death and become reinstated as Rings' guardian priestess.

Van is frustrated in her attempts to carry on the family's legacy and ancestral duties by Melitta, her Christian mother, indicating that both a spiritual and familial divide need to be bridged. Van feels that because of her mother, "Rings cannot happen properly which is the life of our race. And our race has become impure. And I, who am true Ashe, am hungry and lonely and thwarted" (109). The language of race purity is important for understanding the novel's central conflict, "an allegorical contest between those who understand this prehistoric landscape (and who see themselves as the Eumolpidae, inheritors of the Eleusinian Mysteries) and those who are antagonistic to it" (Blondel qtd. in Butts, *Ashe* x). Reanimating the timeless battle between good and evil in *Ashe of Rings*, Butts suggests that the ravages of the war, personified in Peter, Judy, and even Serge, might be counteracted via a revitalized commitment to the mystical forces of nature that is overseen by one with ancestral knowledge and power.

Van most clearly demonstrates this boldness and understanding during her attempted rape at Rings, a scene that reverses Melitta's earlier act of defilement with Morice Amburton and thereby restores the purity of Van's legacy. The rape is a calculated outrage planned by Judy, Van's nemesis who hopes to climb socially by ruining her reputation and turning her family, and thus Rings, against her. Judy sends the shell-shocked Peter Amburton to Rings to assault Van, but when he sees her lying on the stones, naked and white in the moonlight, he flees in terror. Here Van appears truly mythic and timeless, her "vibrant identification with a natural locale evok[ing] the ancient fertility goddess Persephone" (Radford, "Defending" 126). Although her mother initially sides with Peter and Judy, believing the rape attempt to be a lie, Van knows that it was a decisive act, thinking: "We've done it. We're turning [Melitta]. . . . The wall's rumbling down that keeps us out of paradise. The house is laughing. I am beautiful. I have the Rings to play with. I have power. I have done better than I understand. Magnificat" (196). Soon thereafter, she is reunited with her mother and brother and rightfully reinstated as caretaker of Rings.

In *Ashe of Rings,* racial-ancestral purity is necessary, according to Butts, for the protection of the English landscape, and here it manifests as a kind of mystical power available to those who are aligned with the ancient Rings. But the notion of purity becomes increasingly disturbing in Butts's later work, where the struggle over England is no longer couched in terms of basic belief or unbelief. Instead, she adopts in *The Death of Felicity Taverner* what Andrew Radford calls "a naturalized eugenic viewpoint," and "advance[s] an oppositional polemic reliant upon exclusionary categories of 'Englishness'" ("Defending" 133, 131). Instead of the internal, familial struggle for guardianship of a magical locale that we see in *Ashe of Rings*, *The Death of Felicity Taverner* presents blatant anti-Semitism, and an elitism similar to that expressed in *Warning to Hikers*.

The latter two works were both published by Wishart & Co. in 1932, so it is no surprise that they contain a similar theme, primarily the invasion and desecration of the English countryside by outsiders. Referred to as "barbarians" in *Warning to Hikers* and "the Tide" in *The Crystal Cabinet*, these outsiders amalgamate, in *The Death of Felicity Taverner,* in the persona of Nick Kralin, Felicity's husband (*Crystal* 243). While we are told that Kralin's father doesn't "officially" have "jewish blood," Kralin is nonetheless described as a "Jew-about-town" and replies, "Mixed," when Scylla asks, "But you're a Jew, aren't you? Not a Slav?" (*Taverner* 177, 212, 296).[36] Jascha Kessler suggests that Kralin is comparable to a modern-day Shylock, fulfilling the stereotype of the "pushy, vulgar, and insufferable intruder clambering into the ranks of aristocracy" (213- 214). After Felicity's mysterious death, Kralin attempts to blackmail her family into cheaply selling him their land, threatening to expose her personal papers if they do not cooperate. Capitalizing on the psychoanalysis craze, he tells Felicity's family that her diary is "erotic" and that it would lend itself nicely to a "practically complete study of the Electra-complex" (260).

Aside from his perverse disregard for personal privacy, Kralin is indicative of a larger usurping of the countryside by greedy industrialists and developers—"Le Kralinism," Scylla calls it—for he is intent on bringing tourists to the area (225). Fearing the ruination of their land by visitors, Felicity's family envisions "the greasy papers of their meals blow[ing] about, the torn newspapers and the tins" (343). Such a future would be intolerable for the Taverners and the Tracys (Scylla, Felicity's cousin, and her husband, Picus) "who cannot endure imitations of anything," who, in their tastefulness, choose "apples before tinned peaches" and "one dress from Chanel to six 'from a shop'" (301). Moreover, Kralin associates with the type of people Butts clearly condemns in *Warning to Hikers* and in her reviews, the same group for whom he hopes to

develop the land: urban intruders. In fact, Kralin brings two such women to Felicity's home, and Scylla calls one of the women the "kind least tolerated of all strangers in that land. Out-of-town by rapid transit from its slums; young, heavy-haunched and over breasted, wearing a terrible parody of country clothes. . . . Bored to extinction she seemed, to exasperation; one hand on her hip, rocking on ill-balanced heels" (201). Even the boorish Kralin is embarrassed by the confrontation and his association with the women who are so clearly out of place.

But beyond the Tracys and Taverners' gentile snobbism is a real fear of Kralin. He is a man marked by emptiness, devoid of belief. To explain Kralin to Boris, Picus tells him, "If you asked him the meaning of meaning, he'd answer, 'no meaning at all'" (177). Scylla adds that Felicity left him because she thought "she had discovered some frightful secret. Called it the Grey Thing, but it was what Felix meant about meaning. And Un-reason which Picus said is a God. That man is sure that he has the inside dope on the ultimate senselessness of everything. And is content" (178). The family finds this contentment most terrifying because it ultimately suggests a kind of inhumanity that makes interaction impossible. After their attempts to uncover the cause of Felicity's death—she is found near Villefranche, and her death is a mystery—they even come to realize that the specific circumstances are unimportant, that she was killed, in part, by the "Grey Thing" in Kralin.

Unlike Kralin, who is marked by "Not-Being, Un-Meaning, Un-Doing," the Taverners and Tracys have a strong relationship with the land on which they live, the "flawless, clean and blessed, mana and tabu earth; strictly of their flesh . . . whose pattern was repeated in them, the stuff of a country made into man" (242, 259). Their connection to the earth is so strong, Butts suggests, that they are literally formed by it. And it is the deceased Felicity who had, perhaps, the most tangible and intimate contact with the countryside. She was, according to Scylla,

"everywhere, so that the hills were her body laid-down, and 'Felicity' was said, over and over again, in each bud and leaf" (191). This metonymic correspondence makes Kralin's intended desecration of the land doubly insulting because it becomes an attack on the very body of Felicity. Butts even uses rape imagery to describe the two-fold violation; as Kralin outlines his plans for developing the area, Picus hears a "mourning somewhere in creation that the freshest earth there should lose its maidenhood, become handled and subservient to man, to the men who would follow Nick Kralin" (249). The feminized English landscape is under attack by those who cannot hope to appreciate its bounty or respect the very virtues that make it so appealing to begin with.

At the heart of this struggle is Felicity. Her body can be viewed, argues Jane Garrity, as both "a generative source and a collective unconscious through which authentic Englishness is channeled" and its authenticity renewed (*Step-Daughters* 215). It is, therefore, imperative that her family expel Kralin. Though they cannot save her physically, they can preserve her memory and thus initiate cultural and national rejuvenation. This act of safekeeping, however, is predicated on a troubling sense of possessiveness and a belief in the need for racial expulsion. In "Excavating a Secret History," Andrew Radford argues that there are dangerous undercurrents in Butts's work; rather than "a sincere pride in a heritage of homely things that fosters ardent regional affiliation, local responsibility and community service," Butts displays a "feeling of umbilical attachment to southern English 'turf' which . . . cannot be divorced from a more elitist and exclusionary sensibility, a fierce *nativism* that demonises the foreigner because of a perceived geographical, racial, class or sexual 'inferiority'" (85). In *The Death of Felicity Taverner,* this "foreigner" is Nick Kralin, and he must be exiled by Felicity's family so that they can maintain their ancestral connection to the land.

Importantly, though, in the end it is the complex and tormented Boris who must take action. Described as a "bad man," he nonetheless identifies with the Taverners' lifestyle and heritage, and they feel that he is "their own kind" (225). Ian Patterson argues that this tenuous connection is possible because Boris, "like his beleaguered English hosts, retains a sense of *mana* and *tabu,* of the 'unknown categories' of which the urbanized world, pre-eminently the Bolshevized one, has been dispossessed" (133). Indeed, he comes to side with them against Kralin, likening him to a Red agent, the type of man who ruined his own family. When Boris finally decides to kill Kralin, we see a noticeable change in him; the man who is afraid of thoughtfulness, reflection, and decision, who avoids anything beyond mere pleasure and entertainment, begins to dress with the "quick precise movements" of a soldier who knows his mission (352). Luring Kralin out to the cliffs, ostensibly to show him some seaside property he might exploit, Boris tells him to look into the water. With the same nihilism that he has displayed throughout, Kralin looks at his reflection and replies, "I see nothing" (357). Boris then knocks him into the water and weights him with rocks, thinking, "One thing I have put right, who have not put many things right" (358). Patterson has rightfully argued that Boris has to be the one to kill Kralin because it "preserves the ethical chastity, the sophrosyne, of the Taverners and Tracys" (137). Despite their abhorrence of Kralin, Felicity's family is neither prepared nor equipped to permanently eliminate him from their home. Such an act, however justifiable in their minds, would violate the purity of the English landscape and thus disrupt the process of cultural recuperation.

The urban influx described in Butts's reviews and the physical and spiritual disinheritance that are threatened in *Ashe of Rings* and *The Death of Felicity Taverner* were very real problems for Butts, who was haunted until her death by the sale of her family's home and

the development of her beloved Dorset. But these personal traumas manifest in troubling ways in her critical and creative work, where the salvation of the countryside and an idyllic past warrant mass exclusion and extreme, criminal actions. Thus her notion of Englishness, even culturally defined, is predicated upon stemming the flow of modernity. Butts, of course, was not the only modernist to write about the decline of the landed gentry. Evelyn Waugh and Elizabeth Bowen, for example, explore the same sense of loss through the degradation of ancestral seats in *Brideshead Revisited* and *The Last September*, Waugh suggesting transcendence through faith and Bowen implying that the forces of change are nearly unstoppable and often just. For Butts, on the other hand, the physical home is less significant than the land, and its continued guardianship by the spiritual and cultural elite is imperative.

These and, indeed, almost all of the beliefs that reach fruition in Butts's novels and pamphlets are prefaced in some way by her book review commentary. Unlike many of her contemporaries, who employed the essay, manifesto, or editorial to advance their artistic goals, Butts relied on a less intrusive and less expected but equally effective critical method. While her reviews are short and ostensibly directed at the books under examination, they nevertheless demonstrate her commitment to preserving the past through the study of antiquity, the application of myth, and the protection of England's spiritual and cultural core. By nature of the genre nothing more than fragments of prose, they present a complete picture of Butts's modernist aesthetic, one grounded in stylistic experimentation, skepticism, and the complex appropriation of classical themes.

In a posthumous *Life and Letters To-Day* tribute to Mary Butts, Bryher observed that the author displayed a "charity and intolerance" that "made easy fame impossible" but that marked her as one of "the immortals" (160). Butts, who openly acknowledged her artistic struggles but

always maintained a sense of her own greatness, undoubtedly would have approved of Bryher's remarks. Admittedly contradictory in this way, she could be extremely generous in her personal life but demanding when it came to matters of aesthetic and critical integrity, as is evidenced by her numerous book reviews as well as her struggles to adequately incorporate her beliefs about the past in her own fiction. It was, in fact, this very juxtaposition that made all of her work so personal and brought it into perfect alignment. And if that does not speak to immortality, it does go a long way toward answering Williamson's question: "Who is Mary Butts?"

Notes

1. Butts died at the age of 46 of a perforated ulcer and diabetic complications.

2. See Timothy Materer's discussion of the founding of *Criterion* for more on Eliot's desire for literary standards.

3. Butts did write an excellent essay on the supernatural entitled "Ghosties and Ghoulies" that was published serially in *The Bookman* in early 1933, but this piece, like much of her work, has gone relatively unnoticed. See her *Ashe of Rings and Other Writings* for the complete text.

4. Here I am distinguishing longer essays on individual works from book reviews. In "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," for instance, Eliot aims to "elucidate" rather than evaluate (165). See pgs. 165-167 of Rainey's *Modernism* for the full text, which was originally published in *The Dial.*

5. Both Roger McCutcheon and James Basker see these notes and announcements as precursors to the review.

6. See Frank Donoghue's *Fame Machine,* Joseph Bartolomeo's *A New Species of Criticism*, Clifford Siskin's *The Work of Writing,* and Brian Hanley's *Samuel Johnson as Book Reviewer,* for example.

7. Both Frank Donoghue (24) and Brian Hanley (21) write of this shift in tone and purpose.

8. Noting Q.D. Leavis's circulation estimate of 100,000 copies per week and factoring in library copies read by numerous patrons, Jonathan Wild suggests that the periodical probably had a weekly readership of about 500,000 (59).

9. The periodical is not included in Hoffman et al.'s *The Little Magazine* but is covered in Brooker and Thacker's *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines.*

10. Jane Dowson records that about 700 books were reviewed in 1930 alone (540).

11. The condemnation of America seen here is typical of Butts. She, like many Europeans, found fault with a perceived lack of American depth and complexity, a partial result of the country's youth and its corresponding absence of historical knowledge and lived experience.

12. *Several Occasions* (Wishart & Co., 1932); *Traps for Unbelievers* (Desmond Harmsworth, 1932); *Warning to Hikers* (Wishart & Co., 1932); *Death of Felicity Taverner* (Wishart & Co., 1932); and *The Macedonian* (Heinemann, 1933).

13. *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* (Heinemann, 1935) and *The Crystal Cabinet* (Methuen, 1937.)

14. See Butts's "Mr Ezra Pound is the Goods" and "Negro."

15. See, for example, Alison Light's *Forever England* and Maroula Joannou's *Women Writers of the 1930s.*

16. Blondel records this interaction in *Mary Butts: Scenes from the Life*. See pages 268-269.

17. See Hickman's "Modernist Women Poets and the Problem of Form" and Ingman's "Religion and the Occult in Women's Modernism."

18. See Carpentier's *Ritual, Myth, and the Modernist Text,* Barr's "Divine Politics," and Marcus's *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy.*

19. Martha Carpentier notes that the label "Cambridge Anthropologists" is actually a misnomer, since Harrison, Murray, Cook, and Cornford were, in fact, classicists who "formulated and popularized the 'ritual theory' or 'ritual approach' to classical literature upon the foundation built by the new anthropological understanding of primitive myth and ritual" (43).

20. On pgs. 461-462 of her *Journals*, Butts records her thoughts about a discussion she and Angus Davidson had regarding the differences between violence in Fascism and Communism.

21. She mentions it, for instance, in "Antiquity," "The Past Lives Again," "Aristophanes, The Laughing Philosopher," and "Homage to Bertrand du Guesclin." Butts also references the book in her journal and drafts a portion of her review there. See pages 358-359.

22. Butts criticizes Ferdinand Mainzer for a similar lack of historical situating in "Caesar and His Times"; according to Butts, "the chief fault of the book is that it might have been written about any set of men at any point in time or place. Change the names and titles, and he might as well be describing a forgotten chapter in the history of Chile, to-day or three centuries back" (10).

23. Despite her criticisms of Weigall, she still appreciated his work, noting in the "Author's Appendix" in *Scenes from the Life of Cleopatra* that she found his *Life and Times of Mark Antony* provocative: "There something of the age is evoked that is missing from the great classic accounts, the tremendous names are used to help us to identify human beings, not as labels in an exercise on political history . . ." (*Classical Novels* 345).

24. Butts had a particularly tense relationship with her mother, Mary Colville-Hyde, believing that the family's declining wealth—and, in her eyes, social position—was a result of her mother's financial mismanagement and her irreverent treatment of the family's artifacts. Colville-Hyde had sold Salterns, the family estate, in 1923 and had gradually been ridding herself of the family's possessions, including the contents of her late husband's library, over the years. And Nathalie Blondel even suggests that Butts was spurred on in her writing of *Cleopatra* by her family's predicament: "However disproportionate the decline of the Ptolemies to that of

the Butts family in historical significance, she clearly felt that shared sense of humiliation gave her the necessary entrée into the mind of Cleopatra" (335).

25. Butts herself was not exempt from dealing with readers' expectations, either. Most of the discriminating reviews of *Cleopatra* openly acknowledged the biased perceptions of Cleopatra, generally driven by a love of scandal and intrigue, as well as the difficulty of rewriting her in the popular imagination. L.P. Hartley of *The Sketch,* for example, found that he had "a slight feeling of disappointment at finding Cleopatra's name cleared," but this did not dampen his praise: "Miss Butts seems to have the facts on her side, and she pleads the cause of Cleopatra's virtue with an energy and an eloquence that every right-minded person must admire" (qtd. in Blondel 382). And a reviewer for the *Worcester Evening News* placed equal emphasis on Butts's rationality: "Miss Butts has debunked all the notions, or misconceptions of Cleopatra as the most alluring 'vamp' in creation. She pens a portrait that appears even more probable than any preceding it . . ." (qtd. in Blondel 382). The labeling of Butts's work as "more probable" than other accounts undoubtedly would have pleased the author, who wanted to avoid yet another romanticized depiction of the queen.

26. See Butts's *Sunday Times* reviews "Queen Victoria's Wicked Uncle" and "King Richard III Defended."

27. Butts's unique and oft-seen belief in mana may have been a product of her admiration for Jane Harrison. Carpentier writes that mana can be understood as a "spiritual force inherent in nature and humanity," a vitalism, and that the concept informed Harrison's ideas about magic, religion, ritual, and art (49).

28. Michael Levenson explores Eliot's use of the word "parallel" in *A Genealogy of Modernism,* writing, "Where narrative has traditionally depended on convergence, convergence

of incident, convergence of character, Eliot's mythic method extends *parallels*" (200; original emphasis). He then goes on to argue that *The Waste Land* works through "*contextual development*" rather than "traditional narrative development" (201; original emphasis).

29. For excellent discussions of the Arthurian legend in Cather and Faulkner, see Klaus Stich's "Cather's 'Midi Romanesque': Missionaries, Myth, and the Grail in *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" and Taylor Hagood's "Faulkner's 'Fabulous Immeasurable Camelots': *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Le Morte Darthur*."

30. *Armed with Madness* (Wishart & Co., 1928).

31. A Boris, loosely based on Butts's friend Sergei Maslenikof, figures into a number of her works. Butts met Maslenikof in Paris in 1926 and had an intense relationship with the man whom she found simultaneously maddening and inspiring. In a 1928 letter, she referred to him as her "Janus King": "Most of the time he makes me fairly unhappy, then suddenly he shows a side of himself, half-saint, half-child, half-prince. I've got a lot out of this, as you know" (Blondel, *Scenes* 169).

32. Both Jane Garrity and Andrew Radford use this term to describe some of Butts's female characters. See p. 190 of Garrity's *Step-Daughters of England* and p. 136 of Radford's "Defending Nature's Shrine."

33. Mais played an important part in publicizing the countryside, making a series of trips and corresponding broadcasts about England for the B.B.C. Harvey Taylor argues that these broadcasts had a "proselytizing objective" (231).

34. Butts's great-grandfather was William Blake's patron, and she grew up surrounded by dozens of Blake's portraits and sketches, which were housed in a room at Salterns (Blondel, *Scenes* 16).

35. Pound never specifies what censors might object to in *Ashe*, though it has clear sexual references and many of the characters closely mirror Butts's family members.

36. Outside of her fiction, Butts's anti-Semitism was ambiguous, however, if such a thing is possible. In a November 1936 journal entry, for example, she records her despair over being called an anti-Semite by Angus Wilson, reflecting, "I hate cruelty as much as he" (*Journals* 461). She was also married to John Rodker, the son of Jewish immigrant parents, though they had a rocky relationship.

CHAPTER 5

THE ENDURING LEGACY OF THE MODERN PERIODICAL PRESS

In 1932, the newly revived *Contact* printed an extensive bibliography of little magazines at the very end of its February number. Compiled by David Moss and containing the titles, editors, dates, and locations of well over 150 magazines published after 1900, the list is an early and important attempt to trace the history of experimental writing outlets in the early twentieth century. The bibliography is accompanied by Williams Carlos Williams's short essay "The Advance Guard Magazine," a piece in which Williams outlines major little magazines, including *Broom,* the *Dial, This Quarter*, the *Little Review,* and *Others,* and distinguishes the work produced in those periodicals from what he sees as the comparatively mediocre writing of their commercial counterparts. The essay is not a diatribe against commercial publishing ventures—although Williams's distrust is evident—but is, rather, a concise, inside account of "advance guard" publications that closes with an exhortation by the seasoned little magazine veteran, who tells writers and critics to "read and re-read the actual work produced by those who have made the 'small magazine' during the past thirty years" (90). Williams's essay, colorful and subjective, works as an effective companion piece for Moss's lengthy and well-researched bibliography, which is extended over the course of the next two numbers of *Contact* to include over 165 new sources.

A little over a year before the publication of Moss's work, in November of 1930, Ezra Pound had published in *The English Journal* his own account of the history of little magazines, many of which he had been involved with in some capacity. His piece begins with a discussion

of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, a magazine he consistently found fault with but one that he also was forced to admit provided a "place where unknown poets could be printed" and "where new ideas and forms could be tried" (692). From *Poetry,* he goes on to evaluate the contributions of the *Little Review, Dial, Criterion, This Quarter,* and other important periodicals of the previous decades. Like Williams, Pound distinguishes them from commercial magazines and cites as the major difference the editors' willingness to forsake profit in the name of experimentation and artistic freedom. Significantly, he also acknowledges the various forms a published work might take and writes,

> The work of writers who have emerged in or via such magazines outweighs in permanent value the work of the writers who have not emerged in this manner. The history of contemporary letters has, to a very manifest extent, been written in such magazines. The commercial magazines have been content and are still more than content to take derivative products ten or twenty years after the germ has appeared in the free magazines. (702)

For Pound, these "free" magazines offer writers the opportunity to publish pieces that might otherwise be ridiculed or ignored; furthermore, his concern with a work's "permanent value" suggests that he sees the little magazine as an endurance test for the writers of his generation, a way to measure their dedication to their craft.

It should come as no surprise that Moss, Williams, and Pound published their work at about the same time or that the latter two, given their years of editorial experience, insisted upon the importance of little magazines to the development of twentieth-century literature. Only a few years before, in 1929, the *Dial* and the *Little Review* both shut their doors after years of service to the literary community, providing an apt opportunity for Pound, Williams, and others to reflect

on the services provided by the magazines and the impact each had. But while the authors were right to note the end of a particular modernist publishing legacy, they were somewhat misguided in their unbending distinction between avant-garde and commercial ventures, as well as premature in solely emphasizing the publications of the past.

Williams and Pound were not alone in distancing the aims of the little magazine from those of the mainstream press. Indeed, many opening editorials and announcements indicate that the staff of and contributors to these modernist journals saw their mission as a response to the market-driven and audience-conscious motivations of their commercially minded peers. But the periodicals of the early twentieth century were more entangled than Williams and Pound indicate. Moreover, many of the pieces published in mainstream magazines and newspapers were neither unimportant nor "derivative," to use Pound's term. And the periodicals simply provided a more public, and often more lucrative, alternative to the avant-garde press, one that helped to acquaint modernists with a reading populace that they simultaneously ridiculed and depended on. Publishing work by, as well as photographs of and articles on, modernist writers, the commercial press acted as a necessary companion to the little magazines, despite a mutual sense of distrust and skepticism about the other's goals.

Mina Loy, Kay Boyle, and Mary Butts stood at the heart of this publishing network. They were, of course, neither the first nor the only writers to take advantage of the newfound opportunities of the periodical press; nearly all of their modernist counterparts contributed work to magazines, sometimes driven by financial gain and sometimes by the need for artistic freedom. But Loy, Boyle, and Butts's relative obscurity highlights the work that remains to be done within the field of periodical studies. From the bold manifesto and experimental poem to the popular novel and critical book review, these authors were able not only to master various

genres, but also to situate their work in an impressive range of periodicals, including avant-garde literary journals, general-interest magazines, niche publications, and widely circulated newspapers. Working in stylistically different ways and in diverse venues, they contributed to the development of literary modernism via the press, making it imperative to situate them within a broader Anglo-American modernism that had its roots in the periodicals of the early twentieth century.

Pound, Williams, and Moss recognized the significance of the periodical press—or at least the little magazine, one if its most notable facets—in their early work on avant-garde publications. The publication of Moss's bibliography might even be seen as the genesis of modernist periodical studies. In the preface to their seminal study on little magazines, for instance, Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich note that their compilation process began with Moss's *Contact* piece. Since their study chronicles modernist periodicals through the end of WWII, however, it moves well beyond what Moss had accomplished in early1932, indicating that the magazines continued to flourish in the following years and that Pound and Williams were slightly premature in focusing largely on the work of bygone ventures. About three decades after the appearance of Hoffman et al.'s *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*, Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie published *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, a set of "essay-memoirs," according to the editors' prefatory note, meant to serve as a "companion" to the earlier study (3). Their collection chronicles both the individual experiences of editors and contributors and major directional shifts within the periodical culture, including increased activism, recognition, and arts funding.[1]

Although Elliott and Kinzie did not include a complete bibliography along the lines of the one created by Hoffman et al., others have attempted nearly comprehensive lists. One of the most

significant is the *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*, begun in the 1960s and now in a 46th edition that includes close to 4,000 periodicals and book publishers. The annual nature of such a publication indicates that these presses and magazines are necessary but ephemeral, still-tenuous ventures. Others, too, have vigilantly catalogued literary journals, a process made more efficient by recent technological developments. The *Poets & Writers* website, for example, lists over 600 print and online journals to which contemporary writers might submit their work ("Literary Magazines"). Interestingly, Hoffman et al. also estimated the presence of roughly 600 little magazines in the introduction to their work, published over six decades earlier (2). This similarity is certainly coincidental, especially given the explosion of short-lived journals after the advent of desktop publishing and online platforms, but it speaks to an aesthetic continuity that most modernists would have celebrated, even if they had not been able to anticipate it.

While the number of functioning literary journals in existence today speaks to an ongoing commitment to exploration within the artistic community, significant changes have taken place within the post-WWII Anglo-American periodical press as a whole. One of the most notable, and one that distinguishes the contemporary press from that of the early twentieth century, is a decline in the amount of fiction and poetry published in mainstream magazines and newspapers. Magazines such as the *New Yorker* still continue to showcase authors, but their special fiction issue partially compartmentalizes it from the essays, articles, and reviews that appear weekly. And most other magazines forsake literature altogether, choosing to provide news and commentary rather than creative work. John Tebbel and Mary Ellen Zuckerman attribute this postwar shift to new forms of entertainment and to the splintering of the press. The collapse of the fiction market, the authors argue, "was a direct result of television, which told stories all day

long . . . to the same people who once read serials and short stories in magazines" (249). They also suggest that "the recasting of magazines to appeal to different audiences" made it increasingly difficult to court new subscribers with fiction, which was both expensive to include and less alluring than the promise of specialized knowledge tailored to the readership in question (249).

The rise of television, popular and accessible, was one of the many media upheavals that transformed the role of the periodical press and the goals of the various papers and magazines of which it is comprised. Before television, radio broadcasts enabled news agencies to quickly disseminate information to large audiences, giving magazines a more audience-specific function. And in recent years, the internet has revolutionized the publishing industry, prompting some naysayers to question the future of print culture altogether. In each case, these changes presaged waves of panic and shifts in the industry's mechanisms, but all were dealt with by savvy editors and publishers who were able to exploit the advantages of the new technologies. As in the past, the primary result of these changes has been increased specialization, the abandonment of "mass readership" and the subsequent courting of "elite audiences who will be loyal" to specific magazines and their high-spending advertisers (Tebbel and Zuckerman 358). These "elite" publics include readers of local and regional magazines (*Southern Living* and *Midwest Living*, for example), industry and trade periodicals (*Computerworld* and *Restaurants and Institutions*, for example), and special-interest publications (*Men's Health* and *Cooking Light*, for example).[2]

Many magazines also choose to accommodate the new technologies rather than compete with them. *TV Guide*, for example, founded in 1953, celebrated the rise of television by providing show listings as well as information about the television industry itself. In an era when television's artistic merit was still under question, the magazine treated it as a "serious art form,"

according to Bryan Curtis, even "importing eminences from other media" to lend the new medium some cultural capital.[3] Recently, however, *TV Guide* has failed to maintain its distinction. One of the most widely read magazines in America during its heyday, the publication has lost close to 8 million readers in the past decade and has slipped from 4th to 32nd in terms of circulation, according to the Association of Magazine Media (formerly Magazine Publishers of America) and the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) ("Average Total Paid & Verified Circulation").[4] Its decline illustrates well the consequences of failing to adapt to the needs of the reading and, in this case, viewing public.

But other magazines are working harder to accommodate the Information Age and its new technologies, looking to avoid the kind of steep decline experienced by *TV Guide* and so many other publications. Newsweeklies, in particular, are reconceptualizing, trying to meet the shifting demands of the marketplace. Jon Meacham, the editor of *Newsweek*, sees a causal chain at work: "What's happening now is that headlines are delivered by the Web. That has pushed newspapers to become more like newsmagazines were in '82, and it's pushed the newsmagazines to produce a monthly-quality product on a weekly basis, and it's pushed the monthlies into the place of the great quarterlies, and now the quarterlies have become books" (qtd. in Smolkin 18). While the amount of information and the swiftness of its delivery have evolved, the core mission of the newsweekly has remained the same. *Time* editor Richard Stengel sees his magazine as providing a "trusted guide" that helps readers navigate the "information explosion," something the weekly has been doing since its inception in 1923 (qtd. in Smolkin 18). Importantly, this role parallels that of the literary reviews established roughly two centuries ago, which were meant to help readers navigate the publishing industry's murky waters. Differences in genre and size of readership aside, the periodical has always had an audience-based function.

At present, the periodical press faces one of its most formidable challenges to date as it attempts to reconcile print culture with digitization. But despite panicked claims about the demise of the magazine and newspaper—and, in some cases, reading itself—periodicals are still very much a part of everyday life, a fact that editors and publishers are striving to highlight for skeptics. In a 2011 issue of *Parents*, for example, a clever, two-page advertisement showcasing the health of the publishing industry uses cover shots of well-known magazines to proclaim, "We're *Lucky* to have *More* free media than ever, a *Parade* of never-ending *Wired* options. Yet most of *Us* still spend our *Money* on magazines. Readership is up, among young *People* as well as their *Parents*. Why? It's *Real Simple.* Magazines have an *Essence* and *Vibe* like no other medium. From *New York* to *Los Angeles*, folks just can't imagine *Living* without them" ("Magazines" 108-109). And current statistics support the advertisement's claim. In 2010, the ABC recorded that the circulation of its top one hundred magazines alone topped 235 million, a staggering figure given the sheer number of magazines currently being published ("Average Total Paid & Verified Circulation").

This number is, admittedly, smaller than it has been in years past, but media giants like Hearst Magazines and Condé Nast continue to revolutionize the industry, working with rather than against the accessibility and expediency of the Internet. By March of 2010, for instance, Hearst had sold 10 million print subscriptions via the Web, indicating the tremendous potential for print and online platforms to work in harmony (Ives 2). These numbers should continue to rise given the percentage of young readers, too. The Association of Magazine Media reports not only that 75% of teenagers read magazines, but also that adults under the age of thirty-five read more magazines than older Americans ("Twenty Tweetable Truths"). Since younger generations

are, on the whole, Internet savvy, magazines would seem to have a bright future as along as they continue to work in conjunction with emerging technologies.

When Pound wrote in 1930 of the "permanent value" of the work produced by modernists and published in the little magazines, he probably could not have envisioned the enduring legacy of the era's periodical press. Long overlooked by scholars who privileged close readings of isolated, individual works, the magazines and newspapers of the early twentieth century are now being reevaluated as primary texts in their own right. And fittingly enough, we are being aided in this endeavor by the very technologies that would seem to sidestep print culture altogether. Brown's Modernist Journals Project and the Modernist Magazines Project, a companion site to Oxford UP's *Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, are two recently created online resources that already have had a tremendous impact on the field of modernist periodical studies. These are accompanied by blogs such as Magazine Modernisms, as well as dozens of other personal and professional sites dedicated to the study of individual magazines and newspapers and the era's larger publishing culture.

Although these sites cannot replace the study of physical texts, they have revitalized a once-forgotten facet of modernism. Moreover, they have exposed gaping holes in the canon, one that might easily be filled with writers like Mina Loy, Kay Boyle, Mary Butts, and others who contributed to the development of Anglo-America literary modernism by meaningfully interacting with the periodical press. Only one part of a larger network of artistic production, periodicals—in all of their manifestations—gave voice to a generation of writers intent on breaking free of the artistic restrictions of the past. And by providing a platform for the dissemination of, and commentary on, fresh new work, they ensured that modernism would always survive in the magazines.

Notes

1. See Felix Stefanile's "The Little Magazine Today" for more on these developments.

2. Chapters 18 and 25 of Tebbel and Zuckerman's *The Magazine in America* provide excellent overviews of the rise of regional and trade publications, respectively.

3. Curtis lists a number of well-respected authors, including John Updike and Joyce Carol Oates, who contributed to the magazine.

4. Easily accessible onscreen guides surely account for much of this slippage, though article content probably plays a role as well.

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