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The Presence of Women: Modernist Autobiography by Dorothy Richardson, Gertrude Stein and H.D.

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Abbreviations Used

DOROTHY RICHARDSON

B	*Backwater*
CH	*Clear Horizon*
D	*Deadlock*
DH	*Dimple Hill*
DLH	*Dawn's Left Hand*
H	*Honeycomb*
I	*Interim*
MM	*March Moonlight*
O	*Oberland*
PR	*Pointed Roofs*
RL	*Revolving Lights*
T	*The Tunnel*
Tr	*The Trap*

GERTRUDE STEIN

ABT	*The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*
EA	*Everybody's Autobiography*
MA	*The Making of Americans*
TL	*Three Lives*

H D

A	*Advent*
BMTL	*Bid Me to Live*
ETT	*End To Torment*
G	*The Gift*
H	*Her*
P	*Palimpsest*
TF	*Tribute to Freud*

Introduction

> The text preserves the past by recording it [A] written or a printed work has a special kind of involvement with the past, namely, its textuality as such Not just what a text says, but the physical text itself possesses a certain pastness All texts are preterite Unlike an utterance, a text is assimilated by the person who receives it not when it is being composed but after its utterance (its "outering") is over with
> A text as such is so much a thing of the past that it carries with it necessarily an aura of accomplished death (Ong 1977, 232-233)

This quotation, from a section entitled 'Text as Monument' in Walter J Ong's *Interfaces of the Word* (1977), forms part of a prolonged investigation into the impact of literacy on the human psychological make-up particularly in Western culture Here, Ong opposes qualities traditionally associated with written and printed texts to those characteristics generally assigned to the spoken word Feelings of warmth presence and immediacy are normally associated with speech while concepts such as clarity, precision, and permanence show us, with hindsight, the extent to which writing was a stimulating and liberating invention In the present quotation, the permanence stability and eternity of the written work is at issue In it are combined the attractive potential of the eternal monument poised towards a never-ending future, and a more sinister generally accepted suggestion that this stability freezes the living word, and kills in order to preserve

The 'aura of accomplished death' surrounding textuality becomes more poignant still when considered in the light of one of the 'master narratives' of Western textuality the genre of autobiography By means of textuality and autobiography the writer addresses a literate, printed infinity But this permanence, this promise of eternal strength, is necessarily connected with a finality which authors have not always relished For the autobiographer, the absence associated with textuality can be creative, enlightening and clarifying as the past is distanced But, once a memoir or autobiography has been written, there is a felt danger that the finalization of the autobiographical text also freezes, determines, defines the autobiographer's still ongoing life This dissertation posits itself upon this unhappy paradox, combining Ongian issues of orality and literacy with a reinterpretation of the genre of autobiography as undertaken by modernist women writers The many, unashamedly

oral and aural aspects of autobiographical writing by Stein, H D and even Richardson will highlight revolutionary intentions behind their modernist texts which differed from those of their male contemporaries Primarily, these female texts aimed to escape from the trappings of textuality, from the 'aura of accomplished death' In fact, at the risk of sounding chronologically more confused than the inventors of the terms 'modernism' and 'post-modernism', a 'proto-post modernist' questioning of literacy and textuality can be discovered in their autobiographical writings The women modernists under discussion, however, will be seen to query this inspirational and deadening textuality from a firm background within the oral world

Chapter I will discuss the theoretical writings of Walter J Ong, an American Jesuit priest who for the last few decades has been writing on the topics of orality and literacy as psychological realities Together with Jacques Derrida, among others, he has lucidly taken part in the unravelling of the powerful mythology created around writing by writers and readers Ong treats writing and print as technological innovations which have irrevocably altered our way of experiencing the world around us Important is his perception of 'orality/aurality' as a state of being, an existence in the world primarily as listeners and speakers and not seers Literates, on the other hand, think, perceive and experience differently from oral people, who do not yet possess the visualist alienation Rather than offering a strictly philosophical interpretation, Ong stresses the more prosaic, everyday effects of the writing technology, the consequences for memory span, the growth of new story telling habits, the painful development of printing conventions, the containment of all things worldly in dictionaries and encyclopedias

In fact, Walter J Ong's theories have implications for the literary tradition, suggesting a re-interpretation not only of literary history as a whole but also of specific genres like autobiography In this re-evaluation autobiography becomes the master narrative of our visualist literacy, underwriting the idea of the conscious, unified individual Offering the definitive, public version of an individual life, it effects the closure which forms a radical part of the workings of early literacy on our writing More than any other literary genre autobiography poignantly fronts the alienation and absence which is part and parcel of the writing and reading experience

Women, however, have developed a different relationship to both orality and literacy Suffering from a lack of power in the spoken situation as well as in public life, women modernists will offer a perverse reading of the genre of autobiography, developing life stories which refuse closure in order to boost the presence of the female individual Instead of final, definitive interpretations of their lives, Richardson, Stein, and H D Richardson present autobiographical texts which show not the important events but the relationship between unimportant daily life and female identity

Inevitably a theory constructed around the epistemological and emotional effects of literacy, orality, life stories and female identity will have the combined shadows of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva in the background As will be seen in Chapter I, when Freud developed the process of psychoanalysis he very clearly played out against each other the emotional complexes surrounding orality and literacy to the benefit of his traumatized patients Lacan's 'speaking subject' reworked the Freudian view on child development in a linguistic sense The 'mirror phase', Lacan's very visual metaphor for the recognition of the self becomes more visualist with the self now presented as splitting off from a felt unity with the surrounding world Moreover, Lacan's mirror phase is simultaneously an entry into the symbolic order the linguistic system He thus considerably refined Freud's representation of the young child, but implicitly read this language as a written language Walter J Ong frequently points to the innate visualism of both Freud and Lacan, however philosophically their metaphors are read In fact, we could develop two psychoanalytic stages of self-recognition entry into the oral/aural linguistic order as represented by the father, and entry into the world of literates with the development of the analysis and 'egotism' so typical of the writing self Derrida's work, especially *Writing and Difference* (1978), has investigated the emotional and ideological luggage of the print culture we live in He especially points to delusions of warmth, proximity, and presence as wrongly and persistenly desired by writers, despite the fact that writing unavoidably entails absence Walter J Ong offers a similar response He too associates presence, performance, warmth, direct contact with speech, while simultaneously stressing the creative absence associated with writing

In Chapter II, the narrative of literary and artistic twentieth-century modernism is retold in line with the alternative literary history suggested by Ong's theories Initially, the combination of literary modernism with the concept of orality may seem incongruous, ludicrous even Certainly, the literacy of modernists like Joyce, Eliot, Pound, Richardson, Doolittle, Stein Apollinaire, Braque, and Picasso would seem beyond doubt What Ong's views do offer, however, is the possibility of regarding modernism in the light of the affective associative complexes surrounding orality and literacy at the beginning of the twentieth century

The modernist movement will consequently be interpreted as both a high point in the interiorization of writing and print technology, and as the result of a perceived crisis in literacy Indeed, many modernists indicate a deeply-felt anxiety about an excess of irrelevant, ephemeral print which has caused a questioning of the authority of text In reaction to this modernists were by various means to attempt a return to a prelapsarian state of textuality, when what text there was was highly significant and important By reducing their text by printing, publishing and distributing themselves, they equally accepted a limitation in their audience, now only the friends and acqaintances of the modernist networks and a small outside readership

Moreover the specific situation of women modernists must supplement our present theories of modernism which are clearly male-oriented Gertrude Stein, Dorothy Richardson and H D for instance show a marked interest in the autobiographical position or, more widely defined, in self-writing, an interest which would not be generally regarded as part of the modernist esthetics Actually they share this strong autobiographical slant with authors like Djuna Barnes, May Sinclair or Kay Boyle Indeed, many women modernists indicate a marked interest in the development of a new perspective on writing specifically in connection with the description of their selves and their life histories Thus, this combination of female modernism with autobiography is investigated in the following three chapters Increasingly, moving from Richardson and Stein to H D , a clearer picture emerges, presenting a modernist autobiography with specifically female goals, which plays on topics of orality and textuality All three writers investigate the precarious situation of the female speaker who feels alienated from herself in the presence of male interlocutors Moreover, their autobiographical personae eventually move towards writing as an identity-boosting activity, helping these women to be really present to themselves

Via her autobiographical persona Miriam Henderson, Dorothy Richardson really spells out the psychological forces at work on the New Woman of the late Victorian and Georgian periods An almost incomprehensible belief of young women in their lack of independent existence ties in with the relationship of women to the speaking situation discussed in Chapter I Writing for these young women is not just a creative outlet, it is a self-creative movement of unadulterated egotism In other aspects too - interiority, agonistic scene building the wish for a close relationship with the reader - Richardson shows her awareness of orality and aurality and her delighted perception of the writing situation as a boost for the female individual She consequently presents us with the life story of a consciousness in being a communicative autobiography evoking the interrelating of a young woman and her surroundings

Gertrude Stein similarly voices feelings of absence and alienation as a woman speaker, as well as undeniable triumphalism when she feels successful and in touch with herself during speech Specific to Stein is a tremendous awareness of the literate and oral media and their effects on language and the individual, and consequently also an implicit discussion of interiorized literacy Explicitly Stein's talky autobiographical texts in fact render us redefinitions of literary genres like detective fiction, and autobiography Like Richardson, she presents us with communicative autobiographies, which perform the presence of a woman speaker

The most conscious, if eccentric, discussion of the present woman's autobiography comes to us via H D 's search for the autobiographical prophet persona Here, the everyday alienated woman speaker is contrasted with the prophetic Writer-Speaker, a woman in crisis whose painful evolution in fact allows her to be more present to herself In H D 's revisionist image of Helen we now have a woman reconstructing herself out of her painful memories From *The Gift*, the clearest expression of H D 's feelings of being a chosen seer, we realize that this reconstruction resides in the act of writing itself, as H D presents us women-in-crisis on their way to becoming writers Her experiences as Freud's analysand allowed her to be acutely aware of the self-creative possibilities of writing and psychoanalytic speech She subverts the Freudian mirror stage to find female self-recognition in the convex mirror of another woman's eyes In fact, H D is yet another modernist autobiographer to pull the genre of autobiography in the direction of speech and female performance

These modernist women's autobiographies, then, indicated their awareness of the quandaries of both writing and speech for themselves as modernists and in their precarious presence as women They concluded by redefining the genre of autobiography and developing modernist interests which centred on the wish for a permanent and strong presence almost physically facing the reader In a different relationship with both orality and literacy, their need to express self-performance by way of autobiography results in an alternative female accent on the modernist revolution in language

Note to the Reader

Both Dorothy Richardson and H D use a great deal of italics in their texts Consequently, where certain aspects from quotes are to be fronted, underlining has been used Moreover, with three authors whose awareness of speech and orality makes them purposefully repetitive and verbose, quotes are inevitably lengthy

Chapter I Orality, Literacy a Gendered Perspective on Autobiography

1 Walter J Ong's Theories on Orality and Literacy

The complex of historical, psychological, and anthropological issues surrounding the arrival of literacy in a society has interested Walter J Ong for several decades Since his first collection on the topic, *The Barbarian Within and Other Fugitive Essays*, first published in 1954, Ong has not drastically changed his position concerning the effects of the twin technologies of writing and printing on human thinking and knowledge *The Presence of the Word* (1967) posits the ambiguous problem of embodying the Divine Presence by the limited and static technology of writing, while *Interfaces of the Word Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (1977) is a collection of essays on key moments of this history of literacy In a later overview, *Orality and Literacy*, first published in 1982, Ong repeated these basic precepts while taking account of the more recent theoretical developments of feminism and deconstruction [1]

For four decades, Walter J Ong has maintained, almost single-handedly it seems, a discussion on the lasting epistemological effects of the inventions of the writing and printing 'technologies' It is a timely discussion, in view of the computer technology developing in the latter half of this century to cause yet another drastic revision in our mental make-up and our perception of textuality In a similar way, the arrival of writing and of printing in a society was an epistemological point of no return In these two stages, oral communities crossed the threshold to fundamentally altered societies Typically oral communities are characterized by communal storytelling Formal oral address and verbal prowess form part of a clan member's status and success The 'knowledge' and communal history of the clan has to be contained and preserved by means of continuous oral telling and re-telling in the presence of an audience The typically literate society on the other hand, has the option for individuals to record their own personal existence and history in utter privacy

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1 In the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* the following meaning for 'orality' is found '1) the quality of being spoken or verbally communicated preference for or tendency to use spoken forms of language' 'Literacy' is defined as 'the quality or state of being literate knowledge of letters condition in respect to education esp ability to read and write' a word derived from the earlier concept of illiteracy' Aural' is simply described as 'of pertaining to or received by the ear' As a more recent paedagogical term 'oracy' is derived from the Latin os' (mouth) and '-acy (as in literacy) to indicate the 'ability to express oneself fluently in speech

Ordinary, unremarkable individuals in this century leave an inevitable paper trail of documents and computer data, from the shortest shopping list to diary extracts and official certificates of marriage and death

Ong's theories are based on early- and mid-twentieth century research into oral cultures and on the fierce controversy involving Milman Parry, Albert B Lord, and Eric A. Havelock concerning the method of composition of the Homeric epics [2] The development over centuries towards the heavily interiorized literacy which characterizes present-day Western society (among others) has not only meant that we can now more efficiently and lastingly leave traces of our culture and our selves It has also irrevocably restructured both our consciousness and our awareness of the sensory world surrounding us From a world where the 'primitive' gathers information through sight, hearing and smell, we now drastically favour sight over the other senses In fact locked in this visualism literates feel very unconfident in their capacity to learn anything via smell touch and hearing

In order to investigate the nature of orality and literacy as psychological and epistemological realities Ong often focuses on societies where the two states came into contact, like the Greek, Latin or medieval cultures In these mainly oral-based societies changes due to literacy can be detected more easily One such period in the history of literacy came with the establishment in early medieval monasteries of scriptoria, the copying factories of the Middle Ages For the first time since the sophisticated administration of the Roman empire text was reproduced with a renewed level of efficiency Isolated in a specially allocated part of the monastery, the scriptorium was the first medieval version of virtual assembly-line text reproduction, as the text passed through the hands of successive monks with highly specialized tasks, like the copyist, rubricator and illuminator Frequently they were actually forbidden from speaking during the hours of production

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2 In the 1920s a controversy surrounded the theories of Milman Parry over the status of the text of the *Iliad* and *Odysseia*. He maintained that the many epithets and stock phrases in both epics indicated that narrators had used these as fillers interchanging them as they needed to fit in metrical patterns The surviving text then was but one of many narrations and not the one and only authorized text

Another favoured period in Ong's theories is the Western Renaissance, when the invention of print technology in the sixteenth century was both cause and effect of an accelerated evolution towards literacy Early printers like Gutenberg in Germany, Plantijn in Antwerp and Caxton in England took another fateful step towards an increased visualism, since their movable alphabetic type caused an 'ultimate locking of sound in space' (Ong 1967, 47) It was now possible to produce a greater number of copies, exactly alike, while the movable type allowed for the swift setting of new text More importantly it strengthened the notion of a word as not made up of interlinking sounds but of separate letters [3] The sixteenth-century movable type presses liberated society from the laborious, endless copying out by hand of only a few important manuscripts Intellectuals and scientists could now slowly move out of the oral world to start depending on these new, efficient texts for mnemonic purposes, instead of learning knowledge by rote or by experience As the printing industry developed better techniques, the reading and recording public grew One early partial effect of this increased reach for textuality was the Reformation, a religious revolutionary force squarely based on print Oral-based societies are naturally conservative this was a showdown between newly literate intellectuals and clergy on the one hand and the Catholic church on the other The significant step in this clash was Martin Luther's nailing of a printed text his *Theses*, to the church door at Wittenberg in 1517 The development of Information Technology in the second half of this century has completely altered the power structures once again, since desktop publishing has now brought an extensive publishing capacity with relatively little financial restraints even to the private individual Elements like television, facsimile telephones, and electronic mail have further upset the communicative apple cart, bringing us into a world of 'secondary orality', the 'global village' in McLuhan's visionary terminology (Ong 1977, 298-299, Ong 1991, 136)

It needs stressing as Ong frequently does, that this evolution towards our 'interiorization of literacy', our visualism, is at once more gradual, more incisive and paradoxical than would seem at first Simple causality will not do We cannot 'blame' the dominant visualism of our present societies on the invention of print, but rather must see the invention of print as a symptom of an increased visualism, which

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3 Ong points out that it took relatively long to develop alphabetic letterpress print using separate casts for each letter since the technique of printing with blocks had already been in use in the Chinese Korean and Japanese cultures of the seventh and eighth centuries He suggests that the residual strength of the oral culture prevented it from clicking' in people's minds until the fifteenth century (Ong 1982 118)

had already come about as a result of the existing writing culture The print culture in turn has now reinforced this visualism Over the centuries this has resulted in 'widespread reorganization of the sensorium'

> What happened with the emergence of alphabetic typography was not that man discovered the use of his eyes but that he began to link visual perception to verbalization to a degree previously unknown (Ong 1967 50)

Thus the 'visualisation of knowledge' received a boost (Ong 1968, 74), and had important effects for the socialization of reading

> Rather than a record of something someone had said a book now became an object, belonging more to the world of things and less to the world of words Silent reading now began to replace the older oral habits of the manuscript age, when even a scholar reading privately to himself habitually picked the words off the page one by one and aloud Book titles change from addresses to the reader to become labels like the labels on boxes for, with the spread of printing, books became items manufactured like tables and chairs As objects or things, they obviously "contained" knowledge (Ong 1968 75)

As Ong amusingly points out 'the whole intellectual world goes hollow' (Ong 1968, 75) the visual metaphor of the book as a container for information serves all kinds of knowledge Our vocabulary for knowledge is consequently mainly visual-based with metaphors like 'insight', 'concept', 'idea' 'vision', 'visualisation' 'perception' 'ideal', 'speculation' 'reflection', 'lucid', 'metaphor', 'lucidity' 'views' 'introspection'

> In many ways, the greatest shift in the way of conceiving knowledge between the ancient and the modern world takes place in the movement from a pole where knowledge is conceived of in terms of discourse and hearing and persons to one where it is conceived of in terms of observation and sight and objects The remote origins of the auditory-to-visual shift need not concern us in detail here They have been traced to the difference between the Hebraic concept of knowledge, auditory and consequently personalist and existential and the Greek concept based on analogy with vision For the Hebraic (as perhaps for the present-day Arabic world still) to know (*yadha'*) meant to know one's way around, to "know what's what " to "be in the know," whereas for the Greek, to know meant to see, to intuit, to envision intellectually (Ong 1968, 69-70)

This shift from an awareness of knowledge as something lived in, of the world as a felt, heard and surrounding entity to a *perception* of the world structured in maps, reflected in paintings and pictures will be of consequence in our discussion of the women modernists Richardson and H D especially present their protagonists as

aware of a felt world of knowledge surrounding them, rather than a visualist one They learn and experience mainly in and because of communication with others, as does the Stein persona In this respect, they will partake of a three-dimensionally felt world, of orality/aurality as a state of being which connects them to a much earlier consciousness

One other vital aspect of the appearance of literacy in a society is the mutual interinfluencing of orality and literacy Orality and oracy change under the effect of writing Thus the arrival of writing helped orators better to plan their speeches 'The Christian stress on preaching, oral though the genre was, thus curiously favored the growing emphasis on literacy' (Ong 1967, 61) In order to preserve them, common sayings, proverbs and dicta originally from the oral sphere were collected in books like Erasmus' *Adagia* (1500) These and similar collections were still based on an initial orality, which set our early writing mode along the tracks already developed by the oral community Writing influenced the speaking practices, while the spoken tradition initially determined writing Consequently, the new technique of writing and script took some time to develop away from orality Ong interestingly points out how early writers grappled with the effects of the new technology They needed to invent a terminology to describe it and the terms 'heading', 'footnotes' suggest a parallel was made between text and the body (Ong 1991, 100) Other examples show that it took a while for our present awareness of space in textuality to develop Ong gives as an example the title page of a sixteenth-century book with the first words THE in much larger capitals than the second, more informative word BOKE (Ong 1991, 120)

But significant for the discussion of women writers are Ong's remarks concerning what he calls - with his own typical dependence on epigrams - the 'tenaciousness of orality' (Ong 1991, 115) [4] The impact of literacy on a society is never complete, nor does it develop evenly within a community Even in highly literate present-day societies there are what Ong calls 'pockets of orality', a recent example of which is the popularity of the rap phenomenon in American youth culture Even though the invention of printing techniques have pushed Western culture further and faster into a greater literacy, practices from oral cultures have been retained Originally, the

4 Interestingly Ong s books frequently seem to echo each other with an almost literal repetition of phrases leaving a distinctly oral impression as if Walter Ong is intending a similar aural rhetorical effect on his readers

impact of script influenced only the literate elite Society on the whole proved distrustful of and resistant to the written document Thus it took a long time for the legal world to step down from its insistence on public, face-to-face witnessing during legal procedures and to accept instead documents to prove ownership, marriage, identity We still feel a marriage has not really taken place until the couple has effectively been pronounced man and wife in the presence of witnesses The signing of the register is not such a high moment of significance (despite the fact that the piece of paper, the marriage certificate is filed away as 'proof' of the marriage having occurred) The public defence of doctoral dissertations in many countries equally stems from the public debating contests in the Middle Ages as a means of testing students Elocution contests, developed in the nineteenth century are seen as similar 'hankerings' for orality (Ong 1991, 115) In a clear line stemming from antiquity, important texts were seen to deserve being read aloud Ong cites Dickens' lecture of selections from his novel on an orators' platform (Ong 1991, 115), whereas the habit of reading aloud in family circle remained into the twentieth century (when the secondary orality of the wireless took over that family function)

> Long after a culture has begun to use writing, it may still not give writing high ratings A present-day literate usually assumes that written records have more force than spoken words as evidence of a long-past state of affairs, especially in court Earlier cultures that knew literacy but had not so fully interiorized it have often assumed quite the opposite
> Witnesses were *prima facie* more credible than texts because they could be challenged and made to defend their statements whereas texts could not (this, it will be recalled was exactly one of Plato's objections to writing)
> (Ong 1991, 96)

The art of Rhetoric, still much valued in the Renaissance, is another indication of the remaining force of orality It dominated a major part of the traditional classics-based school curriculum well into this century Societies moving towards a greater literacy nevertheless still found a great use for orally based practices which received a new lease of life via the support of literacy

Walter J Ong repeatedly stresses how hard it is for twentieth-century Western academics to imagine the mental make-up of the purely oral community Literates have become so locked into the visual that it has irrevocably changed their thought processes and the structure of their consciousness Proof of this is all around us, and causes the profound plight of those who for some reason remain illiterate in a literate society Foreign language students actually resent purely oral-aural exercises

without the support of text They feel they own the word more completely as an object on the page than when dependent on its uncertain aural echo in their memories Feeling awkward and insecure on an oral-aural level, they actually prefer spelling-based mispronunciations over the helplessness felt in oral-aural communication For literates, access to a pre-literate society has been largely blocked off Consequently, a true oral society or pre-literate person is really beyond our imagination which explains why many such societies are considered inefficient and primitive by literates

> A literate person, asked to think of the word 'nevertheless', will normally (and I strongly suspect always) have some image, at least vague, of the spelled-out word and be quite unable ever to think of the word 'nevertheless' for, let us say, 60 seconds without adverting to any lettering but *only* to the sound This is to say, a literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to purely oral people (Ong 1991, 12)

An oral society experiences the opposite position 'It can never get far away from the word as a vocalization, a happening' (Ong 1967, 33) The word as solid, printed object as opposed to the word as a living, happening and finite event is one of the major affective results of the arrival of literacy

As we started to *percewe* the word our awareness of the artful and the beautiful became a vision of Art The coming of literacy has meant that a tangible body of permanent, stable texts has been built up, an idea of Art and Beauty that we manage to keep with us This canon of literary texts is an artistic and epistemological experience which the literate can forever possess and control, unlike the fleeting, changing vulnerability of art and knowledge that has to be kept alive via performance Ong cites the example of illiterate South Slavic narrative poets in Alfred Lord's research, for whom literacy was attractive, because it expanded their memory Unexpectedly however, their budding literacy hindered their art

> Learning to read and write disables the oral poet Lord found it introduces into his mind the concept of a text as controlling the narrative and thereby interferes with the oral composing processes, which have nothing to do with texts but are 'the remembrance of songs sung' (Peabody 1975, 216) (Ong 1991, 59)

Entranced by the permanence and stability of the text, these poets were outflanked by the 'absence' that shadows the text, by the fact that the text's stability is hostile

towards performance, since every performance is different and fleeting Literates appreciate the static eternity of the printed canon over the oral tradition which inevitably invites a certain amount of chaos

The stable, permanent text, however, has also 'stabilized' the language Most written languages have a distinction between the 'unofficial', unwritten dialects, regiolects and class-based variations on the one hand, and a 'standard language' on the other The standard language, because it is written, is more stable, described in textbooks, grammars and books of correct usage which then influence writing practice Moreover, it has been extended by the publication of word lists and dictionaries, which contain a much larger vocabulary than ever used by any speaker (Ong 1991, 106-107) While an oral language makes do with a much smaller vocabulary, the large vocabulary of the written language has been artificially created by retaining words that would naturally have gone out of use Because of this increase in its range and because it is stable and permanent objectified into books, the written language has achieved a higher status Even a word obsolete since the seventeenth century is not abandoned but is retained in monster dictionaries like the *Oxford English Dictionary* When advocates of a dialect try to raise its status they typically do this by compiling dictionaries and grammars In fact, the standard English now spoken was a mere dialect in an economically prosperous area, which thrived because it was supported by the authority of script [5] Literacy consequently has greatly affected our speech, our thought processes and our experience of language

Here we enter the issues essential for modernist women writers During the evolution towards an increased literacy, an affective complex has grown up surrounding the concepts of orality and literacy, a set of feelings and experiences concerning both modes of language which influence our practice of them Jacques Derrida's hugely influential discussions of the situation of writing and what he sees as our misplaced hankering for the presence of the oral situation in fact offers a

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5 Literacy has also created languages Originally the oral medieval Flemish dialects of North Belgium and the South-Eastern dialects of the Netherlands slowly mutated from Dutch dialects and accents into German Until the arrival of steady national borders it would have been impossible and senseless to draw a dividing line between the two languages But the borders between Germany and Holland/Belgium supported by the advent of complete literacy have drawn a firm linguistic line alongside the national lines Teachers went to training colleges in Amsterdam or Munchen textbooks are from the Dutch or German capitals and the dialects have been moving away from eachother as inhabitants have increasingly become anchored to the dominant dialect of their country

philosophical rumination on this affective complex (Derrida 1978) [6] Walter J Ong points to a similar subconscious emotional opposition of the permanence and clarity associated with literacy versus the liveliness, the performance and presence associated with the oral situation It is an affective complex that has grown up over centuries as our culture acclimatized itself to the nature of literacy Derrida advocates a radical separation of the two modes so that writers do not labour under the illusion of direct contact with their audience and can instead concentrate on the creative, differentiating and differing aspects of the written mode Ong agrees with Derrida to a large extent, stressing that both modes have their strengths both specializing in the rendering of a specific type of message in a certain way They part ways, where he insists on the inevitable inter-influencing of the two modes The written language has grown out of and is inevitably influenced by the spoken language, while our speech has been irrevocably altered by our awareness of the scripted mode

Undoubtedly, textuality has established for itself a level of authority unattainable to the speaker It is an authority based on its permanence, on the fact that it remains despite the passage of time 'Verba volunt libra manent', as the Latin saying puts it Initially the respect for the written word was excessive (as was the fear and disapproval with some early critics like Plato) Newly literate people believed something must be 'true' because it was written down into a permanent form [7] Another characteristic of the written word, which will be particularly attractive to women writers, is isolation Speech, communication unites all speaker-listeners within the one context The absence writing induces involves an egotism, a preference to be by oneself, communicating only with oneself, since the 'audience' is by definition absent Male and female writers physically or mentally isolate themselves when writing In the case of earlier women writers, this aspect of writing has been regarded as unbecoming egotism as Gilbert and Gubar have suggested in

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6 One element of caution is required here however Frequently Derrida seems ambiguous in his discussion of the 'writer and the 'speaker On the one hand he seems to regard the concepts literally opposing the literate situation to the one of the oral community But simultaneously 'writing' seems to involve any kind of 'permanent 'stable inscription indicative of culture

7 The plot of *Tess of the D Urbervilles* depends on this assignment of authority to the written text by a hardly or newly literate family The D Urbervilles glorious ancestry was characteristically forgotten by the non-literate father What the novel points to is their mistaken interpretation of the authority of the text as people who have only recently entered the literate world they still give to the text the authority it had when the first texts were being produced that of a legalistic binding magical text which must necessarily spell the truth because it has been written down

their appreciation of Jane Austen in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 107-184)

Over the years, the authority of the scripted text has also attached itself to the 'scriptor', the male writer Initially, this was the cleric who could read as opposed to the illiterate laymen Later the author who wrote opposed himself to the world/woman as the object of writing the creator to the created In a sense, Derrida's theories follow this tradition - he himself persistently refers back to Plato and Hegel in order to affirm the authority of his literacy and authorship In *Spurs/Eperons* Derrida throws the full weight of a highly literate, bilingual discussion of Nietzsche's philosophical style behind a consideration of, among other things, the 'emptiness' of the sign 'woman', her absence as a 'writing' subject (Derrida 1979) Gilbert and Gubar have pointed to the excesses of this equation of man with literacy, like the identification of the male pen with the male penis which proved so disabling for nineteenth century women writers (Gilbert and Gubar 1979, 1-7) Throughout the centuries, the existential and epistemological possibilities of scriptedness have reached almost godly proportions, as if the writing male subject had wrested the art away from God or the gods Enchanted by the permanence of his writing a proud Horace penned down the absolute statement on the stability and eternity of his poetry 'Exegi monumentum aere perennius' (*Odes* bk 3, no 30, l 1) The discussion on modernism too will involve this authority associated with the text On the one hand, changes in the printing industy and in readership will effect a crisis of literacy which causes modernist men to despair over the effectiveness of this textual authority On the other hand, modernist women writers will try to wrest this authority from men to throw the weight of textual authority behind their own literary concerns, the wish really to be, to exist, almost to 'be being' in the text Women writers too subscribe to a firm belief in the power of the text but a different relationship to literacy and orality will mean they have a totally different set of textual requirements

Another effect of the interiorization of literacy has been the emergence of originality as an artistic goal Ong sees Romanticism as a movement of interiorized textuality because of its new stress on creativity and originality, and a rejection of old-fashioned rhetoric (Ong 1977, 222-223, Ong 1991, 133, 158) Indeed, originality is a very literate goal, the first perception of art as *belonging* to one particular individual In a truly oral society, as already mentioned a word is an event something that happens

to both hearers and speakers in a fleeting context (Ong 1991, 32) The written word however, doesn't need the presence of a living community and can be stored Moreover, in book form it can be bought, sold, stolen, hidden, and still remain in existence

> Print created a new sense of the private ownership of words Persons in a primary oral culture can entertain some sense of proprietary rights to a poem, but such a sense is rare and ordinarily enfeebled by the common share of lore, formulas, and themes on which everyone draws With writing resentment at plagiarism begins to develop (Ong 1991 131)

In the same sense, T S Eliot and Ezra Pound's obsession with literary influence came at the end of a long line of (masculine) familiarity with literacy The avant-gardism of modernism, its attacks on the preceding literary tradition, the very name 'modern'ism indicate a desire for absolute novelty and originality, for freedom from the authority of previous poets, novelists and painters The result is the demand for radical originality, as well as copyright laws to defend ownership, and, much later, Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (Ong 1991, 134) The modernist obsession with the literary tradition however is also an awareness that in this stable collection of texts they now have choice the choice to reject, redefine correct, accept Unlike oral poets, they no longer have to take in the whole tradition and commit it to memory They can afford to ignore, to redefine, to challenge This made the modernist revolution as a whole very literate in atmosphere

In the affective complex built up around orality feelings of presence and performance compensate for the absence of permanence They refer to the unique and singular interaction between the teller and his or her audience, a relationship altering between different tellings of the same tale or even within the same tale Involved in the oral situation is a present audience-in-communication, an audience which would lose its sense of unity if they were made to read something With a written text either author, reader or context are absent In fact, the presence of the spoken is such a strong characteristic that in religious ritual spoken formulae are used to summon the presence of the deity Ong proves this with the otherwise very literate (Western) Christian religions, but the characteristics work equally well for the incantations by a witches' coven The written word has no such presence God doesn't write to us, but to the mystic believer God is a Presence and Speech As Ong quotes from the *Letter to the Romans* (10 17) 'Faith comes through hearing' (Ong 1991, 75) Writing induces

absence, what is written about is (felt to be) absent either from the reader, or the author, or both, whereas oral poets composed in the presence of the force of the audience, and the 'reality' they are talking about is part of communal memory, 'owned' by everybody The performance level offers the interaction between the teller and audience as an added part of the performative creation For oral peoples, knowledge exists in this performative, communicative context only Ong sums it up in the following way

> Spoken words are always modifications of a total situation which is more than verbal They never occur alone, in a context simply of words (Ong 1991, 101)

Written words on the other hand, are 'alone in a text' (Ong 1991 101) lacking the support of the pronunciation, emphasis, audience-participation, involved with the performance level A written word is of a totally different quality, 'a thing', not an event (Ong 1977, 232-233) It is a faculty of space and vision, not of time and aurality

For the writers, the absence of the audience means that the lack of a common context has to be overcome The referents of an oral situation, for instance, are immediately obvious from gestures, intonation or simply their presence Where communication fails the hearer can demand extra information If a written communication, especially a printed one, fails, then this failure is final The case of Salman Rushdie is an extreme example of this His early requests to view *The Satanic Verses* from a tolerant, liberal viewpoint were attempts to fictionalize his audience which proved impossible he could not prevent his books from being read by other readers in a context beyond his control But the absence of audience and context can also be liberating, as the oral situation is inevitably agonistic, and potentially violent Possible laughter or attack from a displeased audience is the reason behind our stage-fright The performer must make the audience or interlocutors be quiet long enough to listen and come under her or his influence If Rushdie had performed *The Satanic Verses* with a certain audience present, he might have been subjected at close quarters to antagonism or violence Traditional texts have to develop a range of technical devices to remain intelligible and overcome the absence of the audience, like point of view, focalization, the decision on how (much) information will be conveyed narratively It suggests to the readers whom the text is meant to embody, something much easier to act out in the spoken situation An

increased interiorization of literacy has led to the 'difficulty' of twentieth-century novels Authors feel they can now afford to give the audience less narrative support The continued existence and success of traditionally written popular novels indicate, however, that only part of the general audience accepts this Modernist authors like Joyce, Richardson and Woolf are 'obscure', because they flaunt the absence of writing, requiring greater imaginative activity on the part of the reader

As a result of these considerations on orality and literacy as basic modes of knowing and being-in-the-world, Ong has made forays into what could be called an 'alternative' literary and cultural history In fact it is often a correction to the existing literary histories which until recently have tended to ignore the communicative medium The romantics' quest for originality has already been mentioned as one effect of an increased interiorization of literacy Another effect was the attempt to transfer the stability of print onto the story the search for textual closure

> Print encourages a sense of closure, a sense that what is found in a text has been finalized has reached a state of completion This sense affects literary creations and it affects analytic philosophical or scientific work (Ong 1991, 132)

The effects for Ong are an ever tightening grip on the text His definition of literate 'closure' is not quite a rejection of openendedness, but rather the increasing need for complete authorial control over every aspect of the literary work As an example for this Ong refers to Hartman's discussion of the poetry of e e cummings, which drove demands on print technology to the extreme and locked the printed word in its own space on the page Cummings' poems are tied specifically to typography, playing on features which cannot be voiced like '£ŁŁ * &', the distinction between capital and small letters, and the radical splitting of words Unpronounceable, this 'concrete' poetry so completely belongs to its author that it makes performance utterly impossible

A parallel literary-historical consequence of increased literacy is the changing function of narrative For the aural audience, the use of narrative was essential in order to make knowledge both understood and remembered But whereas oral narratives are fairly loose and episodic, written narrative has become increasingly convoluted in its creators' search for text control Occasionally the complexity means

that readers too may find themselves confused and forgetful, although this disrupts the textual goals of clarity and precision In fact, the intricacy of the twentieth-century classical detective story has frequently reduced its readers to the forgetfulness of an aural audience, allowing a skilled operator like Agatha Christie to use and re-use plot lines with impunity Ong also links another offshoot from modernism, New Criticism, to an increased interiorization of literacy (Ong 1991, 160) Their emphasis on regarding the text in complete isolation from historical and biographical context is as far removed from the living performance-in-context as were e e cummings' poems The New Critics' demand for the 'autonomy of the individual work of textual art' in fact raises an inevitability into an ideal The autonomy of writing, the absence of audience and context, now becomes a wish for the pure textual form unsullied by interference from 'real life' It is important, however, not to exaggerate the modern bias towards literacy De Saussure's lectures, for instance, which laid the foundations for the new science of linguistics, were contemporaneous He made the very new distinction between the competence level of 'language' and the performance level of 'parole' Part of the crisis in literacy for the modernist period was a renewed recognition of this oral level Nevertheless De Saussure's theories still focused largely on linguistic competence and written examples, and under-researched the situation-based oral performance of the speaker

From this brief overview, Derrida and Ong would appear to have developed similar theories on literacy Their actual definition of literacy, however, differs For Derrida the concept regularly widens to any 'inscription' by the human being on his life world, whether a textual, artistic or plastic sign Derrida's remarks have functioned as important caveats to over-simplistic views on writing as only the encoding of an already existing oral message He has successfully undermined our commonsensical belief in the spoken word as direct, pure, truthful, original and the written word as artificial, secondary, unreal But Ong defines Derridean criticism as basically cradled in literacy

> Derrida insists that writing is 'not a supplement to the spoken word' but a quite different performance By this insistence, he and others have rendered a great service in undercutting the chirographic and typographic bias that has also been the concern of this book At its worst, as textualists see it, this bias can take this form one assumes that there simply is a one-to-one correspondence between items in an extramental world and spoken words, and a similar one-to-one correspondence between spoken words and written words (which seem to be taken to include print, the textualists generally assimilate writing and print to each other and seldom if ever venture even to glance at electronic communication) (Ong 1991, 166)

Derrida discusses what Ong calls the 'metaphysics of presence', the higher regard for orality because of its contextuality For Derrida this is tantamount to an outdated illusion of completeness, presence, of direct communication with 'reality', chased after by writers trying to ignore their ingrained literacy Ong correctly puts his finger on what strikes the reader as discomforting in Derrida's very partisan discussion of writing and orality Unacknowledged by Derrida, the relationship between orality and literacy is complicated by the inevitable and neverending inter-influencing of literacy and of an orality already altered by the arrival of literacy Derrida's view on literacy and orality itself results from 'historically unreflective, uncritical literacy' (Ong 1991, 169) Opposed to Derrida's statements, Ong reaffirms that '[t]hough it releases unheard-of potentials of the word' a written word is not a real word but a 'coded symbol', the representation of an utterance, not a representation of 'reality' (Ong 1991, 75-77) In this respect, he differs from Derrida, whose definition of 'l'écriture' is altogether more semiotic, and more fluid Both writers agree, however, that writing is not a simplistic appendage of speech, but is instead a second channel for thought They differ on the practical effects of orality and literacy Ong sees writing as having so drastically changed our thought patterns that we find it hard to imagine a pre-scriptive mind and memory, and we need archeology to offer us some hints Derrida's 'writing', any conscious inscription of the human consciousness upon reality, is more philosophically inclusive, but his term no longer offers any explicative strength

At present, the problematics of writing reading, speaking and listening are again in a certain amount of flux If Walter Ong perceives the epistemological revolution that was the Renaissance as part and parcel of the visualism of the printing revolution, we can very much wonder whether there is not a similar connection between Derrida's insistence on the strength and difference of writing/reading and the revolution within the worlds of communication and information technology We now have the

extremely versatile paradoxically 'moving' text of the computer screen and facsimile lines This results in a renewed domination by the textual, but it is a radically different text, a text that is infinitely changeable, that can generate reams and reams of paper and drown the computer operators in their own words It is consequently a text which is starting to behave as if it were speech, starting to grow so copious and voluble that it becomes ephemeral and forgettable Moreover, the text can now again seem more powerful than the individual operator In fact, a new illiteracy may be developing that of the computer illiterate, who fears the unpredictability of the computer text The global village too is not being impaired, since the arrival of modems and electronic mail allows us virtually to 'talk' to other computers across the world The conversation has only, temporarily, slowed down to typing speed level (but voice operated computers have already seen limited development) With facsimile lines mushrooming even telephoning now becomes visual!

On the other hand we are faced with the extreme strength of 'oral' performance on television, cinema and by telephone a secondary orality underpinned by our ability to read and write We may wonder what the effects will be on literature, to have so many novels filmed for television, or to have the existence now of stories on the screen which were never written as a traditional text, but merely as scenario or guidelines The sheer strength of television and film is the combination of the visual and the aural, and, inevitably, all of this will transform our perceptions of literature Ong has established that all interaction between media is potentially enriching, since these media will strengthen and alter each other Concomitant with 'secondary orality', we must consider then this 'secondary literacy', or 'secondary textuality' of the postmodernist age Simultaneous with a literacy which is taking on the fluidity and lack of closure of the oral mode, are the full impact of deconstructivist critics and the revolution in communication Certainly the relationship between text and speech is undergoing yet another fundamental change

2 Gender in Orality, Gender in Literacy

So far we have only marginally regarded the woman speaker and the woman writer In both cases, the female subject is in something of a double bind A number of elements suggest that women have to a certain extent always been associated with the 'pockets of orality' coexisting within our society's literacy Ong once again offers

one of his inimitably commonsensical explanations in *Interfaces of the Word*, and he approaches the position of many 'insights' from feminist film theory

> The concept of "mother" tongue registers deeply the human feeling that the language in which we grow up, the language which introduces us as human beings to the human lifeworld, not only comes primarily from our mother but belongs to some degree intrinsically to our mother's feminine world Our first language claims us not as a father does, with a certain distance that is bracing because it is both austere and founded in deep love, but as a mother does, immediately, from the beginning, lovingly, possessively participatorily, and incontrovertibly
> The association of mother with first language learning is, moreover, not merely a matter of proximity, of her being normally more within earshot of the child It is also physiological and psychosomatic An infant's contact with its mother is a distinctively oral and lingual one in more ways than one Tongues are used early for both suckling and for speaking, and language is usually, if not always, learned while a child is still at the breast (or bottle) Who wipes an infant's mouth, and how many times a day? First languages especially are associated with feeding, as all languages are to some extent (Ong 1977, 23-24)

In fact, we can use Ong's remarks on the speech situation of the young child to supplement Lacan's version of the young person's acquisition of language [8] Firstly, the picture Ong draws is not that of the father as the primary means of entrance to the symbolic order, but of the enveloping maternal atmosphere 'validating' all speech Indeed, it is via her presence that the child encounters language Moreover Lacan's formulations of the arrival of the child in the symbolic order are so couched in visual metaphors such as the mirror phase, that one forgets that he is in fact discussing the young speaker, not the young communicator via a written language Significantly, his version of the child entering the symbolic order is that of a subject splitting himself off from an imaginary object, separating from the Other to attempt to exist as a separate unified speaking subject In fact, all this is to occur in an acutely oral situation With this oral correction, the objectification of the Other and splitting off of the self, becomes a much more subtle and interactive situation It is not so drastically based on acute separation, but on an embodying, as it were of the other (person) into the self As Ong says, the fact that the speaker anticipates answers ends any simplistic ideas of communication as transmission , and consequently to Lacan's over-simplified distinctions

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8 Ong himself does not bring up any connection with Lacan His remarks on the speaking situation for the young child are part of a communicative correction of the oversimplification of Speech Act Theory

> Speaking and hearing are not simple operations Each exhibits a dialectical structure which mirrors the mysterious depths of man's psyche As he composes his thoughts in words, a speaker or writer hears these words echoing within himself and thereby follows his own thought, as though he were another person Conversely, a hearer or reader repeats within himself the words he hears and thereby understands them, as though he were himself two individuals This double and interlocking dialectic, so beautifully described by Louis Lavelle in *La parole et l'ecriture*, provides the matrix for human communication The speaker listens while the hearer speaks (Ong 1968, 51)

Moreover, Lacan never allowed for gender differences his child speaker is predominantly a male child For the girl child as the one not allowed to speak the power structures inherent in the oral situation must be more important, more shocking than any later power structures involved in writing In the light of the orality-literacy pole, we must suggest an alternative entry into the symbolic world of language for the young female speaker, a conversational female model as it were The difference lies in the necessarily agonistic if not antagonistic nature of the speaking situation As an experienced writer, Lacan doesn't actually address the fact that the entry into language he envisages is entry into an oral system While the male child discovers with delight that he is listened to the female child finds herself in a void, powerless to enforce others to listen while not empowered to ignore the speech of others Lacan describes how the man-child responds to the authority of the father with acquiescence and rebellion, but accepts that the female child merely acquiesces and is not severely traumatized by this experience of learning how to not-speak The discovery by the girl child that her self-love and self-importance is an illusion is as great a shock, and it happens specifically in the oral sphere, when the girl is told to be quiet

Women are further tied to the oral sphere by a variety of features, one of them their 'not-knowing Greek and Latin', to paraphrase Virginia Woolf's essay title Intensely connected with the literacy complex is the function of Latin as a civilizing and indoctrinating force from the Roman period through to the early twentieth century Latin has a peculiar relationship to both the affective worlds of oracy and literacy Latin was a language taught and diffused by script, according to Ong, significantly uniting the (male) elites of several countries who all had different mother tongues Latin was, in theory, one of the languages only written, 'learned by males from other males', and was like other 'sex-linked male languages', such as Sanskrit, Classical Chinese, Classical Arabic, Rabbinic Hebrew (Ong 1977, 25, 28), intended to

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distinguish the men from the boys, as well as the men from the women It became a kind of initiation rite allowing the young speaker-writer access to a public and international language, and completely locking women out (Ong 1977, 27-28) Because of this internationality it was a language intensely binding boys to literacy [9] There is no babytalk in Latin, no regularly used, natural slang, so that the young boy made a drastic move to patriarchy from his mother's world which he was taught to perceive as only oral (Ong 1977, 37)

But being tied into the oral sphere did not mean that women could then say what they wanted In fact, they are specifically assigned to this position as a frustrated speaker In her autobiography the modernist Bryher reflects back on her restricted situation as a young woman, when she was hardly allowed outside the home, and then only if accompanied She was hemmed in by a series of powerful but unspoken rules, to the extent that she was 'reproved, aged twenty, for writing a business letter to a publisher to inquire about the fate of a manuscript' (Bryher 1963 149-150) She presents herself as an intensely frustrated speaker, and paradoxically as a creature tied hopelessly to sociability, for whom it is egotistic to pursue any occupation that requires isolation

> Usually I was careful and silent I prayed to be forty, knowing that as long as I was young nobody would listen to me I seldom had more than half an hour a day to myself It taught me concentration because such moments were so precious no noises could disturb them and I usually spent the time memorising pages of poetry to repeat during our interminable walks It was a training in the ancient oral tradition but also a dangerous practice because it absorbed the energy that should have gone into creative work Yet what else could I have done? It was morbid to read so much, they said, and selfish to want to write (Bryher 1963, 157)

She has already discussed this ban on isolation in her text, again stressing learning pages by heart, 'a form of oral transmission ideally suited to the training of a writer but at that time I dreamed only of going to sea' (Bryher 1963 106) What is interesting is that this modernist (by association) should be so aware of her restriction to orality as a child, almost forbidden from the textuality which consequently becomes an ideal Textuality for her is that egotism, loneliness, and attention to the self offered by the text It is a far cry from women's intensely social function in late Victorian and Georgian society Women were - and still are - the

9 Circumspect as ever Ong points out that initially the advantages perceived in Latin were used mainly to teach public speaking and dialectical conversation thus initially supporting the oral mode

talkers, the conversation fillers They chase embarrassing or antagonistic silences, as Dorothy Richardson's Miriam frequently feels obliged to Their limitation to daily life meant a limitation to the woman as the sociable, communicative agent She is not, however the Lacanian speaking subject, solid in its self-definition and separation, but a speaker whose speech does not serve herself, but only the male speaker In this ideology, women exist in 'gracious silence', waiting for male speech (T, 27) They cannot sustain speech independently, but have been trained to buoy up male speech, doing what Pamela Fishman calls the 'shitwork' in conversation (Spender 1989 20) Teresa de Lauretis discusses this actual non-presence of the woman speaker in her own speech (as indeed in her eventual writing)

> [It is] the paradox of woman as both object and sign I may speak but insofar as I speak I don't speak as a woman, but rather as a speaker (and when I do, I naturally take advantage of the podium) I also may read and write, but not as a woman, for men too have written "as woman" - Nietzsche, Artaud, Lautréamont, even Joyce apparently did - and others nowadays, all honorable men, are "reading as a woman " (de Lauretis 1989, 112)

The notion of the silent woman in cultural history stems from this awareness of women as both tied down to the oral situation and not in possession of their own speech This has made her the stable, empty vehicle of a metaphor, the signifier, metaphorically useful to a whole range of male authors from Nietzsche to Derrida The French feminists have pointed to this association of 'woman' with the silent pole, while Kristeva's *Stabat Mater* defines the tears and milk of Mary as 'the metaphors of non-speech, of a "semiotics" that linguistic communication does not account for' (Jacobus 1990, 21) Significantly, she refers to the pre-linguistic somatic babble as the only place where woman can truly 'be' The correctness of this diagnosis, however, is of no use for the frustrated female speaker who wants to act decisively as a speaking subject, influence other speakers, be truly heard, and radically exist in the speaking situation For women writers born in the late Victorian period this paradox surrounding their speech is unavoidable in their daily lives, and they make it a topic of their writing Women's intrusion into the area of self-serving (public) speech in the nineteenth century occurred significantly later than their appearance in print in the eighteenth century Ong's discussion of oral speech has shown us, however, how dangerous oral talk can be, how its enunciator can be physically attacked and verbally abused if he/she displeases the audience Even though the pressures on women who broke into print have been amply documented, by among

others Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar, women public speakers needed the protection of a moral crusade before they could take the public stand as independent non-servile speakers [10] We can consequently oppose two mythical speakers to suggest the situation of the woman speaker, where Freud and Lacan used Oedipus to suggest the power-hungry inquisitive infant male speaker The Cassandra complex could then stand for the frustrated woman speaker who has something vital to say, like Cassandra's premonition about the fall of Troy, and is not listened to The Sheherazade complex on the other hand denotes the archetypal woman narrator pandering to male presence, under threat of execution if she doesn't, spinning out stories to keep male violence at bay

Based on their ambiguous position in an oral sphere which does not allow them really to speak, women's relationship to textuality is equally confused Women entered literacy relatively late and less confidently As Ong points out the first schools admitting women in the seventeenth century were the newer vernacular schools (Ong 1991, 112) When they did start writing in any great number women focused on the new genre of the novel, since this genre did not need any extensive study of the literary tradition Up and into the early twentieth century, women's formal education was limited Gertrude Stein in the United States, Dorothy L Sayers and Vera Brittain in England were among the first women to attend university but both Virginia Woolf and Agatha Christie were educated at home by their mothers and Dorothy Richardson's formal education was patchy Moreover, women's school education was not so completely couched in the literacy of Latin, Greek and the English canon as the male 'initiation rites' Consequently, women modernists did not partake of literacy as extremely as many male modernists [11] They did not internorize literacy to the same extent, so that Stein, Richardson and H D during the modernist revolution could experiment with a highly oral-sounding style, while other features in their writing in fact stem from the preoccupations of the oral sphere If male modernists reacted to the upheaval of the times by shoring up texts against their ruin, and by confronting the literary tradition that preceded them, women modernists did not have a literary canon to lose Their interests focused on more basic issues like the situation of writing and its effect on consciousness, the experience of having

10 Mary Poovey suggests that the alignment of gender and class in the discussion of prostitution in the Contagious Diseases Acts during the 1840 s allowed women like Josephine Butler to discuss these sexual matters so openly because she was dealing with lower-class women (Poovey 1990 38)

11 Because of circumstances certain men may have been similar 'outsiders' like working class men or artists from a society where the oral tradition was still stronger like James Joyce

become 'authors' and writing subjects as opposed to female talkers In hindsight, their experiments seem equally or more revolutionary and experimental, but to contemporary modernists they must have seemed side-issues, dead end interests

Also, textuality can serve women badly For a writing self an important psychological effect stems from the absence of audience and context The result is that the writer feels both the text as well as the topic under discussion become his property The arrival of literacy and the move to the visual as a predominant mode of knowledge causes different affective attitudes towards the surrounding world For instance, our sight serves us badly when we want to gauge perspective, since we perceive really only 'a series of surfaces', while knocking on walls or a box can make us feel interiority without destroying it Ong calls this 'the unique relationship of sound to interiority' (Ong 1991, 71) To look at one thing one has to look away from another Sound on the other hand surrounds one, doesn't prevent picking other things up, or as Ong summarizes it 'Sight isolates, sound incorporates'

> By contrast with vision, the dissecting sense, sound is thus a unifying sense A typical visual ideal is clarity and distinctness, a taking apart The auditory ideal, by contrast, is harmony, a putting together (Ong 1991 72)

On the one hand increased literacy has pushed our society further towards a visualism that was already present moving to the visual sense as the primary mode of information gathering This shift in our sensorium, the increased tendency to 'believe it when we see it' had important psychological effects for our relationship with the surrounding world The aural and visual senses process information differently, and consequently affect not only *what* individuals experience but also *how* they experience Vision is based on difference, on separation of elements It is the dissecting sense In our information acquisition we strive for 'clarity', for distinctness, analysis, a taking apart in order to understand In an early essay 'System, Space, and Intellect in Renaissance Symbolism,' Ong defines the essential visualism of our cultural history

> It is impossible for us to abrogate the history which has shaped our minds and our sensibilities and made us fit for twentieth century existence We are committed to being intellectual visiles in ways in which earlier men were not, by the very fact that we are irrevocably explainers cultists of the clear and distinct, reasonable men (Ong 1968, 84)

Both modes of information gathering are equally important and basically supplementary both harmony, interiority on the one hand, and clarity, distinctness on the other are naturally human ideals of perception, serving their own function But our society dominated by literacy and print technology has increasingly favoured the visual pole

Recent feminist theories of knowledge, frequently based on insights from film theorists, have reached similar conclusions concerning the essentially visualist nature of our epistemology Emily Martin sounds very Ongian, when she recognizes that this visualism has certainly steered science in a very specific direction

> Anthropologists have claimed that the privileging of the visual mode of knowledge is particularly likely to lead to forms of representation impoverishing the complex whole that actually exists The emphasis on *observation*, on mapping, diagramming and charting, has meant that the "ability to 'visualize' a culture or society almost becomes synonymous for understanding it " "Visualism" connotes "a cultural, ideological bias toward vision as the 'noblest sense' and toward geometry qua graphic-spatial conceptualization as the most 'exact' way of communicating knowledge " (Martin 1990, 69)[12]

But more dangerously from the perspective of women, visualism and interiorization of literacy has allowed an ideology to develop that views the female pole as Other, nature, the dark continent where the light of science will eventually penetrate The visual mode makes a strong distinction between the viewing subject and the object, of which only the 'surface' can be seen Suddenly, point of view intensely determines what is seen, since sight is based on difference, distinction In a culture where the viewpoint of the male visile is recorded in the permanence of texts women are seen in terms of the opposition between the visible 'surface' and the unknown interior

12 The result of this growing concern in anthropology with the domination of visual knowledge over the sciences has led to a new emphasis on hearing as a mode of perception 'While 'visualism has been castigated as objectifying and limiting the aural has been suggested as an alternative mode of perception which might avoid some of the problems associated with the visual (Martin 1990 69)

> The ferreting out of nature's secrets, understood as the illumination of a female interior, or the tearing of nature's veil, may be seen as expressing one of the most unembarrassedly stereotypic impulses of the scientific project In this interpretation, the task of scientific enlightenment - the illumination of the reality behind appearances - is an inversion of surface and interior, an interchange between visible and invisible, that effectively routs the last vestiges of archaic, subterranean female power Scientific enlightenment is in this sense a drama between visibility and invisibility, between light and dark, and also between female procreativity and male productivity - a drama in need of constant reenactment at ever-receding recesses of nature's secrets (Fox Keller 1990, 178-179)

In effect, by the late nineteenth century we can note that women were indeed tied to the visualism and literacy of the masculine viewpoint Their representation in the immensely popular English paintings from the second half of the last century, combined with the photographic images mass-produced later on, constitute an important increase in the ideological force of visual presentations of women Confined in domesticity, the Victorian middle-class woman no longer was a working partner She was trapped in visualism In her dress and behavior, she was to embody the family's morals on behalf of her menfolk. But her function was also to display the family's wealth, visually to embody the wealthy, hierarchical bourgeois family Her whole lifestyle was subject to this visual function, while even her speech was only intended to bolster this ideal of male authority Like children, the Victorian woman was meant to be seen, not heard Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity* discusses the attitudes of painters to their female subjects, from the Victorian Academy painters through to the modernists their depiction of woman as basically a passive being was a powerful tool strengthening the ideology His overview collects numerous pictures of swooning, fainting, dying consumptive women, or comparably of sleeping women who seem dead, or of madwomen borrowed from mythology or Shakespearean theatre All these pictures of women indicated their basic unsuitability for daily life, for anything but their visual 'aesthetic' function [13] In this way the many Victorian galleries presented the male and female viewer with a picture of womanhood as either passive and silent, the 'fair sex', or in case of perverse womanhood active and mainly destructive With regards to these presentations of women, increasingly sinister and animalistic, Dijkstra perceptively recognizes that most modernist painting stayed within the themes and content of earlier painting Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Klimt, and Klee persisted in these

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13 Thus characters like Ophelia the Lady of Shalott, Elaine Andromeda, Cassandra were revived to represent the dangers of woman s escape from the private sphere while titillating the male spectator

misogynist images of women as either passive or cruel, despite their revolutionary style Style of course is content to a certain extent, but the misogyny of the art world persisted or even intensified during the modernist period Leafing through Dijkstra's assembly of paintings is to get a striking view of the visual images surrounding women in the late nineteenth early twentieth century

Interestingly, Dijkstra points to the vacant stares of these representations of woman in pictures like *The Drone* (1899) by Arthur Hacker, Lord Leighton Frederic's *Bianca* (ca 1881) or Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Beatrice* (ca 1880) Another much used visual metaphor was the doubling up of very similar female faces, testifying to the inherent similarity between all women Here we see the effect of visualism as enshrined in the male 'viewpoint' The sharp distinction between the viewing subject and the viewed object reduces the latter, even if it is a female person, to mere surface, with an absence of content

The painters' interpretation is backed up by many of the late nineteenth-century philosophers Nicholas Cooke's *Satan in Society* (1870) presents women as all basically the same

> There is far less variety of temperament among women They seem, in this respect at least, to be cast more in a common mold than men It would seem that, in the designs of Providence, each man has to follow the paths of a special destiny, and consequently is endowed with special aptitudes The common destiny of women does not exact those profound and essential differences among them which are remarked among men (Cooke 1876, 279)

Max Nordau agrees

> [W]oman is as a rule, typical, man, individual The former has average, the latter exceptional features there is incomparably less variation between women than between men If you know one, you know them all, with but few exceptions (Nordau 1886, 48-49)

In these 'scientific' observations all women are the same, because they all partake of the passive, unconscious pole of nature They mirror nature, and they all mirror each other, hence the many paintings of women looking in mirrors, in natural pools or lakes looking at each other or mirroring their faces 'Woman' is passive not intellectual The many suffragists, anti-vivisectionists, and other activists of the

period must have been reeling under this pictorial, visual and textual onslaught The forces hemming them in were both visual and textual, denying women's existence as individual presences With regard to the present discussion, these pictures and the new theories backing them up inexorably denied women access to the genre of autobiography Since every woman's consciousness is like any other woman's there seems little point in narrating the story of her psychological growth

The only story concerning women's lives had been performed over and over in the novels of the nineteenth century, a basic plot of courtship, marriage and if there was life after marriage, motherhood Rachel Blau Duplessis' basic thesis in *Writing Beyond the Ending* seems correct as she indicates the attempts women writers made to escape from this constricting plot which basically silenced them, relegating them to the private sphere and making them empty signifiers in fiction Modernist women writers, often living in the sub-culture of London bohemia or the Paris avant-garde, would very tangibly have come up against these pre-fabricated patterns to their lives and respectability As a lesbian, Gertrude Stein literally found herself outside the heterosexual plot while there were absolutely no words for H D 's sexual alternation between male romantic thralldom, to use DuPlessis' term, and the intimate support offered by women friends and lovers Richardson's eventual marriage, after a long life of independence, was equally unwritten and unheard off not many brides marry their husbands expecting them not to live, or expecting no emotional demands Stein's highly ambiguous reaction to this situation indicates the extent to which this plot was binding women into constricting roles She simply recast herself in the role of husband and Alice as the happy wife of a paradoxical lesbian 'heterosexual' marriage Regarding herself as a 'husband' also meant referring to herself as a 'he', thus outmanoevring herself grammatically

If there is only one female plot, one course a female life can run then finding oneself unable to accept this basic plot is finding oneself without a pre-given function and a pre-written identity If one can only be a wife a mother a widow a spinster, and one wants to live beyond these, there is only an empty signifier with which to construct a self Women modernists discovered painfully that somehow they had to succeed in projecting these inner selves, that they had to begin performing themselves in language Aware of women's effective 'absence' from both the spoken and literate situations, they wanted the description in text of their selves to be stronger, more present, a performance of self rather than a presentation

Women, then, are in fact in a double bind, tied to a visualism that allows them to have only a surface no content, and equally tied to a position in orality which allows them only alienated speech, speech at the service of the male speakers They feel not really present in the speech situation, like Cassandra unlistened to or like Sheherazade unable to speak for themselves Literacy and visualism both deny them this 'being-in-themselves', and have in fact made this representation of women more efficient since it can now be multiplied, distributed over a much wider area, with a stronger effect The situation seems hopeless, since both modes deny woman actual presence, a being Their only chance, and this is the direction modernist women will take, is the combination of both these modes of communication, undertaking in conjunction, the *act* of writing and the *act* of speaking Thus, the relatively large attention paid to conversation in the autobiographies of Dorothy Richardson, Gertrude Stein and H D , the presence of the topics of writing, speech and their spheres of action, would stand in a converse relationship to the presence of plot in an autobiography since plot, sediment of the nineteenth-century ideology, stands for silence in women

3 An Ongian Perspective on Autobiography

One vital characteristic of writing has only briefly been mentioned writing boosts introspection, or, as Ong puts it '[w]riting is consciousness-raising' (Ong 1991, 179) As a visualist experience, writing has 'a distancing effect', making the writer distinguish between the writing subject and the absent object written about

> By separating the knower from the known (Havelock 1963), writing makes possible increasingly articulate introspection, opening the psyche as never before not only to the external objective world quite distinct from itself but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set (Ong 1991, 105)

Because writing is a technology, and 'artificial' in the sense that we must consciously learn spelling, it invites analysis and alienation It is a positive alienation, however, which has paradoxically led literates to a discovery of the self, of the individual Because writing invites clarity and analysis, the natural outcome is that eventually the writer will subject the inner reality to the same analytical faculty Analysis leads to self-analysis The result is an increasing individualism, an increasing need to write oneself down Ong shows that oral societies are less experienced with self-

analysis, or analysis of character A Soviet anthropologist of the early thirties, A. R Luria, interviewed illiterate and 'somewhat literate' persons and discovered that they answered questions about their characters and personalities situationally, explaining their position in their family and society rather than attempting an analysis of what they were like [14] These illiterates in other words, were not yet individualists, but stressed their inclusion in a community Our Western literary genre of autobiography in this sense can be considered as the final outcome of interiorized literacy, when textual analysis of 'reality' becomes self-analysis Karl Weintraub thus defines the essence of the genre

> [A]utobiography adheres more closely to the true potential of the genre the more its real subject matter is character personality, self-conception - all those difficult-to-define matters which ultimately determine the inner coherence and the meaning of a life (Weintraub 1975, 824)

The importance of the genre is not only the individual but an individual who has established, via his writing a scripted coherence to his life and self which is not there in day-to-day experience, but belongs to textuality

Consulting the *Oxford English Dictionary*, several authors of the genre of autobiography point to the relative youth of the term appearing for the first time in 1809 in a text by Robert Southey, significantly cropping up in the romantic period with its triumphant assertion of the importance of the individual But even early literacy could lead to analytical self-investigation If St Augustine's *Confessions* or the medieval and Renaissance autobiographies did not stress the importance of the individual perspective as the basis of their world view, they did testify to the belief that an individual life provided a good example or illustration via which to convey a political, religious or cultural message Weintraub spends the latter part of his essay, 'Autobiography and Historical Consciousness' tracing the growth of an individualistic awareness since the Renaissance, and his evolution coincides very clearly with an increasingly generalized interiorized literacy He mentions the increased importance of autobiographical writing from 1800 as the result of the new

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14 In an informal conversation subjects were asked to isolate from a series of words the word that doesn t belong a game demanding abstract thinking and analysis Luria showed that this type of thinking was not used by oral subjects - they thought situationally if items like log hammer hatchet saw belonged to the same work situation they were all 'alike' as a 25-year-old illiterate peasant said (Luria 1976 56 quoted by Ong 1982 51 - *Cognitive Development. Its Cultural and Social Foundations* was only published in Russian in 1974 and in English in 1976)

individualistic consciousness from the Enlightenment and the Romantic period (Weintraub 1975, 821).

Georges Gusdorf's early article puts Jean Jacques Rousseau at the beginning of modern autobiography, thus highlighting an important emphasis shift in the tradition of a genre about an individual life. The autobiographer now sees his personal life as a valuable part of history (Gusdorf 1980, 31). In this respect, Rousseau exemplified that another important step towards this interiorization of literacy had occurred. He asserted the importance of his own life story despite or because of his adjustment problems to a society which he regarded as constricting (Weintraub 1975, 832). At the heart of the Romantic interest in the individual as separate from a community, Rousseau proves that not only the great man who served his community is entitled to his autobiography, but every man is. This is a basic step away from the oral community, where the knowledge attained with difficulty and remembered solicitously by the community was of far greater importance than the individual. For any individual to risk isolation from this common knowledge, even to stress the individual against this community, he must be able to rely on books and writing, where information can be looked up in isolation. The presence of a community is no longer necessary, and is even felt as a hindrance. Weintraub halts his evolution of the individual consciousness at that point of triumph : the writing of autobiography leads to truth about the individual, about a life and about history. An early critic of the genre, he did not envisage the situation when interiorized literacy took a further step towards an analysis of the subconscious.[15] Freudianism, relativism, and the historical situation around modernism undermined this belief in the unity of an individual and proceeded to delve deeper into personality.

Another important shift in the history of the autobiography was the evolution, in the twentieth century towards the literary autobiography. As Jelinek indicates, nineteenth century autobiography was largely an extra-literary affair (Jelinek 1986, 44). This can be seen in our libraries, where the genre is often still assigned a place on the History shelves. Historians, social reformers, politicians, religious ministers wrote autobiographies, outlining their lives, showing with a didactic intention the importance of the individual and self-help. Although much of the poetry and many

15 Mazlisch is an early critic who did consider a Freudian psychoanalytic autobiography (Mazlisch 1970).

novels contained autobiographical elements, few novelists and poets wrote straight autobiographies presenting themselves as the artistic individual Jelinek voices her amazement at the paradoxical situation that the age of Romanticism and intensely personal poetry had no similar explosion of literary autobiographies (Jelinek 1986, 43) Indeed, whereas the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had seen a move towards autobiography as confession in the nineteenth century this 'subjective mode is smothered in respectability' (Jelinek 1986 40) The drastic Victorian split between the private, subjective mode and the public world, however, meant that autobiography at this period was intensely connected with plot It became the public memoir of a successful individual, the story of an individual's progress, not a genre open to the (largely private) female writers In the early modernist period, this Victorian function of the autobiographical started to shift towards the expression of the psychology and development of an artist 'Autobiography as literature' is a discovery of the twentieth century It indicates the final disappearance of the last strong vestiges of an oral society with increased general literacy The alienation from the self that had allowed people to write their autobiographies now took one step further, or rather closer

Both testifying to a highly interiorized literacy modernism and the genre of literary autobiography seem to have coincided at the beginning of this century Moreover autobiography or more correctly autobiographical fiction, seems to have been a central genre within modernist aesthetics The fact that the modernist period is so clearly defined in our minds may rest partially on the fact that most of the writers and poets who took part in literary modernism at one stage of their life wrote an autobiography looking back at what they saw as a highly significant period Robert McAlmon, Bryher's one-time husband, wrote his autobiography on the period 1920-1930, *Being Geniuses Together 1920-1930*, published in 1968 'Revised, with supplementary chapters and New Afterword by Kay Boyle' [16] We can also immediately recall Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Eliot's spiritual autobiography *Four Quartets*, Lawrence's many autobiographical novels like *Aaron's Rod* and Aldington's novel *Death of a Hero* Autobiography certainly was 'in the air' Roger Elbaz's *The Changing Nature of the Self* describes the progress over centuries of the genre to the centre of the literary stage, starting with Augustine and concluding with Malraux He opens his book with a tantalizing

16 The original text was written by McAlmon in 1934 and first published in 1938 Kay Boyle would later, in 1968, republish it alternating chapters about her life in that same period with McAlmon's

sentence 'This book concerns the slow emergence and gradual consolidation of autobiography as a central practice in the discourse of modernism' (Elbaz 1988, vii) Although Elbaz seems to use the term 'modernism' with reference to the modern period, rather than the 'movement' at the beginning of the century, his remark is quite revealing Domna C Stanton agrees, in her introduction to her collection, *The Female Autograph. Theory and Practice of Autobiography From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, and quotes Spengemann who puts the matter even stronger (Stanton 1987)

> Indeed the modernist movement away from representational discourse toward self-enacting, self-reflexive verbal structures and the critical theories that have been devised to explain this movement conspire to make the very idea of literary modernism seem synonymous with that of autobiography (Spengemann 1980, xiii)

Among others James Olney refers to the influence of Dilthey on the history of knowledge in the nineteenth century, especially to his belief that concerning historiography and hermeneutics 'autobiography occupied a central place as *the* key to understanding the curve of history, every sort of cultural manifestation, and the very shape and essence of human culture itself' (Olney 1980 8) This epistemologist influenced his pupil and son-in-law Georg Misch, who undertook a massive historical work on autobiography, *Geschichte der Autobiographie* unfinished upon his death but finished by his pupils (Olney 1980, 8) This work started off this century's critical speculations about autobiography as a literary genre This again shows the centrality of the individual's life history to all knowledge and arts as part of an influential philosophical outlook in the latter part of the nineteenth century In his bibliographical essay in *The Forms of Autobiography*, William C Spengemann presents a historical overview of the criticism of autobiography He also places a first surge of interest in literary autobiography in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century (Spengemann 1980 175-178) More autobiographies were being written and read than ever before, while the first critical works discussing the genre began to appear Misch's history and Anna Robeson Burr's book *The Autobiography A Critical and Comparative Study* (1909) consolidated the recognition of a genre

In *A Genealogy of Modernism*, Michael H Levenson traces the roots of early modernism, from late nineteenth-century thinkers like Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater, Irving Babbitt via Joseph Conrad to two basic ideas, the interest in 'reality' and the

loss of an authoritative ideological basis for viewing reality other than the individual's consciousness

> At issue is the establishment of a "psychologistic" theory of literary meaning which insists on the primacy of consciousness and the muteness of the mere event The *meaning* of the physical reality, not its independent existence is called into question There is not so much a question of *esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived) as *significare est percipi* (to mean is to be perceived)
> In this regard the choice of metaphors is instructive James, in defending the claims of the mind, calls it a "reflecting and colouring medium," consciousness is a medium of illumination (Levenson 1986, 21)

Levenson's definition of early modernism is significant, since its radical favouring of individual or artistic consciousness as the basis of meaning-giving indicates the same interiorized literacy as in autobiography Both have taken one step further from autobiography as history Now, the individual no longer gives independent meaning to his own life only (historic autobiography), but becomes the basis for a signification of reality (modernist autobiography) The crisis in meaning-giving which Levenson and other critics refer to is the result of this radical process With the interplay between reality and the one individual we arrive at the disappearance of philosophical 'Truth' Consequently, both modernism and literary autobiography have a stylistic self-consciousness in common, a fact recognized by Francis R Hart, who quotes a Ph D dissertation by Dillon Johnston

> The autobiography, more than any literary genre, tends to talk about itself the development of the subject matter is so dependent upon psychological theory and ideas about documentation that a discussion of the formation of autobiography almost always becomes part of the subject matter (Johnston 1969, 178)

Both modernists and autobiographers worry about their representation of a 'life' and of the facts in combination with an individual, a consciousness Thus, the autobiographical project blends well with the esthetic renovations of literary modernism Autobiography and literary modernism significantly share a common ground a quest for the representation of the self as meaning-giver

An equally strong autobiographical slant strikes even the casual reader of many women modernists Djuna Barnes, for instance, wrote *Ladies Almanack* (1928), a literary spoof featuring many of the lesbian women in Paris in the circle of Natalie

Barney, while her most famous novel, *Nightwood* (1936), is the literary sediment of her tempestuous relationship with Thelma Wood Even Virginia Woolf who subscribed to the ideal of the impersonal, 'objective' work of art, incorporates autobiographical experience into her work, as in *Night and Day* (1919), the Septimus Smith episodes of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) Jean Rhys's modernist novels are intensely autobiographical, like *Postures* or, by its American title, *Quartet* (1928-1929), while Margaret Anderson, Edith Sitwell, Bryher, Alice B Toklas all wrote autobiographical accounts of the period Indeed many women modernists seem to have shown a marked interest in the development of new techniques and a new perspective on writing *in connection with* the description of their selves, of their own consciousness

Originally, critics of the newly discovered literary genre of autobiography constructed a canon of great, male autobiographers St Augustine, Franklin, Rousseau, Gibbon or the [illegible] autobiographies by Henry Adams or Malcolm X Only a few, John Sturrock (1977) or Jeffrey Mehlman (1974), dealt with a later, avant-gardist author like Michel Leiris, who rejected the chronological narration in favour of a structure based on association, and the key concepts which he feels govern his life Moreover, these early histories of the genre deal only with (Western) men Weintraub puts it very explicitly '[i]t is the intent of this paper to argue the thesis that the autobiographic genre took on its full dimension and richness when Western Man acquired a thoroughly historical understanding of his existence' and 'autobiography as a form of expression [is] best suited to reveal the developing self-conceptions of Western men' (Weintraub 1975, 821, 822) Even female critics like Elizabeth Bruss and Janet Varner Gunn concentrated on the male canon and were blind to the women (and black, working class men!) on the autobiographical margin From the eighties onwards, however, feminist critics have increasingly discovered female autobiographical works, simultaneous with the 'discovery' of black autobiography

With such awe-inspiring male precursors as Augustine Descartes, Rousseau, and Franklin, autobiography in its holistic form basically has until recently constituted highly unfriendly territory for women writers Sidonie Smith's opening chapters in *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* very eloquently indicate the basic masculinist slant of the autobiographical position Smith defines autobiography as 'one more of those cultural discourses that secures and textualizes patriarchal definitions of Woman as the Other through which Man discovers and enhances his own shape' (Smith 1987,

39) Indeed, born out of Renaissance ideals of the self-contained, acting, reflecting, scripted individual, per definition male, autobiography is a public stage, on which a man's past life is put up for a public viewing usually with the avowed intention of increasing the readers' knowledge and experience Even a spiritual autobiography like Rousseau's holds up the picture of a man whose actions and thoughts are of public importance and interest The 'individual' at the heart of an introspective, retrospective effort is a male individual only He is the representative of a patriarchal society stressing rationality, unified identity and difference, but especially a representative of male literacy Susan Friedman (1988) and Shari Benstock (1988) both point out that this 'individuality', this unified, separate, self-governing identity, cannot work for those who belong to two cultures, juggling two role models Women partake in the pursuit of individuality, while realizing that they are both individuals and their opposites, part of nature and of the reality on which male individuality acts Being both subject and object of the text does not allow the woman autobiographer an unhindered, unproblematic access to the genre

Estelle C Jelinek thus asserts the existence of a different, female autobiographical tradition, unrepresented in the theories of the traditional, predominantly male critics (Jelinek 1986, ix) The difference, as indicated by Jelinek lies on three levels, women autobiographers describe a different subject matter with different narrative forms, projecting a different self-image (Jelinek 1986, xii-xiii) Jelinek's theoretical framework covers autobiographical fragments from as early as the Egyptian Ahuri through to Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* including both white British and American autobiography as well as slave narratives and black women's autobiographies Her conclusion is basically optimistic '[O]ne cannot help but notice a progression in self-assertion, self-confidence, and literary sophistication' (Jelinek 1986, x) The all-inclusiveness of Jelinek's overview is cause for concern, however, in its suggestion of typically female characteristics of uncertainty, tentativeness, disorderliness in women's autobiography Jelinek herself sidesteps what she calls the 'nature/nurture issue', not committing herself to notions of female determinism (Jelinek 1986, xi) But her work traces an emerging female autobiography in such drastically different societies, cultures and historical periods, that she cannot avoid suggesting pervasive, inherently female qualities The pattern which Jelinek deduces is one of contrast women write about 'family, close friends, domestic activities', men about 'the professional, philosophical, or historical events' (Jelinek 1986, xiii) Women as she says 'often depict a multidimensional, fragmented self-image colored

by a sense of inadequacy and alienation' as opposed to the male 'self-confident, one-dimensional self-image' Women's autobiographical style then is presented as 'episodic and anecdotal, nonchronological and disjunctive', where (traditional) male autobiographers write linear, causally-based life-stories (Jelinek 1986, xiii)

Although there is some obvious truth to Jelinek's presentation we have to be wary of using her characterization as a transhistorical theory, since it ignores basic differences in the cultural, narrative, and aesthetic contexts Many of Jelinek's remarks concerning Stein's first autobiography for instance, are noteworthy, but she ignores the modernist background to the writing as well as Stein's previous writing practice, and dominant themes Thus she ignores Stein's ongoing interest in the autobiographical position as a feature of her modernist esthetics Jelinek swiftly dispatches *Everybody's Autobiography* as only 'a kind of postscript' to the earlier autobiography, 'a travel book' in which Stein '[projects] the image of what she thinks a man is', making the autobiography dull and uninteresting (Jelinek 1986, 145, 147) Stein is viewed as just another woman to write a woman's autobiography ignoring her modernism, her expatriate situation in the early twentieth century, and her lesbianism

Smith formulates three important points to take into account concerning women autobiographers Her definition seems to allow for a greater diachronic sophistication than the characterization of all female autobiography as disjointed

> Here, then, are the phenomena this discussion would illuminate (1) the ways in which the autobiographer's position as woman inflects the autobiographical project and the four marks of fictiveness that characterize it - the fictions of memory, of the "I," of the imagined reader, of the story, (2) the ways in which the autobiographer establishes the discursive authority to interpret herself publicly in a patriarchal culture and androcentric genre that have written stories of woman for her, thereby fictionalizing and effectively silencing her, and (3) the relationship of that literary authority to her sexuality and its presence or absence as subject of her story These three phenomena mark the text of her life (Smith 1987, 45)

She concludes her overview by saying

> Precisely because self-representation is discursively complex and ambiguous, a "radical disappropriation" of the actual life by the artifice of literature takes place at the scene of writing self-interpretation emerges

> rhetorically from the autobiographer's engagement with the fictive stories of selfhood (Smith 1987 47)

The discursive representation of women autobiographers reacting from within a specific historical and cultural situation, and in a specific literary context, presents a far more sophisticated perspective on autobiography as a position of compromise between various influences It allows for a certain continuity in characteristics and for a consideration of the medium of literacy and the technology of writing as experienced at a certain point in history Moreover, the discursive perspective allows for women writers who not only have to mediate their relationship to literacy, and their position as women subjects, but who also, due to a greater affinity with orality, stress communication and dialogue in their autobiographical texts The autobiographic personae of H D Stein and Richardson discover themselves during the agonistic conversations with men and women As we shall see, relational, discursive autobiographies are the core of their experiment, the recognition of oral female presence shored up by the power of the text

One issue intersecting with literacy and orality is the radical post-Victorian split between the private sphere of the home and family, and the languages of public literacy and orality By definition in the private domain, the life of the average woman is a public non-event, not worth telling on the public stage of the traditional autobiography As we have already seen, all women were basically the same Consequently, they were complete non-starters as autobiographers As Smith and Jelinek indicate many of the earliest women autobiographers, who were seriously disrupting reader expectations, wrote their life stories disguising them as the biographies of their husbands Moreover, for a woman to offer her history to the public, was risking punishment, as Virginia Woolf perceived concerning Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, an autobiographer and 'a bogey to frighten clever girls with' (Woolf 1929, 93) As a private person putting herself on public display, a woman autobiographer consequently found herself with an oblique, uncertain attitude to the language of the public sphere, which 'profoundly contaminated her relationship to the pen as an instrument of power' (Smith 1987, 7) Women's relationships to their own lives was one of silence, not one of public control through language

But the essential aspect of the traditional autobiographical 'individual' is surely the fact that 'he' is scripted, has made himself for all eternity by creating a stable, permanent text which will hold him up to the public view for others, as Gusdorf's seminal article already indicates

> Likewise, autobiography is not a simple recapitulation of the past, it is also the attempt and the drama of a man struggling to reassemble himself in his own likeness at a certain moment of his history This delivering up of earlier being brings a new stake into the game (Gusdorf 1980, 43)

The writing of an autobiography is the self-making of a new, public man To write his autobiography for the benefit of others - traditional autobiography is always a public act - the 'individual-to-be' must isolate himself In order to come into existence he cannot really tolerate the presence of others when writing The self-writer now creates a homogenic self he can believe in, whose life runs along a clear line of causality. This is a coherent 'I' who can know himself, and posits himself in a position of power "'Autobiography," then, is ultimately an assertion of arrival and embeddedness in the phallic order' (Smith 1987, 40) When a man decides to write his own biography, he is saying that his life is ready, and has reached a certain meaning has become significant As a result whatever the content of his life, the autobiographer takes his place in a line of significant men He has basically found an acceptable plot for his life, he has established the meaning of his life, he is Since it celebrates the importance of a male individual wedged in public life, French theorists have called autobiography one of the 'master narratives' of Western culture, one of the prime enunciations of Western individualist logocentric ideology (Smith 1987, 6)

James Olney has referred to three stages in the criticism of autobiography (Olney 1980) Initially, critics focused on the question of whether the texts reflected the 'truth' about the lives of the autobiographical subjects, on the discussion of auto*bio*graphies Then followed a more modernist interest in the nature, and culture, of the 'self', in *auto*biographies Postmodernist critics, under Lacanian and Derridean influence, questioned the effects of language on the kind of individual that was being expressed, autobio*graphies* With reference to female modernists an adjustment needs to be made to the latter position Autobiography is the inscripted text par excellence, *the* symbol of literacy The autobiographer writes the self, because he wants all the advantages of literacy, permanence stability, eternity In

making himself into a public figure, he wants to be assured that his place in the sun will be stable [17] For this reason, we have no theatrical genre called auto-performance, since this would be a performance and therefore ephemeral James Joyce, D H Lawrence, T S Eliot in *Four Quartets* used elements from their own lives in order to describe how the male modernist constructs himself in adverse conditions, faced with a messy, chaotic everyday life, and the loss of all philosophical certainties Their autobiographical texts show an artist heroically constructing his art against the odds of a modern society It is the artist who armed by a higher but almost lost tradition manages to turn the tide, as in the Sanskrit passages at the end of *The Waste Land* (1922) The artistic self is unproblematic Joyce may have presented us with the confusing, myriad impressions hitting the inebriated brain of Leopold Bloom, but he gives the present world of Dublin structure by referring it to the mythic world of a Telemachus looking for Odysseus and via his autobiographic persona Stephen Dedalus lets himself rise above this world as an artist Until *Finnegans Wake* (1939) Joyce is content to let the literary tradition, and the literary hero prevail Books thus become metaphorical for the individual's self to the extent that the modernist Richard Aldington recognizes himself in his books

> A little further down was a display of French books One shelf of about forty particularly held my attention I thought This is a remarkable coincidence, it's the first time in my life I've ever seen a row of second-hand books, every one of which I've read Mechanically I pulled down one of them and opened it On the fly-leaf was written Richard Aldington I took down another, with the same result (Aldington 1968 185)

In fact, Aldington's landlord has sold his books to a second-hand bookshop but in the throes of the Great War, Aldington's recognition of himself in his books becomes a poignant moment of self through reading and writing The individual metaphorically recognizes himself in books, and likes the stability the permanence of the text Walter Ong's analysis of this stability of the text has of course put it

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17 Interiorized literacy also explains the initial strange critical obsession with control over the genre of autobiography In the seventies a number of very similar articles were published keen to find models general rules and categories in which to fit all autobiographical exercise which seemed difficult in a 'genre' so heavily dependent on the varied lives of individuals Although distinctions between the genres are useful (the fact that a diary presents a disunified discontinued self for instance has relevance) Francis R. Hart for one drew too neat a distinction "Confession" is personal history that seeks to communicate or express the essential nature the truth of the self "Apology" is personal history that seeks to demonstrate or realize the integrity of the self "Memoir' is personal history that seeks to articulate or repossess the historicity of the self' (Hart 1970 491)

more negatively it 'carries with it necessarily an aura of accomplished death' (Ong 1977, 232-233)

For women, with an ambiguous relationship to the text as well as to the speaking subject, there is no such easy self-creation in the text As we have already seen, and as suggested by Sidonie Smith, women feature in men's fiction as signs, representing danger, happy ending, loyalty motherhood sexuality etc As a result, womanhood is already a highly fictionalized concept In Eliot's *The Waste Land*, for instance, women are even reduced from signs to mere symptoms indicating the basic illness and infertility of Western society after 1918 Consequently, as autobiographers, women have to mediate a space in between the fictions of themselves already present in literature As the grammatical objects of a sentence fictionalizing them women can't have the same approach to the 'I'-saying, objective autobiography, a fact acutely presented by H D in *Her* Consequently, always threatened by this fictionality women autobiographers have suffered from a very curious relationship between their lives and their textuality

While, on the one hand women were not automatic autobiographers their practice of the novel was frequently criticized for being too autobiographical Women, it was thought, cannot resist making themselves into the heroines of their own fiction Aldington, himself married to a woman writer, published a violent rejection of all women's fiction in *The Egoist*, reviewing a novel by Violet Hunt

> Whenever a woman goes to write a novel she first chooses herself as heroine, she then decides that she had better take someone else, and ends up by choosing herself again If she doesn't do that she sermonises Even in Romola you always have the horrid suspicion that Tito will throw off his disguise and appear as Mary Evans And Adam Bede is an allegorical figure representing George Eliot's better nature It is probably due to the pernicious influence of this author that women adopt these evil courses And her indifference to style is typical
> After all if women are incapable of the indirect method of writing - like a great many men - if they will persist in writing like George Eliot instead of like Flaubert, and if they will cosset and scold and tease and argue about their characters why in Heaven's name shouldn't they? It is much more reasonable to take them for what they are worth, as writers belonging to the great second class, like Rousseau and not to the small first class like Flaubert (Aldington 1914, 17)

Obviously, the crime lies in the mixing of genres, and in the dangerous combination of a female literary subject and a female literary object Aldington uses this

supposed confusion between the writing subject and the object in order to castigate women novelists for going public at all There is a general tendency, also discussed by Domna Stanton's book, to view women's writing as the unavoidable, innocent pouring of a private life into fiction by a person who inexcusably blurs the clear-cut boundaries between the private and the public (Stanton 1987, 4-5) And we do fall for this critical fallacy, as can be judged by the mythology surrounding Stein, or Woolf [18]

However, there is in autobiographical fiction by women modernists an intentional ambiguity surrounding the autobiographical 'truth', an ambiguity of course connected with the choice of many women modernist autobiographers of autobiographical 'fiction' or, to put it more correctly lightly fictionalized autobiography Djuna Barnes's 'novel' *Nightwood* (1936), as well as her *Ladies' Almanack* (1928) and her verse drama *The Antiphon* (1958), plays with the fact that we are intended *partially* to interpret her characters as autobiographical figures Several audiences seem intended friends and acquaintances who could correctly interpret periods of their life as textualized, and a wider audience which perhaps could not This is not just the case of an artist using autobiographical material from which to make art Likewise Miriam Henderson is not Dorothy Richardson, yet on another level we are very much intended to understand that she is It is this ambiguity which is so important about the women modernists' flirting with autobiography Neither are Julia Ashton, or Hermione Gart Hilda Doolittle but how else are we to understand them? This has caused the casualties of so many woman modernists whose subversion of the genre was misunderstood by criticism, as a result of which they were relegated to the rank of minor authors The protestations of impersonality in the critical works of T S Eliot and Pound were taken at face value, however

The relationship of women modernists with their autobiographical texts is complicated even more by the frequent appropriation of their diaries and letters by male modernist competing autobiographers Dale Spender quotes the well-known example of D H Lawrence, who used, and to her feeling abused, his young love

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18 Our knowledge of many of the modernist women writers focuses much more on their admittedly often eccentric lives than on their writing The lives and loves of H D Stein Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson seem to undermine their writings in the critical literature in a way that the lives of T S Eliot Joyce and Pound do not

Jessie Chambers' notes and life story in *Sons and Lovers* (Spender 1989, 152-153) As Kime Scott remarks, *The Trespasser* stems in part from Helen Corke's diaries, while Mollie Skinner's text was used for *The Boy in the Bush*. She also refers to Martin Green's opinion that Frieda Lawrence could be called a co-writer of certain novels (Kime Scott 1990, 217-218) H D was allegedly portrayed in *Aaron's Rod*. But women published about him too Chambers sought to rectify the picture of her early love in *D H Lawrence A Personal Record* (1965), while H D 's version of her relationship with the Lawrences in London was written out in *Bid Me to Live*, written in 1927 and only published in 1960, after two major revisions

Of course, the question of 'truth' in an autobiography is repeatedly asked (Hart 1970, 485) [19] Louis A. Renza opens his dense, interesting essay with three quotes which exemplify the doubts of autobiographers, concerning the effectiveness of their project Mark Twain testifies to his repeated but abortive attempts at autobiography, while the Kafka and St Augustine quotes question the basis of their autobiographical material memory (Renza 1977, 1) As Hart points out, there are no stylistic or grammatical conventions built into our language, signalling whether to take a communication as fact or as fiction We consequently depend on signals from the author, titles, introductions (which themselves may be decoys as in Gertrude Stein's case), publishers' blurbs etc

> Both sides [traditionalists and new critics of autobiography] are continually preoccupied with a question which while inescapable, is in part a pseudo-problem the relation in autobiographical writing of the fictive and the historical, "design" and "truth," *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Hart 1970, 485)

Both readers and writers seem to feel the need to make a clear distinction between truth and fiction Several factors prevent the 'truth' from clearly standing out in autobiography Authors and readers assume the identity of the writing self with the past self being written about Memory is itself a dodgy instrument, since we manage to forget some events considered to be important, while remembering others which seem to have little intrinsic importance The writing situation itself is frequently mentioned as a block to truth The autobiographer writes a narrative, and all the rhetorical implications of narrative come into play In order to give a certain

19 This initial fixation of the early critics of the genre on the truth question suggests that in their struggle with a new field the critics themselves to an extent show the need to have a control over a very slippery genre Karl Weintraub redefines autobiography several times in his opening pages and significantly calls one section of his paper 'Problems of the Genre (Weintraub 1975 822)

meaning and relevance to the story, a pattern may be imposed on it, highlighting events which were, maybe, less significant Weintraub's example from Rousseau forms a good illustration of what he calls 'Retrospective Interpretation' Rousseau returning from a walk outside the city walls of Geneva, finds the drawbridge up and interprets this trivial event in his *Confessions* as highly significant, indicating that he will never keep a home within society (Weintraub 1975, 826) The existence of a traditional narrative also assumes a continuity within the writing self, with the same views and attitudes towards events, even though an autobiography may be written over a large period of time

The truth-question in autobiography would have to be asked in a different way, as with all literary texts, taking into account the fact that the individual changes while the text stays the same In this sense, a text would be 'true' only if it was as flexible as the individual But in fact there are two 'truths', the truth that stays loyal to how a person may have felt and been, with all the imperfections of the writing situation taken into account, and a truth that changes with the living individual It is at the intersection of these two that the women modernists will situate themselves Their 'oral' autobiographies will involve keeping the truth question in an ambiguous vacuum, in fact flaunting this ambiguity Early on, feminists pointed out that women have frequently favoured other genres to write about the self Instead of autobiographical works many women have become diarists, or have deflected onto letter writing (Jelinek 1986, Smith 1987) If she doesn't believe that her life has a plot, since it only contains insignificant day-to-day household events, then a woman writing may prefer such a genre Jelinek's book suggests that women did not have the techniques or self-confidence to write well-structured and well-defined autobiographies and selves However, my suggestion is that their oblique relationship to both orality and literacy meant that women, within their specific situation, may have used textuality for different autobiographical functions than the male function of self-creation, self-definition, self-stabilization via a language of permanence Tied as a frustrated speaker into the oral sphere, and circumscribed as an empty sign in textuality, women were not really 'there' in either linguistic mode

Walter Ong points to a different experience of truth and knowledge in oral societies, an experience of truth as communicative and belonging within a context, not the stabilized, permanent 'Truth' ideal of our literate society

> The expression of truth is felt as itself always an event In this sense, the contact of an oral culture with truth, vague and evanescent though it may be by some literate standards, retains a reality which literate cultures achieve only reflexively and by dint of great conscious effort For oral-aural man, utterance remains always of a piece with his life situation It is never remote Thus it provides a kind of raw, if circumscribed contact with actuality and with truth, which literacy and even literature alone can never give and to achieve which literate cultures must rather desperately shore up with other new resources their more spatialized verbal structures (Ong 1967, 33)

The acquisition and retention of knowledge occurs in a totally different manner in oral and literate societies Ong's formula for this is contained in one of his titles 'You know what you can recall' (Ong 1991, 33) When texts cannot be depended on to support our memory what you recall can be extremely limited and must be organized in definite ways Firstly knowledge transfer and retention in oral culture needs communication Secondly, even knowledge retained by many is extremely evanescent, unless memory is supported by mnemonic tricks like formulae repetitions, alliterations etc Ong's book describes how oral societies will easily drop certain facts or vocabulary from the collective memory of the group if these have no further relevance for their situation (Ong 1991, 47-49) There is no possibility of overloading the collective memory For an oral person, the truth of a life would grow along with the person's needs and experiences, as would the 'history' of a tribe Only what has its uses would be remembered So illiterates often do not bother to remember their age, or their date and place of birth, but they remember their ancestry their status in the group Literates have a totally different perception of time The days of the week stretch visually along a line for us, Sundays turn a corner in our visual memory, the year is a circle of months and seasons with the same days repeated over and over, life is an upward and then downward spiral Facts can be checked in diaries, registers, certificates so that incongruities are felt between the individual's memory of a certain event and its description in a text written at the time Truth, then, is a literates' ideal, becoming a problem when individuals decide to commit themselves to paper and become faced with the existence of several updated versions, several truths for their life story

Stein, Richardson and H D present fickle changing selves, almost flaunt irrational, 'illogical' personalities in their autobiographical writings [20] Their characters are continuously changing, continuously altering their views on life, and the life stories which they consider typical of themselves This constant remaking of themselves, combined with new stories, new versions of events is in effect an element from orality As we tell and retell stories from our past, without writing them down, we change perspectives and facts, because the new stories are the truths that work for the teller in his or her present situation In a truly oral community too, history is 'respoken', history changes with the community Facts which no longer count are quickly forgotten to keep the memory free for what is considered important, while there is a need constantly to re-perform the important self-truths This explains reader irritation with characters like Miriam Henderson, or with the ever-indulgent revising of the H D characters in her series of autobiographical novels The combination of an oral feature, the ever-changing personal history, with verifiable scripted text shows us a character in discord, ever changing unreliable For the first time, readers of autobiography are forced to recognize a personal history in its various changes

In her review of *The Tunnel*, Katherine Mansfield correctly assesses that Richardson 'has no memory' She describes Richardson as diving into a biscuit tin and presenting her readers with biscuits, while ignoring all the moments in between, the moments in fact governed by memory What she offers, consequently, are scenes Mansfield's complaint is that the scenes are not linked into an autobiographical story with a memory plot In a Richardson text then there is no Memory

> And then it is, in the silence, that Memory mounts his throne and judges all that is in our minds - appointing each his separate place, high or low, rejecting this, selecting that - putting this one to shine in the light and throwing that one into the darkness (Mansfield 1930, 4)

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20 The situation can never present a clear divide between 'static male autobiographies and flexible female ones of course Bruce Mazlish, for instance suggests a structure based on a Freudian interpretation of the stages of the self paying lots of attention to the crucial period of early childhood from which the later attitudes in life are considered to stem, and to further 'crisis' moments like adolescence (Mazlish 1970) If pursued to its conclusions his type of autobiography would resemble the narrative of a psychoanalytic session

But in another text Mansfield interestingly reports on her own discovery of many variegated selves She starts off by reminding us of that typically female 'book' of the Victorian girl, the autograph album and the motto so often written in it 'To thine own self be true' To this significantly written confidence in a unified self, she opposes the many selves assailing her in daily life and the ever-changing log book of a hotel

> True to oneself! which self? Which of my many - well really that's what it looks like coming to - hundreds of selves? For what with complexes and repressions and reactions and vibrations and reflections, there are moments when I feel I am nothing but the small clerk of some hotel without a proprietor, who has all his work cut out to enter the names and hand the keys to the willful guests (Mansfield 1962, 205)

Mansfield replaces the motto with a different perception of a textual self-writing, the clerk entering the different selves into an ever-changing, ever-progressing logbook, a text which is both permanent and present, both defined and ever-added to

4 Psychoanalytic Practice on the Border between Orality and Literacy

Any discussion of modernist autobiography needs to consider the use made of life stories by Sigmund Freud in his psychoanalytic practice In fact there are so many points of contact that Freudian psychoanalytic practice can be considered as a useful metaphor for the modernist autobiographical texts of the women writers under discussion

Freud used the term 'psychoanalysis' for the first time in 1896 He had moved from work under the influence of Breuer and the technique of hypnosis to a cathartic talking cure by the mid 1890s (Gay 1989, 103) Freud became well-known to the general public at the height of English literary modernism When Joan Riviere and two members of the Bloomsbury group, Alix and James Strachey, translated his works into English as *Collected Papers* in 1924-1925, psychoanalysis moved into the public domain (Gay 1989, 465), with innumerable popular vulgarizations and the sensationalization of Freud's diverse and developing theories (Beauman 1984, 147-173) [21] In 1917, there appeared an English translation of an accessible book by Oskar Pfister, *The Psychoanalytic Method*, four years after the German publication (Gay 1989, 458) By the mid-twenties, Freud had become 'a household name', and corresponded with 'Romain Rolland, Stefan Zweig, Thomas Mann, Sinclair Lewis,

21 An earlier translater A A. Brill had brought out *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1910 and *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1913, but his texts suffered from inaccuracies (Gay 1989 465)

and, from 1929 on, Arnold Zweig' (Gay 1989, 454, 456) Peter Gay mentions the amusing anecdote of Freud being approached by agents of Samuel Goldwyn to make a film of his life and the headline of the *New York Times* as he rejected the idea 'FREUD REBUFFS GOLDWYN /Viennese Psychoanalyst is Not Interested in Motion Picture Offer' (*New York Times*, 24 January 1925) Despite this rejection of "Freud - the Movie", Sigmund Freud was both extremely popular and infamous at the height of the modernist period Significant however, was that in his psychoanalytic practice he approached topics also present in the texts of women modernists like Stein, Richardson and H D Indeed, the great success of his therapy stems from the fact that Freud positioned himself exactly on the axis between literacy, orality and autobiography in dealing with his patients' neuroses

Firstly, Freud realized the importance of the autobiographical project in the cure process, the need to go back to those past traumatic events which encapsulated the neurosis But it was not so much autobiography as 'autobio-performance', the telling and re-telling of these self-stories, which was essential Freud's inspiration recognized the importance of the speaking performance Speakers never lie in his sense Even the most incompetent speakers the punners the utterers of spoonerisms, the narrators of dreams tell the truth, for the good listener-spectator at least The 'truth' of the unconscious comes to the surface in jokes, slips of the tongue (or the pen), and dreams But this was not an ordinary speaking conversation The Freudian analysand associated freely talked about childhood, dreams, events which had taken on a symbolic value in his or her life thus making an 'oral' autobiography part of the cure process Autobiography, by virtue of its very name, assumes a written account of the own life Psychoanalysis turned this partially on its head by combining oral lifetelling with the associative method, which, for the psychoanalyst showed up the cracks in the individual's life which a written autobiography would aim, literally, to paper over It is talk with a difference, speaking under stress The analysand must attempt associative speech, turning off the organizing narrative mechanism of his narrating

> Your talk with me must differ in one respect from an ordinary conversation Whereas usually you rightly try to keep the threads of your story together and to exclude all intruding associations and side-issues, so as not to wander too far from the point, here you must proceed differently So say whatever goes through your mind Act as if you were sitting at the window of a railway train and describing to someone behind you the changing views you see outside (Friedman 1981, 54)

The unconscious always visual according to Freud, is a series of pictures which the analysands must try to put across as they are watched by the analyst Although visual, the subconscious images obviously needed to be worked out and verbalized But the mixture of the visual and oral modes becomes even more uncomfortable if the actual situation in the consulting room is considered Narrating over their shoulder with Freud sitting behind them, as it were, the analysands are in fact put in an almost purely oral affective situation Their visual contact is completely cut off, and there is only the patient's voice filling the room a situation suggesting the depth and interiority of aural and oral communication, rather than the surface contact of the visual The patient mimics the atmosphere of orality, the feeling of safety, community, interiority

But it also a situation of visual power since the doctor holds the notebook The same memory can lead to different versions as told by the patient and the doctor holds all versions textually Freud also stresses like the true positivist scientist he was the importance of close observation of the patient as she/he was narrating, observation for reactions and gestures as further clues to the case (Gay 1989 71) The analyst, then is in the visual, literate world he can see the patient, observe note down the different narratives As is described in H D 's account of her analysis, Freud occasionally quoted his notes against the patient in order to correct him or her, to point to a fissure in their re-telling of the story It is a situation of power, not unsymbolical of the relationship of literacy and orality in this century The patient is pushed into an oral situation as the object of investigation denied the visual and access to writing, to enter a more unconscious memory of his or her story The analyst is the literate writing up in the evening making deductions and constructing theories Under the full strength of his writing ego, Freud thus capitalized on a different new approach via a new medium to the patient's problem His technique plays out the presence and absence factors of orality and literacy Gay quotes the following advice for the objectivity and neutrality of the analyst 'The physician should be opaque to the patient and like a mirror, show nothing but what is shown to him' (Gay 1989, 303) The patient's vision is impaired, the analyst reflects accurately Depth and surface are again played out against each other

> No matter how one-sided, the psychoanalytic situation is a dialogue The analyst, though largely a silent partner, offers interpretations that the analysand presumably could not have reached on his own If he could have reached them, to speak with Freud there would have been no neuroses While the patient, swollen with grandiosity or bowed down with guilt feelings, distorts the world and his place in it, the analyst, neither praising nor condemning but tersely pointing out what the analysand is really saying, provides a therapeutic glimpse of reality What is perhaps even more important, and quite impossible in self-analysis, is that the analyst - relatively anonymous and attentively passive - offers himself as a kind of screen onto which the analysand projects his passions, his love and hate, affection and animosity, hope and anxiety (Gay 1989, 97)

Not only is the same complex aural-visual situation repeated, but also the dialogue with the silent partner who is the screen on which memories are projected and who reflects back the correct situation, the 'therapeutic glimpse of reality' The quotation also indicates the importance of the actual interaction Freud soon became aware of the creative force inherent in the psychoanalytic speech situation His concept of 'transference', the establishment of a dependency on the analyst by the analysand, is in fact a recognition of the inevitable relationship which is part of the oral situation and which he used so effectively in the therapy [22] Here Freud the scientist had to recognize the power of 'presence' in the oral situation with the unavoidable relationship, whether of dependence or rejection arising irrevocably from the dialogue between two individuals It is indicative of his scientific discovery that he would use transference, this chemistry of the oral situation, in dealing with the patient's autobiography

Moreover, the actual telling, the (repeated) performance of the analysand's memories, proved to be of equal importance as the discovery of transference Listening to Emmy von N 's memories, Freud discovered the use of listening over and over to the same stories, hearing her performance out As Breuer had put it, the symptoms of repressions and complexes were 'wegerzählt' during the psychoanalytic session (talked away - Gay 1989, 66)

> He had already recognized that, tedious and repetitive as her recitals were, he gained nothing by interrupting her, but had to hear her stories out to the end, point after laborious point (Gay 1989 70-71)

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22 The insight of 'transference' came early on in Freud s career during his studies with Charcot when he recognized that patients after hypnosis developed a loving feeling whether filial maternal or downright erotic in nature' (Gay 1989 50)

He would discover the interesting hints given by diversions in the narration Freud learnt to recognize the force of the actual performance and re-performance of the life story In a sense, Freud used his own autobiography in his researches, quoting his own dreams or memories to substantiate his theories In 1897, he performed the first sustained self-analysis, although he may have experimented earlier Self-analysis, 'the founding act of psychoanalysis' and 'the cherished centerpiece of psychoanalytic mythology' as Gay calls it, grounded the new science in autobiography (Gay 1989, 96) Freud was in many respects the child of his autobiographical times

His best-known patients were female, who frequently seem to have had problems that manifested themselves in the speaking situation, like Anna O , a patient of Breuer's who was to be vital for Freud's theoretical development Ill since 1880, Anna's symptoms became quite dramatic in 1881 Besides hallucinations mood shifts, and somnolency she suffered 'mounting difficulties with her speech' 'At times, she regressed in her syntax and grammar, at times, she could speak only English, or French and Italian' Her story telling under hypnosis, during which her symptoms temporarily improved suggested the 'talking cure' to Breuer and Freud (Gay 1989 65) Another patient, Emmy von N had 'spastic speech inhibitions', while Dora, that very traumatic patient for Freud, also suffered from a nervous cough, impaired speech and an irritated throat Freud put this down to a reference to 'sexual satisfaction *per os*' (Gay 1989, 70 248, 250) While Freud seems to have managed to at least partially convince Dora that she was thinking of oral sex - she lost her cough - the connection with speech and sexuality seems equally interesting Ultimately rejecting his interpretations, Dora ended the analysis, uncured [23] In this way the Freudian discoveries were highly poignant in relation to women and children, whom it shockingly credited for the first time with very definite sexual impulses, quite unlike the Victorian image of them, which had always recognized only men's sexual side Freud's defence of lay analysts resulted in the existence of numerous female analysts in Europe In America the influential New York Psychoanalytic Society strongly resisted the inevitable arrival of lay psychoanalysts, and consequently women analysts, who were seldom physicians Early women psychoanalysts were

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23 It is ironic that Freud himself suffered over several decades from a cancer of the mouth which was kept at bay but resulted in Freud wearing a painful prosthesis in his mouth and which impaired his speech at times (Gay 1989, 538) Significantly H D would pick up on this in her own narrative of her analysis with Freud

Joan Riviere, Karen Horney, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Helene Deutsch, Melanie Klein, Alix Strachey, Ruth Mack Brunswick Jeanne Lampl-de Groot, Princess Marie Bonaparte, and of course his daughter Anna Freud [24] His method of analysis by associative talk allowed even relative amateurs like Bryher and H D to consider becoming analysts, which Ray Strachey, another analysand did This scientific method of listening and conversation was woman-friendly

Interestingly though Freud or Jones did not use these tried and tested techniques of performance, presence, association when it came to publishing their own biographies as scientists Although they did at times analyse themselves or had colleagues analyse them, they obviously were too anxious about their status in the scientific community and society at large to turn their revolutionary techniques onto themselves in public, scripted form This is where the modernist women writers under discussion diverge into more subversive autobiographies, since they did attempt to combine the functions of presence and performance in speech with the stability of the text But then, unlike Freud they had not that much to lose, and everything to gain

5 Self-performance

With this background as 'absent', frustrated speakers and a similar absence in the written text women modernists wanted their autobiographies to perform a different function Linda Anderson describes autobiography or autobiographical writings as an 'attempt to write the self, or give the self a narrative', as a re-creative act, making a self (Anderson 1986, 58) The logic of her argument suggests that maybe women would feel a bigger need to write autobiography, to reconstruct meaning into their life and their selves Moreover, the autobiography by Richardson, Stein and H D was favoured by their oblique relationship towards speaking and writing They attempted to combine the advantages of the written medium stability, permanence, with the strength of performance in order to express their autobiography In an oral society, the performance of history was an essential activity to keep this knowledge alive

24 Freud by no means advocated everybody to analyse he called this 'wild analysis' and wanted a long learning process , but one of the key necessities to becoming an analyst was to be analyzed oneself In those early days a long analysis study practical training and commitment allowed lay persons to become analysts with formal university training not yet necessary

> Pre-technological cultures all relatively oral, need memorizers and reciters in strategic administrative positions What information is kept alive in such cultures is largely dependent on mnemonic formulas such as those that have survived only sporadically in our society 'Thirty days hath September,/ April, June, and November /' and so on
> In a culture dependent on mnemonic techniques for its verbalized, intellectualized contact with its past and thus with itself, a poet like Homer serves not merely as an entertainer or even as a recaller but also as a repeater If the poets were not at large, saying things over and over again, much of the knowledge in an oral-aural culture would evaporate (Ong 1967, 27-28)

The oral memory only works in performance, which is why oral-aural societies needed performers to keep memory alive and communicative The past for the oral person, as Ong mentions elsewhere, is present, exists only while it is being performed, and not as it can be looked up and locked up in a library for future reference Women autobiographers like the modernists Richardson, Stein and H D utilized the situation of performance They performed their own past for an audience, since this was the only way for them to be truly present to the audience As avant-gardists they were far less subjected to convention When many male modernists started up what turned into the genre of the artistic autobiography they frequently stuck to the traditional presentation of a life, like Aldington's *Life for Life's Sake* They subscribe to the written autobiography, characterized by a notion of the past as solidly separated from the present, frozen into text The writing autobiographer has created a new self-definition which will remain fixed and guide 'him' for the rest of his life, as texts are meant to remind and guide, has made himself as a public figure who has 'arrived'

> The trail which in the course of many years has led me from the coast of Kent to the banks of the Connecticut River has been long and devious, with many unexpected turns and some checks and misfortunes, but it has been interesting, and, I should say, upon the whole both fortunate and happy I have not yet succeeded in writing either a poem or a prose book which satisfied me entirely, but it is fun to go on trying I can say truthfully that during approximately half a century of infesting this planet I have very seldom indeed been bored, and that is as good as any other definition of success in life (Aldington 1968, 374)

Women autobio-performers present a different perception of a past, only existing in performance, their past selves brought into the here and now As, in a sense, the most literate of genres, autobiography helped concreticize this question for women writers As frustrated speakers, not in possession of their presence in speech, the

'egotism' of the writing situation was liberating They became 'oblique' writers, using the writing situation to 'be' in a text, to perform their self right before the eyes of the readers This is the discovery of women modernists like Stein or Richardson a far greater search for existence in the present, a faculty which, paradoxically, they can only attempt to perform in textuality, since the actual presence of men is paralyzing Characterized by interiorized literacy, men saw themselves much more as a subject within the plot of their lives, proclaiming themselves the 'I' which so annoyed Woolf (Woolf 1929, 150-151) Interestingly, Woolf's own strenuously self-conscious attempts at autobiography were published under the title Moments of Being a statement of this female wish for being in the present if ever there was one Like Richardson's 'moments of direct feeling', Woolf's 'moments of being' stands at the opposite spectrum to Joyce's expression of equally highly charged times, his 'epiphanies' The first seem to indicate a greater interest in 'being', while Joyce's very visualist ideal tends towards the acquisition of artistic vision in the traditional mystical sense

As a result, our approach to the topic of women modernist writers needs to be three-pronged their need to keep an ongoing record of themselves (autobiography) as existing, *present* speaker-writers (orality-literacy) by extending the existing written medium (modernism) Richardson, Stein and H D consequently will be seen to underwrite a perverse use of textuality, working against some of the major characteristics of the scripted word They attempt to go beyond the literate self-definition, which was so detrimental towards women They will consequently avoid the written rules of clarity, precision, and above all will break that mnemonic rule of writing which demands conciseness organization and narrative efficiency By breaking all these rules which via plot circumscribed women, they are in effect introducing elements from the oral sphere into the text Trying to force their autobiographic presence into the text, they favour an oral, ever-flexible, ever-changing style, and long drawn-out scenes of female performance which reject autobiographical closure Significantly, however, this does not make their autobiographical texts 'oral' They may be extending the written word, but it is in fact this orally extended written word which is so attractive and liberating Again women modernists, even Stein did not choose to focus on a stage career as self-performers, even though it is significant that when Stein did start lecturing she didn't really need to reformulate her style It was important for them to force their presence into the written text, to make themselves acutely 'there' even if this meant

going against the grain of the written text In order to escape the Catch-22 situation - female oral and textual absence - they in fact developed a vicious circle of their own What was so important in this effort, was the paradoxical combination of presence with permanence Writing themselves into a text, the 'egotistic' activity of writing already gave them an acute awareness of interiority and self-presence Printing this text, they avoided the frustration of attempting to perform themselves as speakers In order to avoid disappearing under the weight of the empty feminine signifier created by the text, they needed to perform as strongly as possible, pulling in features from the oral mode Above all they needed to keep going autobiographically Consequently, H D 's autobiographical novels supply the readers with an ever-renewed, never-closed personality performing herself to us as so many incarnations, so many presences of H D Steinian texts simply go on and on, their woman speaker tiring out her audience by this constant address The same goes for Richardson's one great text, *Pilgrimage*, which simply ran over the course of her life, and brought her readers into close-up contact with her persona, in a slow-motion autobiography with stress on Miriam's performance and presence The sheer length to which she stretches *Pilgrimage*, the amount of text we have to sit through, has for many disaffected traditional readers seemed almost like the irritating presence of an aunt who will not shut up This is exactly Richardson's intention the will to be, the will to be radically and unavoidably present to the reader, to make a woman's consciousness equally significant *as* a man's This is also present in the autobiographical intention to be present, to win with one's version of events for the sheer fact of winning and speaking in an authoritative voice, making others listen Richardson, Stein and H D are not offering a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman, but they are trying to make us tangibly feel the impact of the presence of women

Chapter II Literary Modernism and the Crisis in Literacy

1 Delineating modernism

> And now I will hazard a second assertion, which is more disputable perhaps to the effect that in or about December, 1910, human character changed (Woolf 1928, 4)

Virginia Woolf's famous dictum complete with hesitations and disclaimers, originally belonged to a paper she read for the Heretics Society at Cambridge, which was published later the same year as a pamphlet by her own Hogarth Press In 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', she is considering the presentation of character in literary modernism The movement itself she connects very clearly with a democratization within English society

> All human relations have shifted - those between masters and servants husbands and wives, parents and children And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature (Woolf 1928, 5)

Literary modernism, then, is only one of the effects of increased democracy Woolf concedes that exact chronology is impossible, so that December 1910 is a border by common consent Characteristically, however, she places this portentous literary movement against a household background

> I am not saying that one went out as one might into a garden and there saw that a rose had flowered or that a hen had laid an egg The change was not sudden and definite like that In life one can see the change, if I may use a homely illustration, in the character of one's cook The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable, the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air, in and out of the drawing-room, now to borrow the *Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat (Woolf 1928, 4-5)

There are, as Woolf suggests several remarkable things about her portrayal of the Georgian household and the Georgian cook with reference to modernism Lucid about the article is Woolf's recognition that the high-brow literary movement is above all lodged in the practical circumstances of everyday relations, as she suggests with her garden and hen-house imagery We may remember that the Woolfs' own daily lives at this time revolved around the inky energetic business of the Hogarth hand

press Woolf's article ends on a typically triumphant note concerning the presentation of Mrs Brown

> But do not expect just at present a complete and satisfactory presentment of her Tolerate the spasmodic, the obscure the fragmentary, the failure For I will make one final and surpassingly rash prediction - we are trembling on the verge of one of the great ages of English literature But it can only be reached if we are determined never, never to desert Mrs Brown (Woolf 1928, 24)

The final assertion about literary modernism is feminist, then, placing the presentation of an ordinary woman at the heart of the modernist project Woolf's prospect of a great new literary age inextricably bound with the renewed presentation of Mrs Brown seems far removed from the aesthetic predictions of Ezra Pound or T S Eliot In her article, however, she combines several factors of modernism which need further investigation Firstly, the great wave of modernisms was based in and influenced by the circumstances of daily life for poets and novelists Like the Woolfs, many of them spent a large amount of their time editing, printing, and inking presses, deciding on paper weight and illustrations, publishing, distributing Secondly, modernism as a literary movement is intensely connected with a new literary goal which affected both form and content of male and female modernist texts, the presentation of women For the women modernists too, then, private experience was connected with their writing programme in their emancipatory drive to force their own reality into the text

'Causes' for literary modernism have necessarily been multiple and contradictory The critical popularity of Woolf's statement lies in its capacity to rise above these complexities of chronology and causality Certainly, society had undergone many changes during the final quarter of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries

> [C]entral themes of literary modernism [were] the emergence from Victorian norms and certainties, the entry into an age characterized by rapid technological change and the violence of two world wars the disruptions of conventional gender roles with the rise of feminism, the breakup of racial and class hegemonies at home and abroad, and the development of literary modes which reflected the disintegration of traditional symbolic systems and the myth-making quest for new meanings (Friedman 1990_a, 85)

Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (1976), or G H Bantock (Ford 1984) add to the list democratization, a change in class relations, and a less authoritarian attitude between parents and children Freudian psychoanalysis, and Einsteinian relativist physics contradicted a century-old positivist world view De Saussure's linguistic revolution halted illusions of 'natural' language to consider language as a structure which preceded the choice of the individual Anthropology stressed alternative cultural organizations, Bergsonian philosophy questioned the concept of time and duration Publishing and advertising geared themselves towards mass commercialism However, to these important causes underlying modernism can be added practical background features which would inevitably have affected the writing experience of the modernist individual the production and distribution habits of the period, the relationships within the writing community, a writer's feelings concerning literary authority in an age of increased literacy and commercial writing, and the arrival en masse of the woman writer and poet

As many commentators have also remarked, the term 'modernism' has always been 'semantically unstable' (Bradbury and McFarlane 1985, 22) A first point in this discussion concerns the authors included under the term 'modernism' When Peter Faulkner wrote his students' introduction to literary modernism, he singled out Virginia Woolf, T S Eliot, and Ezra Pound and then offered the following names for further consideration in his bibliography

> It is impossible to specify all the writers who are relevant, but this list includes major American and European writers Ford, Ford Madox, Lewis, Wyndham, Crane, Hart, Faulkner, William, Stevens, Wallace, Williams, William Carlos, Kafka, Franz, Mann Thomas, Mayakovsky, Vladimir, Proust, Marcel Rilke, Rainer Maria (Faulkner 1990, 77)

Originally published in 1977, Faulkner's book is still very much in use Disregarding the absence of other women writers - not even 'Stein, Gertrude' is included - we can see that in other ways too the accent has since shifted Faulkner's inclusion of Kafka and Rilke, and maybe Proust, indicates his definition of modernism as fairly wide, including writers whom we could consider typical of a 'modern' mentality and attitude, but who did not actually belong to the modernist networks in several European centres during the first decades of this century Bradbury and McFarlane criticize the term on the same grounds unlike 'romanticism' there is no term which can serve as general indicator, since the term 'modernism' is used both for the

general atmosphere of the time and for a specific style (Bradbury and McFarlane 1985, 22) The term itself of course is by now illogical and anachronistic, a situation only increased by the appearance and general acceptance in the eighties of its successor postmodernism [1] But we hold onto it because of its suggestive power 'the modern' was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century a strong and urgent call for renewal and escape from what were regarded as limiting, cramping conventions and opinions Undeniably this feeling of crisis was commonly felt by many modernists and their audiences 'one of the features of the age we are talking about is that it is remarkably historicist, disposed to apocalyptic, crisis-centred views of history' (Bradbury and McFarlane 1985, 20) Radicalism, avant-gardism the extreme distaste for the artistic situation of the previous period is in itself one of the most dominant features unifying all the variations of modernism However, critics have pointed to paradoxes within the modernist phenomenon some modernists have been both politically progressive and conservative, some even fascist Marxist critics like Lukács have called it 'late bourgeois aestheticism' and completely denied its revolutionary characteristics, while others quite rightly emphasize the iconoclastic intentions behind much of the work of futurists dadaists, or surrealists

Moreover, the term has been differently used in various art forms, modernist architecture, for example, does not stem from the same period and background as modernist music or literature For literary critics, it serves distinctly as a term describing stylistic features of alienation and dispersion, while historians would use it more to denote the general period of the early twentieth century But the definition of modernism has also varied internationally, as every country has offered a different cultural inflection on the term Bradbury and McFarlane define English literary modernists as following

> Hough, therefore, is talking about one obvious bifurcation within Modernism, and he is referring, of course, to the doctrines of impersonality and classicism that mark much Anglo-American Modernist thought, and especially that vein in it that concentrates into Imagism, which becomes in every sense the hard core of the Anglo-American tendency (Bradbury and McFarlane 1985, 45)

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1 Teresa de Lauretis thus mentions Baudrillard s characterization of the terms modernism and postmodernism as implosion a mad rush of both modernism and postmodernism together into the black hole (DeLauretis 1989 81-82)

This traditional perspective on literary modernism in the English language has a distinctly different flavour from the variegations of French, German, and Scandinavian modernism In fact, the very creative mixture of these several 'modernisms' in the international art scene is itself an essential part of a very complex phenomenon, which one consequently must avoid calling a movement

Traditionally, criticism has favoured those modernists who presented strong critical writing, and had clear profiles as either poets or prose writers Pound, Eliot and Joyce may have been innovative and cataclysmic, but they were also easy to process by historical and literary criticism Recent critics still insist on isolating these heroes as the only representatives of a major literary and artistic movement Thus Sanford Schwartz's book, promisingly entitled *The Matrix of Modernism* (1988) receives as subtitle 'Pound, Eliot and Early 20th-Century Thought,' while Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (1986) concentrates on Hulme, Ford, and again on Pound and Eliot As Bonnie Kime Scott indicates, Joyce has been awarded the status of having 'the central position in the modernist canon' (Friedman 1990, 196) This is not without reason, since many contemporary modernists considered *Ulysses*, along with *The Waste Land*, as central texts which influenced them greatly However, a certain overexposure of Pound, Joyce and Eliot does them a double injustice In the past, it has frequently dragged them into the realm of high philosophy while isolating them from their cultural and historical background By ignoring their more quirky contemporary fellow modernists they have been turned into safe, unradical inhabitants of a literary canon

2 The modernist network

If modernism is such a confusing, complex esthetic phenomenon then this is due in part to background circumstances, which for the first time in history drastically changed the atmosphere in which art was created A number of characteristics distinguish twentieth-century modernists from the innovators of previous literary and artistic 'movements' These characteristics will be seen to have served to undermine the idea of literary and literate authority alive in the English tradition

Thanks to the modern communication and transport revolution, the modernist movement is in a sense the first instance of a sustained, international semi-official literary network Within this modernist network, a number of people functioned as

'facilitators' Only indirectly involved in the business of writing, they offered money introduced people, acted as unofficial agents, published their favourite authors, edited, printed, distributed and gave advice Bryher, a novelist and educator in her own right, clearly saw herself in that role from the very beginning

> After I left Queenwood [her boarding-school] I prayed that my destiny might be service to artists and poets I saw myself as a Gozzoli page, a cupbearer at the feast of minds, following the flight of speculation and dream as eagerly as children chase their coloured balls Alas, for my innocence! Fate granted me my wish in part and turned me into a mixture of nurse and business adviser without pay, official recognition or an afternoon off to myself (Bryher 1963, 183)

Being a 'facilitator' did not do one's own literary career much good After several months in the role of 'facilitator', as the editor of *The Criterion*, T S Eliot became fully aware of the extent to which his new function was actually preventing him from publishing creative work of his own A letter of 12 March 1923 to Quinn fully shows his frustration

> I have sunk the whole of my strength for the past 18 months into this confounded paper, when I ought to have been minding my own business and doing my own writing The paper has therefore done me more harm than good (Hamilton 1976, 70)[2]

McAlmon is typical of the many helper-modernists His marriage to the shipping heiress Winifred Ellerman, Bryher, meant that he could support others with his printing press (after his divorce from Bryher, unkind Parisian expatriates nicknamed him McAlimony) The time and energy McAlmon put into the work took him away from writing and he ended up embittered and unknown, a travelling salesman for his brother Noel Riley Fitch's biography of Sylvia Beach shows her practically going bankrupt in her efforts to print and, especially, distribute *Ulysses* for its not overly grateful author Harriet Weaver in England Harriet Monroe, Amy Lowell, Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson, Adrienne Monnier were similar 'facilitators' without whose magazines and financial support the modernist movement could not have made its sudden fundamental impact Others brought artists and writers in touch with eachother, like H P Roché, André Breton, the link between many French surrealists, Carl Van Vechten, who introduced Nella Larsen and Paul Robeson to Stein and

2 T S Eliot was not only a poet and literary critic but temporarily the editor of the *Criterion*, and after his much-maligned bank job 'director of Faber and Faber thus amassing quite an amount of control over not just the writing but also the publishing process

Toklas, or indeed the Beach and Monnier bookshops [3] Indeed Bonnie Kime Scott offers a visual representation of a 'Tangled Mesh of Modernists', visually representing the connections, friendships correspondence reviewing between both female and male modernists and contemporaries (Kime Scott 1990, 10) Kime Scott claims that this figure clearly shows, among other things, the strength of women's presence and inter-relationships in her (extended) modernist network Several plots on modernism can thus be opposed to each other Traditionally, we are presented with a view of modernism as a highly competitive clash between heroes and antagonists, attacking each other with words and manifestos Our greater knowledge of the practical functioning of people like Sylvia Beach Robert McAlmon, Bryher, Adrienne Monnier, and Harriet Shaw Weaver within the modernist network plus the supporting done by apparent egotists like Ezra Pound, allows us to rethink modernism as a mobile, supportive, immensely active 'village' network cooperating to renew literature and art This, rather than the 'Clash of the Titans'-plot, would explain its sustained success and influence Borrowing a metaphor from Russian structuralist narratology, an alternative modernist plot would stress the presence of these 'helpers' within a collaborative network, rather than the plot of 'heroes' and 'opponents' fighting it out over the prize of modernist glory

Concomitantly, the internationalism of modernism has been insufficiently considered Critics have discussed separate 'incidents', like the influence of French symbolism and of Italian futurism on English modernists (Svarny 1989) [4] More fundamentally, the expatriatism of many modernists made it a radically international movement National identity was problematic for some modernists or was a function they willingly kept suspended, like Pound or Stein, for whom transnational movement was a liberating part of the modernist experience In a letter to Harriet Monroe, Pound was both sermonizing and optimistic

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3 'Alice testifies very wittily about Roche He was a very earnest very noble devoted very faithful and very enthusiastic man who was a general introducer He knew everybody he really knew them and he could introduce anybody to anybody As Picasso always said of him Roche is very nice but he is only a translation' (ABT 50)

4 John Holloway for instance discusses this international influence in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature* More recently the need for research on the intersection between race and modernism has been mooted Kime Scott quotes Jane Marcus's objections to the traditional Eurocentrist view on modernism How would modernism look if viewed from Africa or India or Japan? What is the patriarchal component of Eurocentrism?' (Kime Scott 1990 17)

> Until 'we' accept what I've been insisting on for a decade, i e , a universal standard which pays no attention to time or country - a Weltlitteratur standard - there is no hope And England hasn't yet accepted such a standard, so we've plenty of chance to do it first (Pound, letter of 7 November 1913, Paige, 62)

Aldington testifies to the internationalism of the new poetry, and the sense of novelty in it

> The Georgians were regional in their outlook and in love with littleness They took a little trip for a little week-end to a little cottage where they wrote a little poem on a little theme Ezra was a citizen of the world, both mentally and in fact He went off to Paris or Venice with vastly less fuss than a Georgian affronting the perils of the Cotswolds Instead of wasting time on debating whether Walter was greater than Rupert, he [Ezra Pound] invited my attention to the literature of Europe (Aldington 1968, 100-101)

Likewise, in his autobiography, McAlmon, freshly arrived in London, describes a difficult meeting with Wyndham Lewis who defrosts upon hearing of McAlmon's rich in-laws and indicates his international interest 'Chelsea, Kensington, and Bloomsbury meant almost nothing to me, because my interest in the arts had always been for things Russian, Scandinavian, Italian, French or Spanish' (McAlmon 1984, 4) One of Pound's first letters to Marianne Moore, immediately enquires after the extent to which she has been internationally influenced

> How much of your verse is European? How much Paris is in it? This is, I think, legitimate curiosity on my part IF I am to be your editor, and as I am still interested in the problem of how much America can do on her own (Pound letter of 16 December 1918, Paige, 205)

In previous centuries, writers like Byron, the Shelleys, or the Barrett Brownings had established themselves abroad But by the end of the nineteenth century travel had considerably intensified, especially between Europe and America T S Eliot, for instance, temporarily came under the influence of Henri Bergson, when he managed to attend his lectures in Paris Paris and London were hardly a day apart, and what had meant travel or a grand tour for earlier poets and writers was rapidly growing into an international community of artists who knew each other, travelled between centres and were able to pass on the latest artistic innovations and the latest gossip with great speed and efficiency Families like the Steins or Sylvia Beach's family travelled back and forth between the continents with great ease Stein spent her

early childhood in Vienna, moved back to America, travelled to London and Paris following her brother Leo while her older brother Michael also brought his family over to Paris The San Francisco earthquake saw the Michael Steins briefly returning to America to check up on damage to their property, after which they again travelled to Europe An extremely favourable exchange rate in the twenties made Paris an attractive place for the many American expatriates But Paris was not the only artistic pole of attraction Bradbury and McFarlane's collection has underlined the importance of Berlin for German, Slavic, Scandinavian, and Dutch writers of Zürich, New York (Greenwich Village, Provincetown Players), Chicago, and of course London If an internationally minded poet or critic previously could only become acquainted with a foreign source via the written or printed word, the modernist community could meet and informally know each other This international network, with all the characteristics of a village, has been stressed by authors like W G Rogers (1968), Humphrey Carpenter (1989), and more recently Shari Benstock (1987) and Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L Smyers (1987) The last three critics as well as a patronizing W G Rogers, emphasize the role of women artists and benefactors as the glue that kept this network together Writers from Europe mailed their poems and prose to Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* in Chicago, or Harriet Weaver Shaw's *The Egoist*, or handed their work to Americans who had set up a printing press in Paris like the Jolases who printed *transition*, or Harry and Caresse Crosby (The Black Sun Press) Adrienne Monnier's bookshop Les Amis des Livres specialized in translations from American and English (avant-garde) literature for its French clientèle What Sylvia Beach, Adrienne Monnier's friend, effectively set up was a similar venture for an English audience More importantly both shops established contacts between Anglo-American exiled artists and writers and the French avant-garde, a kind of linguistic cross-fertilization Monnier's review *Le Navire d'Argent* translated Hemingway, e e cummings, Robert McAlmon, William Carlos Williams and T S Eliot and Monnier later published the first French translation of *Ulysses* by Auguste Morel (Ford 1980, 8) From early 1930, moreover, separate issues of *This Quarter* presented translations from French, Italian, Russian literature Equally, the Dutch modernist journal *De Styl*, whose contributors too temporarily surfaced in Paris, devoted whole issues to French and German modernism The Black Sun's Continental Edition books also intended to bridge the Atlantic Paintings were shipped to America and England where the Armory Show and the Post-Impressionist exhibition respectively greatly influenced public opinion The Dadaists are yet another good example of this internationalism in succession, towns like Zurich,

Berlin, Köln, Hannover, and Paris hosted a dadaist movement with only distinctions in atmosphere between them

This village-like network, then, posited the pole of orality, the inspiration of conversation, in the experience of modernists Without wanting to exaggerate this into McLuhan's 'global village', there was an intense, face-to-face confrontation between everybody who mattered in the world of literature, or so it seemed Even the reclusive Richardson-Odle pair eventually in the autumn of 1923, turned up in Paris to be fêted (Rosenberg 1973, 98) What one modernist said to another modernist could easily turn up in the novel or autobiography of a third Interestingly in this context, in her first editorial Margaret Anderson mentions the inspiration of 'divine afflatus', and the importance of conversation as an aim in starting *The Little Review*

> Second I demand that life be inspired every moment Third the only way to guarantee this is to have inspired conversation every moment Fourth most people never get as far as conversation, they haven't the stamina and there is no time Fifth, if I had a magazine I could spend my time filling it up with the best conversation the world had to offer Sixth marvellous idea - salvation Seventh decision to do it Deep sleep (Anderson 1976, 11)

The natural result of this intensely oral internationalism is the attraction to the sound and texture of another language Many poets and authors, like Pound, Eliot, Moore, attempted to write in other languages, mostly French The alienation, the feelings of marginality called up by the activities of translating or writing in a non-native language were directly brought home to them Shifts in vocabulary and grammar between languages intensely suggest concepts alien to the source language Gertrude Stein's preference for living in France was combined with an intense awareness, in *Everybody's Autobiography* of the alien nature of French vocabulary, as well as the radical Americanness of her native English Both Pound and Eliot received much of their early inspiration and insights from French and Italian poetry The influences H D shared with the imagists, most notably Pound, likewise stem from other-language cultures and translation Bergson, Japanese haiku poems, the Provençal Troubadours, her own interest in a female poet precursor Sappho as well as the connections between Greek and Egyptian cultures Richardson's *Pilgrimage* is obsessed with the naturalness and innate meaning she perceives in Russian, German, and French accents An interesting phenomenon, these twentieth-century modernists were at once involved in a highly literary and literate process, while

simultaneously experiencing intense, actual contact with other languages on an equal and daily basis This intense international contact between middle-class avant-gardists was a relatively new experience The oral/aural clash of languages and cultures obviously made an impact since it surfaces as a motif with the three women modernists under discussion

The importance of translation in the lives of the modernists cannot be overstressed, with so many of them involved in the linguistic missionary work of promoting an other-language writer In the present discussion it highlights an unsettling challenge to the notion of literary authority with which these modernists were faced T S Eliot, Dorothy Richardson, Nancy Cunard, and H D were all published translators who had spent at least several months working between two languages, in the presence of two cultures Kay Boyle translated René Crevel's novel *Babylon* partially in 1930 Louis Aragon translated Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* into French for Nancy Cunard's press Aldington too was quite a translator and scholar, especially after the first world war, when the study of European literary history seems to have provided him with the opportunity of repressing his terrible experiences [5] Dorothy Richardson for one produced a number of professional translations to extreme deadlines In *Pilgrimage*, she uses translation and the presence of other languages within Miriam's environment as another element for undermining the patriarchy surrounding her protagonist H D autobiographically exploited the background presence of the Moravian German Many modernists vividly brought home the creative, but disconcerting effects of living and writing another language This psychological impact of the internationalism of many modernists is not fully taken on board by many English-speaking critics yet it is a central characteristic of the modernist network and atmosphere

Literary collaboration was another natural but problematic effect of this network It also forced modernists to consider what happens to 'authority' if several people have worked on a manuscript, or if the printing of a book is the result of collaboration not just between a publisher and author but also designers illustrators one or several

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5 Translating each other s work did not always improve relationships between authors as the well-known episode of the 'Flowers of Friendship' reminds us Stein s free interpretation based on a poem by Georges Hugnet was seen by her as a poetic translinguistic collaboration between two equals Hugnet obviously regarded her poem as a none too faithful translation of his The question led to a serious quarrel between Stein and Hugnet, and was never resolved Stein eventually published the poem herself under the revised title 'Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded Friendship Faded '

editors and an amateur-printer who very often is also an author T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* is a well-known example, and many critics consider it the fortunate result of Ezra Pound's critical onslaught T S Eliot himself undertook what Lynn Broe calls a 'text-bashing' function for a play by Djuna Barnes *The Antiphon* (Broe 1990, 22), making the text far less explicit about the autobiographical story of incest and brutality which Barnes was initially telling D H Lawrence is well-known for having appropriated portions of diaries memoirs and stories by Jessie Chambers, Louie Burrows and Helen Corke sometimes incorporating them verbatim into his novels (Spender 1989, 154-155) In her treatment of *Being Geniuses Together*, Kay Boyle, a well-meaning supporter of McAlmon, nevertheless attacked the authority of his text, 'revising shortening and adding alternate chapters of my own' (Boyle 1984, i) In fact she gave the text a totally different perspective and context, making it into a duography, rather than the autobiography intended by McAlmon

The ideal of literary authority was further undermined by the mixture of artistic media involved in modernism Some connections between artists working in different arts have been documented, like the friendships between Picasso, Braque, Juan Gris and Stein (Mellow 1974), or between Carlos Williams and the cubists (Dijkstra 1978), or the dadaists (Battersby 1989) The modernist reinterpretation of literature coincided with similar renovations in music, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, as well as photography and the silent film Insufficiently discussed, however, is the actual effect on the perception of an artistic medium from contact with another medium and its version of 'reality' The modernist arts were literally boxing into each other In the hands of practitioners trying to establish what each medium had to offer, this amounted to an experience of artistic translation as it were With the decline in prestige of the 'academies' in several media, every artist felt permitted and capable of working in every field, rejecting the importance of academic specialization In a move counter to the careful specialization and training advocated by Pound and Eliot, painters experimented with writing writers attempted to paint Thus confronted by the limitations of their own and other arts, they consequently attempted to 'force' the boundaries of their own art, in order to include a previously absent artistic quality Stein attempted 'word portraits', Satie wrote musical pieces in the shape of a pear, or in a colour As an audience, we are made to feel the limitations but in a surrealist way we also achieve knowledge of artistic possibilities beyond the medium Thus, in *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein mentions the dissenting reactions of her painter and writer friends to her version of events in *The*

Autobiography of Alice B Toklas Painters and writers, she concludes, maintain different relationships to the present and the past by virtue of the medium they work in She also reports with some misgivings how Picasso tried his hand at poetry, after the example of Salvador Dali 'Well you see Pablo I said you see the egotism of a painter is an entirely different egotism than the egotism of a writer' (EA, 9) But Stein herself wrote a surrealist filmscript about two women, their car and their poodle, and collaborated with Virgil Thomson on an 'opera', *Four Saints in Three Acts* [6] This experience too resulted in a prolonged commentary on the differences between literature and the performing arts in *Everybody's Autobiography*, as well as a totally redefined concept of opera Stein's 'literary portraits' were intended as textual equivalents of the portraits which Matisse, Picasso, Braque, and Laurencin made of their friends Significantly, she even considered the suggestion of taking millionaire Americans as paid 'sitters', as the painters were able to The concrete poetry of an e e cummings or the Belgian poet Paul van Ostaijen (who lived for a while in Berlin) brought design and drawing into poetry while the poet Edith Sitwell wanted to render musical rhythm and melody in poems like 'Neptune-Polka', 'Pluto-Mazurka', or 'Fox-Trot' (Sitwell 1930, 111-114 178-179) Pound's knowledge of music impressed the composer George Antheil who read his article on musical harmony for the *transatlantic review* As William Atheling, Pound had been music critic for the *New Age* magazine edited by Orage for 1917-1920 He had attempted to compose and was writing an opera *Le Testament* based on Villon, for which Antheil was asked to collaborate on the orchestration (Ford, 1975 109-110) Djuna Barnes supplemented her newspaper articles and *Ladies' Almanack* with drawings to make a unified multi-art presentation Mina Loy, on the other hand, was a painter who took part in the Salon d'Automne between 1903-1907, but then turned to experimental writing and later to design Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* too extensively compares Miriam's experiences as a performer of music, or a painter of pictures, with her activities as a writer Richardson herself contributed a regular column to the cinematic journal *Close-Up*, significantly called 'Continuous Performance' The photomontages of dadaists like Kurt Schwitters, Hannah Höch and John Heartfield combined principles from photography and painting into a new, mixed art form

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6 Two film 'scenarios' by Stein were published in *Operas and Plays* (Stein 1932), 'Film Deux Soeurs qui ne sont pas soeurs (1929) and 'A Movie (1920) (Steiner 1978 177)

while their 'ready-mades' were a similar combination of media [7] Caresse Crosby wrote and published poetry and, besides her printing interests also sculpted

In a different sense many modernists also became involved in another new artistic medium, sitting for art photographers like Man Ray and Cecil Beaton Photography's visualism contains contradictions similar to those of print, representing the image of something which per definition is absent As indicated by its etymology, the inventors of the term considered its connection with writing since 'photo' stems from the Greek word for light while 'graphy' stems from 'graphein' to write in light, in fact Man Ray's photographs of Nancy Cunard, or Beaton's pictures of the Sitwells, Stein and Toklas, are posed stage-managed pictures The subjects of these photographers were compromised into creating an image of themselves, both subject and photographer experimenting with the language and 'reality' of a relatively new medium Beaton's pictures of Stein and Toklas show the photographer and his subjects destabilizing the autobiographical perspective of their self-representations Art photography too was inviting them to investigate those aspects of new, disturbing personalities that could be presented on photographs and not in painting Likewise, the surprisingly modernist features of many early silent films are not so incongruous if the involvement of Stein, Richardson, H D , Nancy Cunard, the singer Paul Robeson and Kenneth Macpherson is considered The strongly visual impact of the new art medium affected the hierarchy within the existing structure of the arts Moreover, cinema was itself the result of a new type of collaboration between music, drawing, colouring, composing and the theatrical arts H D 's comments on the silent era of the cinema suggest its hugely exciting but destabilizing impact on the other arts, promising a new or renewed contact with language and literature Like any semiotic function a new art and medium cannot make an appearance without affecting the previous structure of the arts, questioning their artistic goals Bryher testifies to the importance of the silent film 'It became the fashion for the *avant-garde* cinema groups to make films as it had been the custom in Paris to bring out two issues of a magazine' (Bryher 1963, 264) H D considered the cinema 'the most important innovation since the Renaissance' (Friedman 1990, 88) The (still silent) film

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7 Interesting in this context is the appearance of paintings which present us with writing or pictograms of a kind which posit for us the plasticity of writing There are montages and collages which include text by Hannah Höch and Kurt Schwitters the painting 'Zeichenreihe' [Series of Signs] from 1931 by Kandinsky which looks like a set of hieroglyphs on a wall or 'Ein Blatt aus dem Städtebuch' [A Page from the Golden Book] by Paul Klee

nevertheless affected poetic language suddenly words became vivid and alive by virtue of this new visual encoding of narrative

> We take so for granted the use of the term for instance, "flying upstairs," that we do not realize how apt and arresting that phrase really is, until the camera again shows us that, actually, in vision or in retrospection or in anticipation, we "fly" upstairs at a given warning or a given signal So we can "swim" in ecstasy and "drown" actually in happiness
> I mean words, as such, have become weathered the old stamp is obliterated, the image of king or of olive wreath or the actual stars or the actual oak branch have been worn off the coin Words are all alike now, the words even one feels sometimes of a foreign language have lost "virtue " The film brings words back and how much more the actual matter of the drama Words become again "winged" indeed We "fly" upstairs with Lulu (H D 1990, 120)

H D , both a writer, part-time actress and film editor, refers to the creative connection of film and music, a relationship of mood and atmosphere In a process also described by Ong, the poet and writer experiences an invigoration of her age-old medium, the written and the printed word, by the new art She finds an analogy between film and the Freudian notion of the dream and lucidly discusses how the film has renewed the existing arts

> The film is the art of dream portrayal and perhaps when we say that we have achieved the definition the synthesis toward which we have been striving Film is art of another dimension, including not only all art but including all life Art and life walk hand in hand, drama and music, epic song and lyric rhythm, dance and the matter of science here again, as in some elaborate "allegory" of the Florentines, take hands, twine in sisterly embrace before their one God, here electrically incarnated, LIGHT Before the high-powered effect of lamp (most modern expression of voltage and amperes [sic]) we have the whole run of antiquity the whole run of nature, the whole run of modernity (H D 1990 121)

The references to Freudian dream notions and the analogy of the modern with antiquity are perhaps particular to H D , but her statement highlights the radical new 'reality' potentially portrayed with the help of what was then advanced technology H D 's very modernist interest in science and technology meant that for her the early film was capable of 'realizing' her topics of the visionary dream in a new way before her very eyes as it were Reading her autobiographical novels, we see distinct cinema influences in the light pictures of her vision in Corfu projected on

the wall or her very cinematic cutting and connecting of scenes in *Her*[8] Thus, she is equally impressed by the mixing of art forms in a Kenneth Macpherson film With approval, she mentions the technical innovation he brought to the early cinema, by writing his scenes before filming them

> Kenneth Macpherson has indeed achieved a sort of dynamic picture writing His camera has recorded his pen and ink sketches with fluidity and precision He "wrote" his scenario in a series of some 1,000 pictures, the actual directions for each special picture read like captions His script, in this, is unique and in itself a work of art His is an innovation in the manner of approach to "film art" that can not be over-estimated (H D 1990, 123)

In a true mixing of art forms, the camera pictures a pen that doesn't merely write but sketches, making it unsure whether this is writing or drawing, as he 'wrote' the scenario for pictures The result is an art form that indeed seems to tap the subconscious for the first time, something of the utmost importance for H D According to Bryher, the visual language transcended national languages and allowed immediate access to the viewers' consciousness

> It was the golden age of what I call "the art that died" because sound ruined its development The film was new, it had no earlier associations and it offered occasionally, in an episode or single shot, some framework for our dreams We felt we could state our convictions honourably in this twentieth-century form of art and it appealed to the popular internationalism of those so few years because "the silents" offered a single language across Europe (Bryher 1963, 247-248)

The arrival of the talkies made film making too expensive Fragmented along national languages, it fell from its modernist status as an international artistic medium More conservatively, Q D Leavis discusses the pernicious effects of the 'talkies' and the challenge offered by cinema to literature Its direct manipulation of images, for one thing, makes the cinema more forceful than reading

> [M]oreover, attending the cinema, like listening to the gramophone or wireless, is a passive and social amusement, whereas since reading aloud in the family circle is no longer practised fiction is a solitary pleasure and the public to-day prefers communal to private pastimes (Leavis 1990, 55)

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8 Adelaide Morris discusses H D 's interest in an article outlining the central concept of 'projection for H D 's thinking on imagism psychoanalysis astronomy and the cinema (Morris 1984)

She quotes Anatole France's paroxysm of revulsion, which really drives home how threatening a new system of signification must have been for existing culture 'Le cinéma matérialise le pire ideal populaire Il ne s'agit pas de la fin du monde, mais de la fin de la civilisation' (Leavis 1990, 204) From a less reactionary perspective, Woolf too underlines the drastic reinterpretation of writing the cinema was effecting, in her discussion of 'The Reader'

> And the curious faculty - the power to make places and houses men and women and their thoughts and emotions visible on the printed page is always changing The cinema is now developing his eyes the Broadcast is developing his ear (Woolf 1990_a, 698)

The presence of a lively modernist network sustaining writers and artists, the clash of languages and artistic media in their daily experience, and the reshuffling of the arts by the appearance of photography and film were the specific conditions under which modernism came into being The common effect of all these influences was a necessary readjusting of the semiotic structures Writerly authority became fluid in the creative melee of the modernist network, and the very content possible in artistic media, and in the different languages further undermined the concept of the male, English author Underlying the many disturbing new experiences was the basic feeling of a crisis in the traditional arts This rescheduling of the content of literature and the arts can be combined with another major challenge to the traditional authority of the writing subject It concerned another basic shift in the notion of authorship by the appearance of women modernists

3 Women in Modernism

Recently, feminist and black historians and critics have pointed to artists and writers who fell outside the typical paradigm of the white male modernist rebel In order to establish a complete re-evaluation of modernism a lot of research is needed on the input of black Americans (the Harlem Renaissance) and of African and Asian cultures [9] Forgotten women modernists have benefited from critical work of rediscovery undertaken by Elaine Showalter (*A Literature of Their Own*, first published 1977), Ellen Moers (*Literary Women*, 1980, first published 1963), Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar (*No Man's Land*, 1988, *Sexchanges*, 1989), Gillian

9 Recent feminist revisions of modernism have taken on board the issue of race In her overview Bonnie Kime Scott thus includes Jessie Redmon Fauset who took part in the Harlem Renaissance Zora Neale Hurston and Nella Larsen The topic of race and modernism however needs even more research and re-evaluation than gender and modernism

Hanscombe and Virginia L Smyers (*Writing for their Lives* 1987) and especially Shari Benstock (*Women of the Left Bank*, 1986) With the help of feminist publishing houses like Virago and The Women's Press, they have unearthed many neglected female modernists, who had been allowed to drift out of print Of course a good self-advertiser like Gertrude Stein was never really forgotten but certainly Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy, Hilda Doolittle and Bryher, Dorothy Richardson Kay Boyle and others have had to be rediscovered Moreover, a thoroughly engendered theory of modernism has yet to emerge, comprising women writers and lesser-known male modernists Such an engendered vision on modernism would flesh out the seemingly solitary appearance of giants like Joyce Eliot or Pound, and perhaps also reconcile and explain some of the contradictory critical theories which modernism has attracted

A first reinterpretation of modernism along lines of gender was effected by Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar They regard modernism as largely a misogynist reaction by establishment and avant-gardist males to increasingly confident and popular women writers, an art movement based on sexual antagonism Their second major collaboration, the three-parter *No Man's Land The Situation of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, is the twentieth-century follow-up to *The Madwoman in the Attic* which described the connection between writing and masculinity so paralyzing for nineteenth-century women writers They read the twentieth-century male and female writers very much from an oppositional perspective On the male side, there is increasing resentment, a feeling of alienation and aridity, blamed on the presence of women writers This interpretation is not unfounded, as indicated by the many misogynist enunciations by Eliot Pound, Hemingway and Lawrence, or later writers like Norman Mailer and Henry Miller Twentieth-century female writers on the other hand, were hindered by the 'female affiliation complex', the awareness of a now existing female tradition There was certainly antagonism between male writers and what they saw as female upstarts dragging down the art However, Ian Hamilton's discussion of modernist little magazines leaves the impression that some modernist gender battles were in fact fought in later critical essays and reviews Hamilton presents Harriet Monroe as a well-meaning lady-editor without, however, much literary discernment Her championing of now-forgotten women poets is derided by him, while she in his opinion resisted the literary progressiveness of Pound and hindered his revolutionary work

> For all her evident concern, Miss Monroe cannot hide the genteel rather bland puzzlement of her response It was all too far from home She was more comfortable printing cosy poignancies from the girls who had been left behind In a single issue of 1918 we find poems by Eloise Robinson, Ruth Gains, Allene Gregory, Louise Ayre Garnett, Antoinette de Coursey Patterson, Julia Wickham Greenwood and Lola Ridge, (Hamilton 1976, 58)

He quotes with relish from a poem starting 'O France's lilies are tall with pride' (Hamilton 1976, 58) Monroe's break with Ezra Pound is a choice for Americanism by a woman who cannot cope with the sophisticated foreign poetry Ian Hamilton's book clearly distinguishes between the (male) innovators and the (female) traditionalists who were useful in their publishing role but needed clear guidance He equally suggests that neither Jane Heap nor Margaret Anderson could really appreciate the value of Pound's contribution shortsighted by their enthusiasm for American work.'Pound was never really able to penetrate and transform the spirit of *The Little Review* because neither of its editors really understood the value of the free gifts he handed them each month' (Hamilton 1976, 36) He not unjustly mocks their championing of, in Jane Heap's words, an American Dadaist, Baroness Else von Freytag-Loringhoven To him this is only proof of their inability to distinguish quality from eccentricity, a talent surely severely tested by a lot of what appeared in modernist magazines of the period [10] Margaret Anderson's claim that she wanted to offer a free podium for the writer, 'a free stage for the artist', with a minimum of editorial control, is considered as merely lack of discernment (Hamilton 1976, 38, quoted from Anderson, no further reference given) Undoubtedly, there were many such tensions within the modernist network along gender lines The very fact that the presence of so many women modernists was forgotten indicates that the men were more successful in exploiting those gender divisions within modernist authorship, aided after the facts by critics like Hamilton and W C Rogers Bonnie Kime Scott is clear about the situation in her introduction 'Modernism as we were taught it at mid-century was perhaps halfway to truth It was unconsciously gendered masculine' The women modernists were 'not adequately decoded if detected at all' and 'rarely collected for academic recirculation' (Kime Scott 1990, 2)

Despite this, however, there was in fact a great deal of collaboration between male and female 'managers' of modernist art We need only cite the networks around Ezra

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10 Strangely however when editors and magazine moved to Paris Hamilton remarks with obvious pessimism From this point on the magazine was to serve as a fairly random repository for continental modernists - Cocteau Tzara and Brancusi were among the favourites' (Hamilton 1976 41)

Pound, Margaret Anderson, and Harriet Monroe, or Sylvia Beach Male and female modernists worked together to further the new literature, a confrontational attitude perhaps only implicitly present Indeed, the main enemy was traditional art and literature If modernism is considered as a collaborative anti-traditional printing network and community, the terrain all of a sudden becomes very populous Moreover, this view allows for the internal fissures that occur in any network, while allowing the accent in modernism to shift away from sole interest in 'high modernists' like Eliot and Pound Critics must resist what Kime Scott calls 'the monologic element' in 'traditional' modernism and the over-emphasis on their critical theories of impersonality, genius and the literary tradition As she puts it 'Modernism as caught in the mesh of gender is polyphonic, mobile, interactive, sexually charged it has wide appeal, constituting a historic shift in parameters' (Kime Scott 1990 4) Kime Scott thus advocates a greater sensitivity to the hues of modernism in between the extremes Black and female emerging writers may have preferred to work in a more traditional style, while frequenting modernist circles

> The consideration of a non-experimental group of writers, alongside the more traditional experimental canon challenges language-centered interpretations of modernism favored in the canonization process from Ezra Pound to Julia Kristeva (see Schenck, 15) Their presence helps us detect other breaks with tradition, such as the treatment of lesbian sexuality and women's critiques of fascism and war (Kime Scott 1990, 5)

These topics and Kime Scott's inclusion of these lesser known writers as 'modernists' raise some questions of their own, however, concerning the inclusion of writers like Sylvia Townsend Warner Charlotte Mew, or Anna Wickham While accepting that criticism must avoid the exclusion of blacks, women, or other non-paradigmatic modernists, there is an equal danger in using the term only as a time indication Celeste M Schenck includes Charlotte Mew because of her 'political analyses of femininity, prostitution and war a feminist politics' She equally rejects the definition of modernism as only 'iconoclastic irreverence for convention and form', because this monolithization has made women modernists invisible (Schenck 1990, 319-320) Suggesting 'modernisms' instead she concedes that a certain stylistic characterization is hereby lost but that other interests of the period have in this way been retrieved It is doubtful however, that the term 'modernisms' will succeed in making visible women writers who have been forgotten Jane Marcus has even suggested the following new categories to be incorporated within modernism 'Marxist modernism', 'feminist antifascism', 'feminist historical novel', pacifism, and

women writers belonging to 'a "conventional" category' (Kime Scott 1990 17) These revisions of modernism suffer from a-historicism Although the attempt to redraw and expand the map of twentieth-century literature is a valid project, it is not instructive to ignore the specific historical and spatial circumstances of the modernist phenomenon Equally, Gilbert and Gubar treat the twentieth century with the same broad historical sweep that served them so well for their nineteenth-century book They do not really distinguish between the very specific historical background to the production of literature and the arts during the modernist era, and later, more isolated authors who wrote under different circumstances Gertrude Stein, Edith Wharton and Joyce Carol Oates are all mainly treated as women writers reacting to male literary opposition There is no real attempt to take Stein's modernism into the equation

Using the sociological principle of the 'empty field phenomenon', Gaye Tuchman and Nina E Fortin describe a less positive literary history for women writers from the traditional one as put forward by Showalter or Moers (Tuchman and Fortin 1989) Their conclusions to an investigation of manuscripts submitted to Macmillan in the period 1840-1917 suggest that male novelists in a sense 'fought back' against the arrival of women novelists by redefining for themselves a new field of literature and re-assigning value Recognizing the obvious success of popular women writers they created a new contrast between a superior novel, an élitist, male-dominated, avant-gardist genre, and the traditional non-intellectualist novel with the inferior status it holds today

> At the turn of the nineteenth century literary critics and novelists distinguished among the literary qualities of novels and implicated gender in those distinctions By and large they assumed that the novel had a lowly status because of its association with women, as many novelists were and most novel readers were thought to be By 1870 men of letters were using the term *high culture* to set off novels they admired from those they deemed run-of-the-mill Most of these high-culture novels were written by men (Tuchman and Fortin 1989, 3)

The notion of the high culture novel was created to elbow women out of the cultural position they had Tuchman and Fortin view this as endemic to the whole publishing industry, a power struggle belonging to publishers, writers, critics periodical editors They distinguish three phases the *period of invasion* (1840-1879), when women were dominant in submitting manuscripts and having them accepted

but men were showing interest in the novel, the *period of redefinition* (1880-1899), when male critics and writers championed the 'realist' novel over popular literature, with both sexes equally successful in publishing, and the *period of institutionalization* (1901-1917) when male authors were in control of the status novel, and although submitting less manuscripts, were more successful in having them accepted The evolution noted is not drastic, but it does tally with the modernist period, describing the rise of the admired high culture male novelist, while the popular novel and the female novelist lost in status The literary movements of impressionism realism, naturalism, and the modernist phenomenon formed part of this redefinition of literature along gender lines

And indeed, women modernists did not always have straightforward careers within modernism Kay Boyle, for instance periodically 'dropped out' of the modernist coterie, in order to ghostwrite the autobiography of the Dayang Muda of Sarawak (Boyle 1970, 257) Jean Rhys also wrote modernist texts while living more on the edge of the milieu largely due to financial problems She too ghostwrote a book for a rich woman, Mrs Huenot, but was dismissed and returned from the Riviera to Paris The story of her complete disappearance from public memory is well-recorded, as she was only rediscovered due to a BBC radio version of *Good Morning, Midnight*.

It is highly interesting, moreover, that many women writers coloured their modernist interests with their feminism The New Woman, much discussed at the turn of the century, had broken away from the traditionally female private role in the home via the fight for suffrage, higher education, the Rational Dress campaign, and the battle against the Contagious Diseases Act In fact, although it would be a-historical to equate a feminist author with a modernist, as does Bonnie Kime Scott, the reverse is correct in that for modernist women the artistic rebellion was inspired by their feminism The first issue of *The Little Review* has three clear articles on feminism The following assertion is typical of the magazine's attitude 'Feminism? A clear-thinking magazine can have only one attitude, the degree of ours is ardent!' (Margaret Anderson 1967, 2) Sherwood Anderson ends with the confident statement that for the first time women are taking part in the artistic revolution (Sherwood Anderson 1967, 23) In fact, Sherwood Anderson indicates feminism as the only difference with all previous artistic movements

> Nothing in all of this is new except this - that beside the youth dancing in the dust of the falling timbers is a maiden also dancing and proclaiming herself "We will have a world not half new but all new!" cry the youth and the maiden, dancing together (Sherwood Anderson 1967, 23)

Although in many respects Gertrude Stein adopted a very male-oriented attitude to her career and her work she drew a lot of her writing from her thinking about gender and patriarchy, about herself as a woman writer, and as a lesbian writer Despite putting herself 'sous rasure' as a female writer, in her relationship with her 'wife' Alice and her focus on male literary modernists like Hemingway, she is suprisingly lucid about the ideological effects of patriarchy

> There is too much fathering going on just now and there is no doubt about it fathers are depressing Everybody now-a-days is a father, there is father Mussolini and father Hitler and father Roosevelt and father Stalin and father Trotzky and father Blum and father Franco is just commencing now and there are ever so many more ready to be one (EA, 113)

In her appreciation of Mina Loy, Carolyn Burke quotes from the *New York Tribune* and the *New York Evening Sun* to indicate that Loy's modernist poetry was generally linked with her feminism

> [I]n the 1910s her artistic reputation was such that one New York reporter quoted Loy's infamous "Love Songs" to illustrate the belief that such extremely free verse was of a piece with modernism in the arts and with women's emancipation, and another interviewed Loy as a representative "modern woman" while observing, "some people think that women are the cause of modernism, whatever that is " (Burke 1990, 230)

Clare Hanson warns us of the dangers of assuming that female modernism was a derivative of male modernism, or the result of insufficient understanding of male techniques and themes Although she does not pursue the matter she suggests that women were in fact forerunners

> [T]he initial impetus for modernism came in fact from women writers, so that to talk of a female version of modernism - implying a secondary position for women - is misleading One might suggest rather that modernism as we have been taught it is a male parasite on a body of experience and a way of seeing pioneered by women (Hanson 1990, 303)

To a certain extent, the argument is fruitless modernism was too diffuse and variegated to allow for simple boundaries based on gender However, it is

undisputable that women writers were pursuing modernist aims very early on, so that they cannot possibly be viewed as derivative Dorothy Richardson published her first novel in 1916 at the age of 43, May Sinclair was already writing since 1897, while Gertrude Stein published *Three Lives* in 1903 at 29 Ezra Pound and T S Eliot on the other hand were markedly younger, publishing first works in 1908 and 1915, at 23 and 27 respectively Moreover, there seem to have been 'forerunners' In a book on Sarah Grand, Margaret Harkness, George Egerton, and Olive Schreiner, Gerd Bjørhovde discusses a group of women writers publishing around the turn of the century She believes they bridge a strange gap in the female literary tradition, a vacuum of about thirty years in between two major novelists George Eliot and Virginia Woolf Characterizing their relationship to the novel, Bjørhovde finds in these women writers the onset of a modernist critique of the existing literary forms

> All of them were highly conscious that a new age - which was how they saw their time, on the edge of a new century - needed new art forms and new artistic expression in general All of their work reflects a growing dissatisfaction with the conventional bourgeois novel, a dissatisfaction which was both characteristic of the period in general and of many of its women writers in particular (Bjørhovde 1987, xiii)

Bjørhovde interprets the 'flaws' generally perceived in the novels of these 'minor women writers' as proto-modernist experiments with new narrative structures and techniques 'In this way women writers may in fact be said to have had an advantage, a sort of flying start into modern literature in general and Modernism in particular' (Bjørhovde 1987, 172) DuPlessis joins her in suggesting that 'Modernist diction may, in ways still to be fully elucidated, be indebted to female gender stances (in Stein, in Loy, in Moore)' (DuPlessis 1986, 7) The 'writing beyond the ending', i e beyond plot and grammar, which she identifies for contemporary writers like Dorothy Richardson offers a similar reading of (proto)-modernist women writers

Consequently, a totally different picture of modernism can be painted This is modernism as a populous mainly supportive network international combining arts and media, affected by the new technologies of film and photography, and heavily influenced by women writers whose modernist experiments depended on their feminism What we see, in fact, are a number of factors undermining the concept of authorship for the traditional white male writer Another factor is to be added to this destabilization, the presence of a popular writing which now threatened textuality with the fluidity and insignificance pertaining to the oral mode

4 Advanced Literacy and a Crisis in Literacy a Paradox

Considering the length of its principal works, it would seem foolhardy to regard modernism from the perspective of orality *Pilgrimage*, *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, *The Making of Americans* are all many pages too long to be within mnemonic range of the oral person They are only possible in a print culture and even then only in an advanced print culture, supported by good editing and publishing procedures Moreover, the secondary orality which typifies the twentieth century, according to Walter J Ong or Marshall McLuhan, was not yet in place Although the telephone was invented in the late nineteenth century, the great days of the radio were only to come in the thirties, and until 1929 in England the early cinema was a silent, purely visual, and consequently international medium Thus, modernism in fact coincides simultaneously with a period when the interiorization of literacy was at its strongest But frustration with the commercialization of the printing and distribution industry of the period resulted in the first cracks in this situation of radical literacy

From the 1830s, and speeded up from the 1850s, changes in the Victorian publishing system and late Victorian journalism were to have important effects on the practicalities of writing By the turn of the century an awareness had grown among many intellectuals of an overabundance of print and textuality The enormous growth in periodicals and newspapers, and the boom in popular literature had a destabilizing effect on the certainties of men of letters They felt swamped by reams of worthless print and pushed out of the cultural centre From the middle of the nineteenth century, periodicals and journals were boosted by the disappearance of three forms of taxation, the Advertisement Tax (1853), the Newspaper Stamp Duty (1855) and the Paper Duty (1861) Newspapers could reduce their prices, increase circulation, while new titles could be started up (Bonham-Carter 1978, 175-176) A much larger portion of the population now started to read newspapers, especially after the Education Act of 1870, when national primary education caused a genuine increase in literacy Bonham-Carter refers to a real explosion in the last quarter of the nineteenth century 'between 1870 and 1900 the number of newspapers rose from 1390 to 2448, while magazines increased from 626 to 2446' (Bonham-Carter 1978, 176) The real boom occurred in popular journalism, with the invention of modern, popular entertainment papers like *Tit-Bits* started by George Newnes in 1880-1881, *Answers to Correspondents* by Alfred Harmsworth (1888), or *Pearson's Weekly* by Sir Cyril Arthur Pearson (1890) With their text organized in

bite-size 'tit-bits', these were reading matter for the new literates The Harmsworth brothers also launched the *Daily Mail* (1896) 'the first of the mass-circulation dailies' They used all the new printing technology like mechanical typesetting, rotary printing, while adding to their increased potential the speed of telephone and telegraph communication Distribution via railways allowed them to respond even more swiftly to the demands of an increased readership (Bonham-Carter 1978, 176)

The publishing and selling of books also underwent major changes During the 1830s, publishing houses 'rationalized', and started to specialize in certain areas like fiction, or travel Simultaneously, London became the cultural and literary centre (Bonham-Carter 1978 9, 106) Inventions like ink-blocking on cloth during the 1840s had allowed the publication of cheap six-shilling one-volume novels for the poor, less educated market (Leavis 1990 152) By 1848 W H Smith had started to sell books and newspapers at railway stations, followed by Routledge's Railway Library in the 1850s and 1860s (Leavis 1990 152 159) W H Smith's 'Yellow Backs' from 1848 were cheap one-volume editions New middle- and high-brow books, on the other hand, remained so expensive that publishers had to count on sales to libraries rather than individuals, with editions seldom exceeding 1,250 copies By the 1850s Mudie's Select Library dominated distribution, buying during one particular year as many as 120,000 copies (Tuchman and Fortin 1989, 29) The situation changed at the end of the nineteenth century

> In the book trade the walls of Jericho fell like thunder all during the 1890s The 'three-decker' vanished, and new novels - generally published at 6s - sold in thousands In 1900 Marie Corelli's *The Master Christian* had a pre-publication printing of 75,000 copies The price of reprints was slashed cloth copies to 3s 6d and 2s 6d, paper copies to 6d and 7d Abridgements also took the field (Bonham-Carter 1978, 177)

The second half of the century then saw the professionalization and commercialization of the book trade and authorship A first Society of British Authors, which soon floundered had been founded in 1843 under the impulse of Dickens shocked at the piracy of his novels in America The Copyright Amendment Act was put through parliament by Lord Mahon in 1842 (Bonham-Carter 1978, 81, 73) Although it allowed for a lot of loopholes the act was valid until 1911 Bonham-Carter calls the 1880s 'a crucial decade for the profession of authorship' (Bonham-Carter 1978, 119) A new, still existing Society of Authors was founded in 1884, with Tennyson as president The booksellers followed suit with a new (third) society in

1895, and the publishers formed a society in 1896 (Bonham-Carter 1984, 21) In 1886, Britain co-signed an international Copyright Convention in Berne, while the notorious piracy practices in the US were finally curbed, to a certain extent, by the 1891 Chace Act On all levels, the book industry came of age, better controlled and organized The Net Book Agreement of 1899 stopped shops underselling books against publishers and genuine bookshops Interestingly, in the 1880s the notion of literary property was not yet well understood, even by many authors, who still failed to draw up good contracts, use the royalty agreements or make effective use of the literary agents by then operating (Bonham-Carter 1978 166)

This boom in publishing and readership was to affect the literary system To put it boldly, the term modernism can really only be applied to a minority of early twentieth-century fiction A strong-selling commercial dominant popular literature had emerged virtually simultaneously with the avant-garde Detective novels, Westerns, Romances were avidly borrowed and read by a public largely consisting of women Immensely popular in England, the 'classical' detective novel was establishing itself to have an interbellum 'Golden Age' with Dorothy L Sayers, Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham Josephine Tey and Ngaio Marsh The United States saw the rise of the hard-boiled novel by Raymond Chandler Dashiell Hammett and many others Stein, for one, professed herself to be intrigued by the detective genre (EA, xxii 28, 34) These popular genres form an important background atmosphere to the production of the modernists, who always had to confront their own unpopularity [11] Most readers preferred Ethel M Dell, Elinor Glyn or Georgette Heyer to Ezra Pound It is significant that modernist literature, with its attack on closed narrative, the plot, and the traditional character should occur at the same time as the detective novel After all, traditional detective fiction is the closed narrative par excellence The capture and sentencing of the criminal results in an unequivocal ending Moreover, intricate plots of clues motives, and alibis combined with stable, unchanging characters seem to indicate that all in this world is subject to pure causality and rationality The beginning of the century, then, saw the uneasy co-existence of two literary extremes, both testifying to a highly internalized literacy The detective novel overdeveloped the characteristics of the written

11 Leavis remarks with a certain worry how popular literature is also breaking into loftier circles The cult for Hemingway is combined with that for detective fiction in a telling footnote 'something of a cult in highbrow circles and this suggests how strong is the temptation to adopt an easy (because popular) attitude (a) in contemporary society man separates himself from the herd at his peril while the footnote reference states 'Similarly the highbrow cult of detective fiction ' (Leavis 200)

medium analysis, rationality, the love of stable definition The (male) modernists with their theory of impersonality in literature and the self-contained literary work, stem from the same background In different ways both detective fiction and modernist literature questioned language, rationality and common-held views on 'reality' In fact, they responded to the same complex relationship between orality and literacy Holquist remarks on the 'radical rationality'of the detective story Authors like Agatha Christie, and Dorothy L Sayers portray a rational detective in an oversignified world constantly in danger of stumbling into the absurd due to an overabundance of meaningful or meaningless clues The genre calls up the spectre of absurdity, only to defeat this danger in the last chapter where the public (and usually oral) narration of the detective defeats the written confusion, returning it to a single narrative Detective fiction, thus, papered over these anxieties by a reassuring ending always, in the end, the culprit is recognized and tried Modernist literature, on the other hand, faced these questions head on In 'Whodunit and Other Questions' Michael Holquist interestingly points to this strange contemporaneity of a highly successful, much-read popular genre and an equally strong but elitist avant-garde poetry and literature [12] As a result, Holquist remarks on the special relationship between 'high' and 'low' literature

> Kitsch and the avant-garde are both in a problematic relationship to the main stream tradition of high culture Both phenomena are of relatively recent origin, a point which has been made for kitsch by Gillo Dorfles and for the avant garde by Renato Poggioli Why both tendencies should have not developed earlier is an exceedingly complex question But certainly mass industrialization might be adduced as a cause in both cases (Holquist 1971, 136)

The result, as Holquist shows, is that the avant-garde takes care to distance itself from the popular by becoming more difficult more hermetic and by limiting its accessibility to the general public (Holquist 1971, 137) Q D Leavis noted that the nineteenth century had not known such a great split between the popular, best-selling literature and high literature (Leavis 1990, 169-170) Stein too remarked on this phenomenon in her discussion of God and Mammon in English literature (Stein 1988_a, 12) and in *Everybody's Autobiography* 'of course in the nineteenth century best sellers were things that go on being, but the difference between one that is and one that is not writing that goes on being read, it is not possible to describe the difference' (EA, 224-225) However, by her own period this had changed, and

12 Holquist's article investigates the importance of the detective fiction genre in the whole of the twentieth century literature especially as a metaphor for the anxieties and interests of the postmodernist era.

authors were keen to distance themselves from journalists and popular writers According to Tuchman and Fortin, this tendency started during the period 1840-1890 with the development of an ideology about novel writing, to distinguish the 'masculine' high art (realist, naturalist) novel as a genre from the 'feminine' popular romances Publishers' readers played an important role in this redefinition Simultaneously, Tuchman and Fortin note a gender shift, an 'edging out' of women from the high culture novel as published by Macmillan (Tuchman and Fortin 1989, 10, 88) A lot of women were still submitting manuscripts but they found it relatively harder to get accepted with men increasingly interested in the high-art field during a boom in novel writing

Looking back on these changes from her twentieth-century vantage point, Q D Leavis paints a quite negative picture concerning the reading public

> [T]he book-borrowing public has acquired the reading habit while somehow failing to exercise any critical intelligence about its reading It is significant that many subscribers call daily to change their novels (Leavis 1990, 7)

A hard-hitting Leavis suggests this 'drug habit' resulted in the 'herd prejudice' dominating popular writing (Leavis 1990, 7, 67) An example from Nancy Cunard equally testifies to the horror felt by artists at the way the popular press was producing ephemeral text for consumption Spewing forth text merely to fill a daily paper was felt to be a perversion of textuality

> An illuminating comment by Americans themselves on their newspapers is that journalists have got to write *something* - the papers have got to be filled every day you know (Cunard 1990, 79)

In her cryptic way, Stein also diagnoses the same problem Because it is acutely tied to context and time, journalism is radically ephemeral and thus perverts the basic function of literacy and textuality, which is to rise above temporality

> Hemingway, on account of his newspaper training has a false sense of time One will sooner or later get this falsity of time, and that is why newspapers cannot be read later out of their published time (Stein 1990, 506)

Newspaper text is ephemeral and even threatens the writing talent of an aspiring high-brow writer like Hemingway because of its lack of significance when read out of context, in circumstances of absence In an essay called, 'The Novel Démeublé', Willa Cather draws a very sharp distinction indeed

> In any discussion of the novel, one must make it clear whether one is talking about the novel as a form of amusement, or as a form of art One does not wish the egg one eats for breakfast, or the morning paper, to be made of the stuff of immortality The novel manufactured to entertain great multitudes of people must be considered exactly like a cheap soap or a cheap perfume, or cheap furniture Fine quality is a distinct disadvantage in articles made for great numbers of people who do not want quality but quantity, who do not want a thing that "wears " but who want change, - a succession of new things that are quickly thread-bare and can be lightly thrown away (Cather 1936, 47-48)

Cather's almost insulting distinction between high culture and mass consumption suggests her horror at the popular literature and art, as well as an acute feeling of loss Popular art and writing have stolen literature and its tradition from literary women and especially literary men The language of nineteenth-century 'realists' like Dickens, Thackeray, or George Eliot has been appropriated by the popular novelists of the early twentieth century

Consequently, the high intellectuals became avant-gardists, in order clearly to distinguish themselves from the populanists who had pushed them out of the cultural limelight [13] Q D Leavis is very vocal on this feeling of alienation from the centre of culture the clergy, politicians, journalists, are no longer scholars or gentlemen, while '[i]n addition, scientific interests have alienated a large proportion of the more intelligent of the community from culture' (Leavis 1990, 191) With high literature suffering from this loss of status and power high culture is having to realign itself as the result of the presence of so large a number of popular readers, writers, reviewers, publishers, and booksellers crowding them out of their respected profession Modernism then can be interpreted as a position taken vis à vis a crisis in literacy Readers, even the traditional consumers of high literature, admired and talked about the popular literature of the time, the detective stories, romances, westerns which made up the bulk of lending libraries 'The same people who spent

13 Jurij Tynjanov's article 'The Literary Fact' attacks the notion of literature as a static system in which definitions can completely circumscribe genres and levels He suggests that genres and strata of literature are constantly dynamic, adjusting the system as one of the components changes in function in a way very reminiscent of De Saussure's linguistic system (Tynjanov 1977)

their days with Joyce were reading Agatha Christie at night - and if the pattern of reassurance we've adduced as peculiar to the detective story is accepted, we should not long have to wonder why' (Holquist 1971, 147) In his autobiography Aldington actually states his horror at the thought that he might have 'slipped' into low quality reading

> Now that was really a stroke of good luck From the obsolete sensationalism of Ainsworth I might have passed to more recent brands, and have ended up as one of those unhappy people who take their intellectual pleasures so sadly with newspapers, horror stories, jig-saw puzzles, and detective novels (Aldington 1968, 38)

These reactions are indicative of the response by many intellectuals and modernists to the onslaught of popular, ephemeral, insignificant textuality A highly self-conscious literary movement, modernism is a stock-taking by the literary and artistic world Literary modernists confronted their now unloved literary tradition and reacted against the affronts to significant textuality by popular novels and journalism Edged out themselves from the living interests of society, these modernists are retracing their steps, trying to reconnect with the significant texts of the literary tradition In the programmatic or critical articles by Eliot and Pound there is a variation on the phenomena described by Harold Bloom under the term 'anxiety of influence' It is not a fear of the previous tradition but rather of the popular tradition threatening to unseat 'men of letters' from the centre of culture [14] Talking about the better exponents of popular fiction, like Corelli, Florence Barclay, Ethel M Dell, Leavis grudgingly admits '[b]ad writing, false sentiment, sheer silliness, and a preposterous narrative are all carried along by the magnificent vitality of the author' (Leavis 1990, 62) Of course, the other arts too saw an alienation of their traditional languages Simultaneously spurred on by the hot breath of popular writing, literary modernism had become sufficiently 'literate' to be alienated from language, and the inscription of reality and the self within this language In what was in fact the first information explosion of this century, 'men' of letters found it hard to cope with the abundance of print and reading material, and to maintain a belief in the significance of text

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14 However in their belated efforts to live off their pen serious writers like H G Wells called a 'mass-manufacturer of words (Bonham-Carter 180) or modernists like Djuna Barnes and Dorothy Richardson found themselves producing a similarly large amount of essays and reviews actually increasing the sea of low-quality ephemeral text

> I think that is the reason why the novel as a form has not been successful in the Twentieth Century That is why biographies have been more successful than novels This is due in part to this enormous publicity business The Duchess of Windsor was a more real person to the public and while the divorce was going on was a more actual person than anyone could create In the Nineteenth Century no one was played up like that, like the Lindbergh kidnapping really roused people's feelings Then Eleanor Roosevelt is an actuality more than any character in the Twentieth Century novel ever achieved So the novel is not a living form, and people try to get out of the difficulty by essay and short story form and that is a feeble form at best
> The only serious effort that has been made is the detective story and in a kind of way Wallace is the only novelist of the Twentieth Century (Stein 1990, 507)

The ephemerality of text even attacks the person of the writer Concerning the battle between originality and tradition as ideals for seventeenth-century authors Thomas Docherty draws a parallel with the twentieth century

> Both modes have their problems The ancients had to invent, more or less arbitrarily, a tradition which they claimed to be absolute (like Eliot, Leavis and Bloom in our own century) the moderns had to be adept at 'writing to the minute', and thus faced what Ryle in our own time, has called 'the systematic elusiveness of "I"' (Docherty 1987, 237)

As also remarked by Edward Said the modernist author was the first author who felt 'he' could only really be valid when writing, the first 'man' of literature to lose his sense of self-meaning when he stopped writing Authors saw themselves as just-about-to-write or as just-having-written (Said 1975 229) Stein's many ruminations concerning the time of writing and the time of reading are in a similar vein as was her interpretation of her writing block as the result of actually getting published Hemingway's strange autobiographical account, *A Moveable Feast* is a published paradox, as it tries to capture the *action* of writing His readers are reading something to which they cannot possibly have access as it happens, at which they cannot possibly be present It is a collection of stories about the interruption to writing, a remarkable first in the history of literature and highly significant for the general modernist quandary with literacy For male modernists the presence of too much print around to read, and too many different readers around to read all this

text, effectively resulted in chaos through an overabundance of order As Walter J Ong indicates, the initial written document in a largely oral society is an almost magical document, a basis for order which a mainly conservative society used to refer to again and again The modernist era saw the perversion through proliferation of that kind of literacy

The sciences were another competitive area, pushing artists and 'men' of letters out of the cultural centre The positivist sciences which had come to the fore and flourished in the quantifying nineteenth century were themselves under some stress in the period immediately preceding modernism Commentators like Michael H Levenson and Sanford Schwartz define modernism as the result of a very basic and unsettling change in the perception of reality This results from a philosophical and partially scientific reaction to the scientific positivism that dominated the nineteenth-century world view Einstein's theory of relativity, Freud and Jung's new perceptions on the human individual, Bergson's new depiction of time as a stream of moments resulted in a questioning of science The sciences were now regarded as merely one of several possible rationalizations of 'reality' Modernists started to accept that the individual consciousness might have a specific inflection on 'reality' Most specifically called into question now was the simplistic metaphor of the 'drama between visibility and invisibility' which characterized the cataloguing and ordering sciences of the nineteenth century (Fox Keller 1990, 178-179) This challenged the ideology to renew itself, as indeed it did with its basic visualism intact Until the late nineteenth century practical printing-restrictions had slowed down scientific reporting A static body of science had thus been built up, a unity of knowledge which remained basically unchanged for centuries, after the arrival of the print had caused the first major explosion of knowledge in the Renaissance But, as Schwartz indicates, the sudden growth in strange and unexpected ways of all sciences during this period resulted in the same sense of chaos due to an overabundance of books and publications, in this case an overabundance of scientific theories with many more scientists involved than ever before

Simultaneously, the sciences presented a great challenge to the authority of the arts and the humanist ideals behind the function of art For the first time, it seemed popularly more exciting and interesting, and more progressive to be doing science than arts Defensive, rear-guard reactions by philosophers like Otto Weininger indicate the shock at being suddenly outflanked He reacted against the statistical

approach to science, while advocating an individualistic approach, determining that what he felt sincerely as a true fact must indeed be so Contemporary science not only changed the perspective of the world, but also challenged the authority of the visionary, truth-telling poet/philosopher/artist At the end of the nineteenth century, art and science definitely moved apart, as the sciences increasingly required rigorous professional training The gentlemen geologists and gentlemen biologists, of which Darwin was a late example, disappeared and were replaced by academic professionals settled within a university context As curricula solidified in the final part of the last century and the beginning of this century novelists artists and philosophers effectively found themselves pushed out of the centre of thought on reality by the sciences for which they had no expertise As Korg puts it no artist could ignore the influence of science in early twentieth century 'One consequence of this was a renewal of the traditional Romantic fear that science might be a threat to poetry' (Korg 1979, 55) Faced with the scientific challenge, modernists were under pressure to re-assert themselves as progressive, worthwhile and central to the epistemological engagement with reality

It is interesting that both Pound and Eliot focused on the metaphor of the trained, accurate scientist for the new poetry they were suggesting Their anti-romantic, or rather anti-sentimentalist attitude in fact combines with a sublimation of their art as hard, objective, precise, experimental, scientific Eliot talks with contempt about the spilt 'pot of treacle' of romanticism (Eliot 1951 118) while Hulme objects 'to the sloppiness which doesn't consider that a poem is a poem unless it is moaning or whining about something or other' (Hulme 1924, 126) Hulme favours a poem that is 'all dry and hard a properly classical poem' and posits 'accurate description is a legitimate object of verse' For this description, language is a compromise and as Hulme says there must be a 'struggle' with language and ultimate control over language 'hold it fixed to your own purpose' (Hulme 1924 126, 127, 132) From Hulme's perspective, imagism is a matter of control, over one's perception of things, over language, over the conventional view of tradition

Pound also stresses toughness to the principles of imagism, direct treatment of the thing, 'whether subjective or objective', no more words than strictly needed, and the musical phrase to replace the metronomic rhythm of previous poetry (Pound 1954, 3-4) The image of imagism is 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', the ultimate complexity and condensation in the smallest

quantity The result is a 'sense of sudden liberation, that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits' the literate wish for eternal signification (Pound 1954, 4) Another favourite image of Pound's is the tenacity of the scientist What attracts him, is the clear distinction between the scientist and the pupil-scientist He suggests this categorization in literature, where the '[f]reshmen' 'are unfortunately not confined to a definite and recognizable class room' (Pound 1954, 6) His advice to beginning poets stresses the craft, the training, the professionalism of poetry He calls the young poet a 'candidate' like one aspiring to a medieval guild (or about to take an exam), or a 'neophyte' asking to be admitted to a brotherhood (Pound 1954, 5, 6) Regularly, the comparison with playing a musical instrument stresses the need for an extended period of technical training One should 'master all known forms and systems of metric' 'only after a long struggle will poetry attain such a degree of development or, if you will, modernity' The poem must sound acceptable to the 'expert' if musical features are attempted (Pound 1954, 9, 5) In reaction to the sentimental nineteenth-century poetry of women and clergymen, poetry is now again business, a matter for the career poet who undergoes a long training in a tradition No longer is anybody eligible to write In the theoretical essays by Pound and Eliot, poetry is to become a closed society intent on admitting only the initiate There is a duty towards the scientific community 'if a man's experiments try out one new rime, or dispense conclusively with one iota of currently accepted nonsense, he is merely playing fair with his colleagues when he chalks up his result' (Pound 1954, 10) But the real motive behind this astringency is expressed later 'Poetry is an art and not a pastime, such a knowledge of technique, of technique of surface and technique of content, that the amateurs will cease to try to drown out the masters' (Pound 1954 10 - emphasis mine)

In their attempts to resignify the literary text, modernists thus produced a proliferation of critical works Of course the nineteenth century saw the start of what we could call literary criticism by Pater, Swinburne and Wilde However the crisis in literacy not only significantly increased the number of critical texts, but also eventually gave rise to practical criticism in university curricula [15] The surge of modernist critical texts attempted to make sense of that vexed topic for the literary modernist, the total weight of the literary tradition before 'him' and how this 'significance' had been achieved (Quinones 1985) Very adept at spotting the

15 Walter J Ong defines the emergence of New Criticism as both a continuation of and a reaction against the oral-based rhetorical tradition in criticism, as well as a sign of interiorized literacy (Ong 1991, 160)

weaknesses of the twentieth century writer, Gertrude Stein discusses the 'belatedness' of modernists in 'What is English Literature' (Stein 1988_a) Aldington's *Life for Life's Sake* describes a visit to Watts-Dunton, a friend of the late Swinburne, by now an old man himself

> My reason for intruding on the old man was a sentimental one Swinburne had known Landor, Landor, Southey, and at one time Southey was very friendly with Shelley The chain was a short one, and I was never likely to get humanly so near to Shelley again He was only five hand-clasps away In my enthusiasm I didn't even stop there, but somehow made the link back to Pope, and through Wycherley and Davenant to Shakespeare An absurd fancy, but my own (Aldington 1968, 44)

Even though the visit does not really prove very satisfactory, making Aldington feel like a respectful tourist the literary line is important for him and needs to be drawn by his own life so that he can inscribe his authorship into his autobiography With his usual forcefulness, Pound discusses his interest in the literary tradition as a finding out 'once and for all' what remains to be done in poetry He is thus presenting poetry as a finite closed system, a matter of discovery and experiment, rather than endless creativity (Pound 1954, 11) Modernists' like Pound and Eliot's, internorization of literacy is so extreme that they feel they must control even the future of their past Aware of their belatedness they also realize that their own text may become swamped in the sea of text to follow it Docherty's consideration of the history of literary authority touches upon the literary Janus-effect of the Eliot text, facing both into past and future

> This 'influence' moves in both directions The new work exists as a criticism of the past, but it is also already an aspect of that past tradition, has already been inserted into it *The Waste Land* is not simply a response to the writing which constitutes the tradition prior to *The Waste Land*. it is a critical response to the tradition which includes *The Waste Land*. (Docherty 1987, 267-268)

Eliot's self-conscious footnotes do not explain the text to the readers, but present a context More importantly, Eliot appropriates the role of critic of his own poetry by adding footnotes which preclude any future critic's footnoted edition the space on the page is already taken up by Eliot's footnotes, defending the text from future critical onslaught

In a remarkable statement Eliot combines the scientific metaphor with the concept of 'impersonality', the depersonalization of a sacrificing poet

> The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality
> There remains to define this process of depersonalization and its relation to the sense of tradition It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science I therefore invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide (Eliot 1951, 17)

The poet is 'the catalyst' for his art never the expresser of his autobiography, only someone who might use events from his life as the object of his writing (Faulkner 1951, 18) Eliot rejects the autobiographical vision on literature of Wordsworth '"emotion recollected in tranquillity" is an inexact formula' (Eliot 1951, 21) This is replaced by '*significant* emotion', i e 'emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet' (Eliot 1951 22) Stephan Dedalus's image of 'impersonality', the artist 'paring his fingernails' also involves a literary tradition towards increased stasis 'The personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself, so to speak' (Joyce 1981 194-195) These statements by male modernists refer to one of the most celebrated and successful of the modernists' artistic demands, because of its hard stance, and its comparison with the highly esteemed sciences The notion that an artist can completely regard his 'self' and his emotions with the impersonality necessary to turn them into the craft of art is as impossible as the illusion of the 'unified self' As we shall see, however, there is here a marked difference with the attitude towards their readers by many women modernists

5 New Print Technology and its effects

As already mentioned, an amazing amount of artists and writers were actually involved in the production processes of literature publishing, editing, printing, distributing, illustrating books and magazines To a very large extent, the modernist movement is characterized, especially in literature, by a bypassing of the usual methods of distribution Those authors who found it hard to get published simply published themselves and their friends Suddenly, it was financially possible to escape the demands of commercial publishing and set up a private printing press or

edit a magazine, on an amateur basis In their reaction to commercialism these presses and magazines frequently only survived on goodwill and volunteer work [16] A great number of literary reviews were started, and many modernists chose not to go through publishers' selection procedures when they found that printing presses could be set up quite cheaply They avoided the mass of commercial printing, in a sense by amassing their own competing network of journals, reviews and printing presses, which would prove to be equally uncontrollable The avant-garde of the early twentieth-century was situated at the end of an increased interiorization of literacy, but also at the end of a greater spread of the print technology Modernism differs from previous literary periods, in that the modernists to a very large extent now controlled their own publishing and distribution

Virginia and Leonard Woolf started to dabble with a printing press as a hobby, but this venture very soon became a minor business, with the Hogarth Press printing their own work as well as texts by acquaintances, like Stein's Oxford and Cambridge lecture, *Composition as Explanation* (1926) They even received requests to print her monumental work *The Making of Americans* and Joyce's *Ulysses* Both were turned down, wisely probably, since theirs was very much a manual operation and neither work had an untroubled publishing history Nancy Cunard's Twenty-Four Hours Press, Bill Bird's Three Mountains Press, McAlmon's Contact Publishing Company, the Seizin Press of Laura Riding and Robert Graves in London, the Black Sun Press run by Caresse and Harry Crosby are a few of the small presses printing or distributing (or both) avant-garde material Even a single individual like the bookseller Sylvia Beach undertook the publication of so massive a work as *Ulysses*, while Alice B Toklas ran Plain Editions in order to publish some of Stein's work after their dissatisfaction with the publication and distribution of *The Making of Americans* (in both cases the actual printing was done by the Dijon printer Maurice Darantière) Vanity presses were also at the disposal of a 'genius' like Stein, who had *Three Lives* printed at her own expense by the Grafton Press The period's famous little reviews *transition* (Eugene and Maria Jolas) *Poetry* (Harriet Monroe), *BLAST* (Wyndham Lewis), *The Freewoman-The Egoist* (Harriet Weaver, Dora Marsden et al) *The Little Magazine*, *The Little Review* (Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap), *This Quarter* (Ethel

16 Ian Hamilton stresses both the amateurism and the independence from commercial restraints of the little magazines 'The little magazine is one which exists indeed thrives outside the usual business structure of magazine production and distribution it is independent amateur and idealistic - it doesn t (or shall we say feels that it shouldn t) need to print anything it doesn't want to print' (Hamilton 1976 7-8)

Moorhead, Ernest Walsh, Edward Titus), *the transatlantic review* (Ford Madox Ford, Ernest Hemingway) were another very convenient outlet for the discussion of the theory of the avant-garde Bryher's money founded *Close-Up*, edited by Kenneth Macpherson with Bryher, which published articles on the new film genre by Dorothy Richardson, H D Hanns Sachs, Gertrude Stein, Marianne Moore and even Eisenstein Edith Sitwell published her annual 'journal', *Wheels An Anthology of Verse*, in which appeared the first poems of, for one, Nancy Cunard Nancy Cunard effectively ran her own press from 1928 till 1931, the Twenty-Four Hours Press She bought her press from Bill Bird's Three Mountains Press which had closed down Harriet Weaver's Egoist Press in London printed Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Dubliners*, *Exiles* and *Ulysses*, all three in 1922, Eliot's *Prufrock* (1917), Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* (1918), Hilda Doolittle's *Hymen* (1921) underwritten by Bryher and McAlmon, as was Marianne Moore's *Poems*, and McAlmon's poems *Explorations* (1921) (Ford 1975 37) In New York, Robert McAlmon had already briefly published, with William Carlos Williams, a magazine called *Contact*. In Paris, he started the Contact Publishing Company, partially to get his own writing into print, which always met with a lot of rejection slips from the commercial publishers He published Bryher's *Two Selves* (1923), Mina Loy's *Lunar Baedeker* (1923) - with the title misspelt as 'Baedecker', Marsden Hartley, Williams and Hemingway, as well as Stein's long-overdue publication *The Making of Americans* (1925), a somewhat traumatic experience for the publisher and distributor McAlmon also brought out H D 's *Palimpsest* (1926) and another text by a woman modernist, Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack Written & Illustrated by a Lady of Fashion* (1926) After her marriage Bryher briefly, and not without certain doubts joined in the expatriate life in Paris

> It was the moment of glory for the little reviews Printing was cheap, whoever had fifty dollars or its equivalent started a magazine for himself and one or two carefully selected friends Funds failed or there was the inevitable quarrel and the paper died They were full of misprints, the covers were faded, but the contents blazed with vitality If a manuscript was sold to an established publisher, its author was regarded as a black sheep and for his own safety moved to the Right bank (Bryher 1963, 208)

A literary group or coterie would assert its identity by presenting itself in print The enormous amount of time spent publishing and editing themselves influenced the nature of the modernists' creative work Consequently the greater access to publication in magazines of friends or pamphlets printed by friendly private presses

resulted in a very modernist new genre, the aesthetic manifesto Not a new phenomenon manifestos proliferated in the modernist period The Futurists, the Imagists the Dadaists, the Surrealists issued manifesto after manifesto Frequently, as was the case with Wyndham Lewis's manifesto, 'Long Live the Vortex!' (Lewis 1967), their close connection with the people actually involved in the printing resulted in the combination of the revolutionary content with typographic innovation The modernist manifesto was an extreme confirmation of a group's identity by separation from others The resulting splintering of the modernist avant-garde is a natural outcome of a print technology which by this time was within the reach of the individual, or any group which has $50 In the first issue of *The Little Review* in 1914, Sherwood Anderson noted the speed with which new literary trends were appearing

> Already a cult of the new has sprung up, and doddering old fellows, yellow with their sins, run here and there crying out that they are true prophets of the new, just as, following last year's exhibit, every age-sick American painter began hastily to inject into his own work something clutched out of the seething mass of new forms and new effects scrawled upon the canvases by the living young cubists and futurists Confused by the voices, they raised also their voices, multiplying the din (Anderson, Sherwood 1914 , 23)

Interestingly, Anderson uses the metaphor of ephemeral voices to address the dangerous possibility of losing control over the new movements, over artistic textuality The unsettling speed with which renovation occurred meant that today's revolutionaries could be tomorrow's literary has-beens Modernists not only had to cope with popular literature and journalism but also with this speeding up of the process of renovation Even a successful literary operator like Ezra Pound found he lost control over his small imagist club when, in effect, his disciples hijacked the movement H D collaborated with Amy Lowell in putting together a further three 'imagist' anthologies for which they returned to an English title after Pound's *Des Imagistes, An Anthology* (1914) The three anthologies, all called *Some Imagist Poets* (1915-1916-1917) appeared under protest of by absent Ezra Pound Lowell, H D and Aldington were giving imagism a direction he considered insufficiently hard and exacting 'Amygism', as he called it, was too democratic, too open to new

members [17] H D and Lowell from their side attacked his dominance, as Aldington describes

> Amy arrived with certain proposals, to which she had evidently given a good deal of thought She proposed a Boston Tea Party for Ezra, the immediate abolition of his despotism and the substitution of a pure democracy There was to be no more of the Duce business, with arbitrary inclusions and exclusions and a capricious censorship We were to publish quietly and modestly as a little group of friends with similar tendencies rather than water-tight dogmatic principles Each poet was to choose for himself what he considered best in his year's output, and the anthology would appear annually To preserve democratic equality names would appear in alphabetical order Amy undertook to do all the practical work, to get the books published in Boston and London, and to account to us for the royalties And well and loyally she discharged that task, which involved a good deal of work and correspondence (Aldington 1968 127)

To a large extent, this alternative publishing network came into existence because conservatism, commercialism and censorship prevented publication in Britain and the United States The story of Joyce's continuous problems with both the British and American censorship authorities has frequently been retold Its comic highlight was the fine of $100 given to Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson in a New York court which refused to read out obscene passages in the presence of the lady editors (1920) Interestingly in this case, the legal system treated the text as an object No moral authority was found to challenge it but the American Post Office authorities acted as the censorship authority by refusing to handle what they considered obscene Publication by Sylvia Beach and a cumbersome smuggling exercise meant that the modernists managed to avoid the censorship authorities While up to the early twentieth century Mudie's lending libraries, or W H Smith's bookstalls had effectively been able to kill off a novel these were now simply by-passed For the first time authors and their friends themselves would simply set up a press and bring out limited editions of their own books Henry Miller's scandalous *Tropic of Cancer* appeared with a notice to bookshop owners printed on its jacket, 'Ce volume ne doit pas être exposé en vitrine', while Sylvia Beach would cover copies of *Ulysses* intended for tourist customers with 'suitable jackets as *Shakespeare's Complete Works Complete in One Volume* or *Merry Tales for Little Folks*' (Ford 1980,

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17 Amy Lowell s Preface' to *Some Imagist Poets* (1915) is totally unlike a manifesto polite apologetic and explanatory Aldington wryly suggests that she had obviously misunderstood the French title for the first anthology *Des Imagistes* as 'some imagists rather than 'about the imagists' (Aldington 1968 125) Whether there was misunderstanding or not, Amy Lowell lowered the threshold admitting poets as 'imagists'

25, 367, 128) The existence of the private printing presses ensured that for the first time rejection by the censorship authorities did not mean the book would never reach a public

Another liberating effect of this private printing technology meant that the modernists now had a large measure of control over their journals and reviews It was a fairly cheap undertaking and backers came from the middle classes Margaret Anderson's first financial source was DeWitt C Wing described by Hamilton as 'a none too rich journalist on an agricultural magazine' He contributed part of his salary When this first backer disappeared, Margaret Anderson seems to have found it fairly easy to discover new sources, enough to publish the next issue on time The magazine was also mobile, moving to Lake Bluff, San Francisco and eventually to Paris Anderson's control over the magazine and her non-professional status meant that she could even make the ultimate decision deciding that the arrived copy was not interesting enough she 'published' 13 blank pages in September 1916 (Hamilton 1976, 22)

More interesting concerning the modernists' attempts at do-it-yourself publishing and distribution are the effects of this involvement In their tiring frustrating, enjoyable, inky dealings with printing press, letter types, paper categories and ink, these modernists acquired a different awareness of the plasticity of the letters and words In a short memoir, Janet Flanner describes how after an all-night session at Nancy Cunard's press, Louis Aragon emerged triumphant with a Lewis Carroll poem, *The Hunting of the Snark*, all typeset His decoration was significantly literate

> Its outside cover was of extreme interest for the decoration he had created for it, composed of all the symbols for punctuation that the old press type boxes had preserved - exclamation points commas paragraph markers, brackets, parentheses, ampersands, and semicolons, quotation marks, foreign accents for both French and German, and periods, or full stops, in plethora, the whole lot arranged like a frame of differing thicknesses around the edge of the outside page, forming a decoration of grace and oddity (Flanner 1975, xvi-xvii)

Similarly, when he intended to publish part of his *Cantos*, Ezra Pound had a very clear perception of the plasticity and visualism of the book in question

> What he had in mind was an elegant edition of sixteen of his cantos, a volume that would aspire to the level of the medieval manuscript, he explained to Kate Buss, "one of the real bits of printing" that would combine large, clear type on outsized pages and, as an added touch of finery "specially made capitals" and illustrations in color by Mike Strater (Ford 1975, 108)

Published in Paris, written by a later friend of Nancy Cunard, Hugh Ford, describes the histories of these printing presses and their publications If his overview is read with an eye to the topics of orality and literacy, an extremely ironic state of affairs emanates In this twentieth-century Paris, we have almost returned to the monastic copying of manuscripts of the Middle Ages, or to the early slow manual printing presses of the fifteenth century The split from the mass audience which had occurred as a result of nineteenth century printing and distribution practices brought the most advanced literary workers to the level of copyists and printers just emerging out of the completely oral-based society [18] When Hemingway managed to get the *transatlantic review* to serialize *The Making of Americans*, and wanted a copy from Stein, the only copy had already been bound and sent to Knopf in New York As a result, and in the manner of medieval monks, another copy had to be written out

> That makes no difference, said Hemingway, I will copy it And he and I between us did copy it and it was printed in the next number of the Transatlantic Hemingway did it all He copied the manuscript and corrected the proof Correcting proofs is, as I said before, like dusting, you learn the values of the thing as no reading suffices to teach it to you In correcting these proofs Hemingway learned a great deal and he admired all that he learned (ABT, 233-234)

Less extrovert writers and poets like H D , had, as Friedman mentions, a lot of their work privately circulated rather than published, hand-producing a limited number of copies to be given to friends and acquaintances, or to read out to them (Friedman 1990_a, 86)

Conversely, as almost a one-book publisher, Sylvia Beach's amateur status allowed her to let James Joyce have virtually indefinite right to adjust, change and add to his proofs, a practice completely barred in commercial publishing [19] What Sylvia Beach

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18 As Ong himself points out in an article about early printing the earliest printers were of course humanists, writers like Johann Sturm Plantijn or Episcopius (Ong 1968 210)

19 Besides *Ulysses* Sylvia Beach s Shakespeare and Company also published *Pomes Penyeach* in 1927 and the reflections on *Work in Progress* by Samuel Beckett Stuart Gilbert Eugene Jolas Robert McAlmon,

in fact allowed her author - and in this she had been quite intentional and explicit - was the facility to treat his text as if it was part of oral conversation She allowed him the freedom to shift and re-shift positions as a narrator, to change an authoritative because stable text into a fluidly developing progressive text Indeed, she allowed him the more expansive characteristics of speech Typically, when Joyce finally finished, *Ulysses* had 'swollen to a third again its original size' (Ford 1975, 16) The title for serialization of Joyce's last work, *Work in Progress*, was also an interesting choice The notion of an open-ended text which could forever continue to be read and to be written suggests that the new private printing technology was starting to stretch extreme literacy in the direction of indefinite, unstable orality

In 1930, Stein sold a Picasso painting, *Woman with a Fan*, for $1200, and with the proceeds started the Plain Editions press, mainly intended to publish her own work and run by Toklas When Stein and Toklas presented their first Plain Editions book *Lucy Church Amiably*, the novel was called a 'landscape' by the author, with one of Stein's many references to painting (1931) [20] But the subtitle equally refers to cross-media interests 'a novel of romantic beauty and nature and which looks like an engraving' (ABT, 261, also Stein 1930) The disappearance of capitals already shows an interest in the plasticity of the language, but the comparison of a novel with an engraving fixes the black and white design of the text on the page as if plastic and three-dimensional The book is no longer merely a book its pages are a work of art Form and content are now unified Stein's instructions for the cover of this novel are even more suggestive of a perception of the text as a carefully written and three-dimensional design The book was meant to look 'like a school book and to be bound in blue', like the copy books used by Stein herself, uniting both her own writing practice with the first careful scribblings of schoolchildren (ABT, 262) *How to Write*, on the other hand, was meant to look like an 'eighteenth-century copy of Sterne which she had found once in London, bound in blue and white paper on board' The same attention to and love for the plasticity of the book stem from a more oral society where the actual book as a beautiful object had not yet lost its esthetic and significant qualities (Toklas 1989 146-147) Like the Renaissance publisher, the modernist authors could now be in charge of the whole process of bookmaking, from

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William Carlos Williams Elliot Paul et al named Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress in 1929 based on the installments which appeared before the text was published in full as Finnegans Wake in 1939

20 According to Ford and Benstock the novel was published in 1931 although Ford presents an illustration of the frontispice of *Lucy Church Amiably* which presents the date of publication as 1930

writing, proofreading, to typesetting and distribution Hemingway was forever agonizing over ways of beating the United States Post Office in order to be read at home Joyce was able to choose the colour for the covers of *Ulysses*, sending both Sylvia Beach and the printer Darantière on a search exactly to match the shade of blue of the Greek flag (Ford 1975, 18) *Ulysses* consequently was a complete semiotic unit, with even the covers participating in the signification

All this attention to font, type, weight and colour of paper, involved with the production of a limited edition, resulted in a different appreciation of the modernist book, which escaped the trappings of commercial bookmaking, while being allowed to become an object d'art and an inherent part of the text These do-it-yourself publishing ventures meant in fact that books had escaped the objectification of literature into a commodity Its authors and printers had imaginatively returned to that prelapsarian state, when the text was significant, cherished, mystical, artful in itself This thing of beauty with only a limited and so precious edition was now made by an unalienated author and printer, not thrashed out by an impersonal industry only aiming for profit It might have been carefully copied almost with the slow method of a Caxton, a sudden new attention to font and size of letters, and a renewed interest in the text as plastic In a sense the modernists were thus escaping from the pernicious results of the increased interiorization of literacy, and returning to a way of bookmaking from a more oral society They were trying to reintroduce the intrinsically valuable book a book which could again be coveted and treasured, not part of the indistinguishable mass of omnipresent reading matter waiting to be consumed

With stoicism, modernist authors remark on the small size of their target audience, their friends and acquaintances Thus, Pound advised William Carlos Williams to 'write as though talking to one's friends' rather than 'writing for the public', surely a strange remark for one belonging to the age of mass production of books (Ford 1975, 99) In a letter to Marianne Moore, Ezra Pound advises her not to use the phrase 'pneumatic bliss', because it already has been used by T S Eliot for what is only a limited readership

> This is not a final argument but in so close a circle (you are in it willy nilly by the mere fact of writing verse for the members of the reading public capable of understanding) (sic) (Pound, letter of 16 December 1918, Paige, 203)

As her potential literary editor, he also warns her in the same letter that her circulation will never exceed five hundred copies Because he discussed homosexuality in his *Distinguished Air* (1925), McAlmon actually gave strict instructions to Sylvia Beach to limit the sale of his book Ford quotes a letter from London 'For various reasons I don't want a copy [of *Distinguished Air*] to get into England unless I know who it goes to, so I don't want to let any copies be sold in Paris, except to people I know' (Ford 1975 65) An extraordinary perception of writing and the audience must accompany the situation whereby an author would prefer the few right people to read his text rather than be widely read Pound in a letter to Margaret Anderson also complains about his other literary outlet, *Poetry* Besides their 'christianizing' and 'pudibundery', he interestingly hits upon *Poetry*'s subscription to a Walt Whitman quote ' and that infamous remark of Whitman's about poets needing an audience' (Hamilton 1976 24) Small private presses meant small editions and a limited readership When Harry and Caresse Crosby published three books in October 1928 they reached a 'record' combined edition of 301 books in all (Ford 1975, 182) Even a famous modernist like Joyce doubted whether Beach's proposed edition of a thousand copies was not too large At what must have been a low in his self-esteem he suggested to Sylvia Beach only to print a dozen copies, or maybe even two (Ford 1975 14) With a certain litotic flavour, Aldington defined the popularity of imagism 'That I fancy was the original and unforgivable sin of Imagist poetry - people bought it' (Aldington 1968 131)

The case of Bob Brown certainly deserves separate attention since in the present context he could almost be called the archetypal modernist author and publisher A minor modernist writer who came over to France after previous careers as a hack writer and in the New York Stock Exchange, Brown is almost emblematic of the commercial quandary in which other modernists found themselves to a less extreme extent As a free-lance writer, he brought forth an astonishing output of the popular, commercial reading matter, ranging from detective stories to jokes and jingles He himself calculated that he had with a good amount of financial success written '1000 short and long fiction stories, one every three and 6/10th days, counting 100,000 word typewriter busters and 3000 word playful finger-tip type-ticklers' (quoted by Ford 1975, 303, no reference given) He left for Europe after viewing Marcel Duchamp's work at the Armory Show The telex machine he saw while working at the Stock Exchange inspired his invention of a speed 'Reading Machine', intended to aid modern readers with the great amount of print they were now faced with A tape

on this Reading Machine moved the text continuously in front of the readers' eyes, in a cross between a production line, a telex machine, Richardson's stream of consciousness and the cinema To feed this machine, Brown invited poets to write the 'optical' (poem) Analogous with the talkies of the period, Brown called the poetry he wrote adapted to his reading Machine 'readies', also the title of the first publication of Brown's Roving Eye Press, *The Readies* (1930) 'Optically' adjusted texts could theoretically be speeded up so that the viewer catching an 'eyeful' of poetry at any one time could read at an increased rate A collection of adjusted texts was called *Readies for Bob Brown's Machine*, published in 1931 Bob Brown would seem merely a lone eccentric with quirky solutions for the crisis in literacy, had not a whole host of modernists been willing to consider collecting entries for his alternative reading collection The anthology was contributed to by Hilaire Hiler, Laurence Vail, James T Farrell, Kay Boyle, Peter Neagoe, Samuel Putnam, Walter Lowenfels Paul Bowles, Gertrude Stein, Manuel Komroff, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Alfred Kreymborg, Nancy Cunard, Charles Henri Ford Eugene Jolas, Robert McAlmon (Ford 1975 309) Bob Brown's solution to the excess of print was adjusting the method of reading for a passive but more efficient reader subjected to moving print Interesting too is that the 'roving eye' would be reading text as it happened, almost approaching the impermanence and fluidity of pre-literate orality With so much print constantly moving before the eye it would become impossible to look things up, and one can imagine a situation almost similar to that of an aural audience Brown's texts were grammatically adjusted for this process, abolishing the immobile perfection of crafted sentences to favour immediacy and strength of expression, reducing this print to the quality of oral speech It would force the 'author' of this moving tape to take into account his audience's memory span, very much like the creator of an oral performance Bob Brown's attempts at coping with the mass of reading suddenly swamping both reader and writer are symbolic of the modernist writers' paradox

The alternative reaction to this quandary was the opposite one, not the speeding up of moving text, but the more perfect immobilization of text into small but highly significant portions This is the route chosen by the imagist law-givers Their method was to limit the production of text, but to make what they produced highly significant Frequently, then, poet-critics like Eliot and Pound favoured cutting down text to size Concerning the 'imagiste' par excellence, Aldington remarks

> This craftsmanship was the result of infinite pains Version after version of a poem was discarded by H D in the search for perfection, and the pruning was ruthless I had thought I was fairly exacting but I was staggered by this relentless artistic conscience The fervour with which ten generations of Puritan ancestors had sought moral righteousness was here devoted to æsthetic righteousness (Aldington 1968, 126)

Similarly, Pound's essay 'How to Read' was in fact a list of 'what' to read, of worthwhile literature, a service done by Pound to prevent his readers from getting lost in the meaningless pool of textuality (Pound 1985, 15-41) Modernism set itself up as the opposite of that great wash of text, by making itself highly significant textually In the case of literary modernists, the foregrounding of the style of text, however, indicates a profound unease with textuality Ong suggests that the focusing of attention on surface marks like style is an example of extreme interiorized literacy To a certain extent this is an oversimplification Interiorized literacy led to a sense of crisis, when the sheer quantitative involvement of greater numbers in the production and consumption of textuality threatened the significance of the literary text, for reasons of simple logistics Because of the omnipresence of text, in advertising, cheap novels newspapers even on cereal packets textuality seemed to be slowly slipping into the problems of orality The literate's memory and knowledge now seemed subject to the same chaotic ephemerality as the oral person, the significant text of earlier times drowned in trivial print material

6 Gender in Modernism Conclusion

Inveterate mythmakers, many modernists in their memoirs recognized a gorge within Parisian modernism, separating two colourful figures, Stein and Joyce Perhaps intentionally, the two did keep away from each other, separating followers into two camps But the difference was perceived to be more than social One of Stein's correspondents Lindley Hubbell, compared her method of writing to Joyce's

> It is interesting because you and he started at about the same point (Dubliners isn't as good as Three Lives, but it is good) and from that point you started in exactly opposite directions, he toward greater complexity and you toward greater simplicity And his is a blind alley, because the more complicated you get the more incomprehensible you become, until you reach a point where you are entirely incomprehensible (he's reached it And I have to laugh at people who say that Work in Progress is witty He has no more wit than a trout) But the road which you took can't end until you reach the thing-in-itself And whether there is a thing-in-itself I don't know, and neither do you But at any rate, it's an open road, open under the sky, and good healthy travelling The result is that everyone who has followed him has become sterile and finally stopped writing altogether, and

> everyone who has followed you - well everyone who writes stories for Harpers or Scribners or the Atlantic is following you, so there can't be any harm in it! (from a letter by Lindley Williams Hubbell, dated February 25, 1932, Gallup 1979, 255)

We can wonder whether such a split in modernism really did exist, and whether, with possible exceptions, it fell along gender lines As has already been noted, the militancy of male poets towards previous artistic and literary movements discussed by critics like Renato Poggioli (1971), was not necessarily matched by (often female) collaborators like Lowell, H D , Aldington or the Heap-Anderson team In one of his manifestoes Wyndham Lewis puts the strong male individualist artist at his most extreme when he writes that the modernists are 'proud, handsome and predatory' (Lewis 1914, 148) Certainly, male modernists indicate a strong 'interiorization of literacy', a great affinity for visualism Exceptions of course exist Joyce's Dublin voices in *Ulysses* stem from his own upbringing in a highly orality-oriented society Indeed, it is neither truthful or helpful to regard male and female modernist texts as clear sets of oppositional characteristics of male visualism and literacy versus female orality The Imagist movement amply bears this out Although the idea of an 'image' is not only intended to be regarded as a picture, nevertheless visualism and interiorized literacy are clear influences The rigour and concentration of imagism is aimed at an extreme function of literacy, the paring down of the text to the absolutely significant Pound's view on the image is an almost mathematical definition 'An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time'(Pound 1918_a) As we have seen, women were involved in imagism - the superlative imagist was H D - but they did not in the last instance pursue 'imagism' with the same rigour In his role as literary broker of modernism, Pound wrote a highly positive letter to a new poet, Marianne Moore True to character he offers to get her poetry 'into print' It is interesting that his positive criticism combines a highly visual metaphor with an appreciation of her reduction, of the fact that she minimizes the text

> Your stuff holds my eye Most verse I merely slide off of (God I do ye thank for this automatic self-protection) BUT my held eye goes forward very slowly, and I know how simple many things appear to me which people of supposed intelligence come to me to have explained --/--/
> Thank God, I think you can be trusted not to pour out flood (in the manner of dear Amy and poor Masters) (Pound 1950, 202-205)

He defines 'woman' as 'a chaos', and then qualifies that further by referring to oral talk

> The female is a chaos,
>
> the male
>
> is a fixed point of stupidity, but only the female
> can content itself with prolonged conversation
> with but one sole other creature of its own sex and
> of its own unavoidable specie (Pound 1990, 362)

Interestingly enough, he defines this female poet he approves of as 'a stabilized female' and himself as having 'attained the chaotic fluidities' (Pound 1990, 363) Very much in line with contemporary theories on gender, Pound connects the female pole with orality, with chaos, with the unstructuredness of conversation A female poet becomes stabilized when she is, like Moore, sparing in her use of text His review of the 'Others' anthology including poems by Moore and Mina Loy, again repeats a similar notion, when he praises them with the following double-edged statement '(while I have before now seen a deal of rubbish by both of them) they are, as selected by Mr Kreymborg interesting and readable' (Pound 1990, 366 - emphasis mine) Obviously, the importance of the male editor rests in restricting the chatty, chaotic verboseness of the women poets Similar criticism of chaotic length was levelled at Dorothy Richardson's autobiography as the instalment chapters came out over the years Diane F Gillespie mentions 'charges of inconsequence, dullness, obscurity, and formlessness', even though many reviewers and critics acknowledged her importance (Gillespie 1990, 393) James Joyce, on the other hand described his own seemingly formless *Work in Progress* along the lines of a mathematician One revision of 'Tales Told of Shem and Shaun, Three Fragments from Work in Progress' (1929) for the Black Sun Press was described as 'a difficult mathematical sentence with the clue at the end (the word Finish to show that the words in the sentence are of Finnish derivation)' (quoted by Ford 1975, 192, no further reference given, although probably from a memoir by C Crosby)

In connection with this, it is worth considering the working methods of both Joyce and Stein As Korg points out, Joyce developed an overall structure for *Ulysses*, into which he would slot useful phrases and symbols encountered or written later In this sense, he worked paradigmatically

> In his more recent study A Walton Litz has found that Joyce began *Ulysses* with his general plan in mind, and accumulated on sheets of separate paper annotations of newspaper phrases, people's mannerisms, stray facts and similar materials He inserted these into the early drafts of his chapters, gradually thickening their texture and strengthening the style in this way (Korg 1979 122)

Stein, on the other hand, is reported by 'Alice' and other sources to have a totally different method She wrote on scraps of paper or in children's school copybooks, but as the first autobiography takes care to point out, she never 'reworked' anything, but only copied and re-copied

> She always then and for many years later wrote on scraps of paper in pencil, copied it into french school notebooks in ink and then often copied it over again in ink It was in connexion with these various series of scraps of paper that her elder brother once remarked, I do not know whether Gertrude has more genius than the rest of you all, that I know nothing about, but one thing I have always noticed, the rest of you paint and write and are not satisfied and throw it away or tear it up, she does not say whether she is satisfied or not she copies it very often but she never throws away any piece of paper upon which she has written (ABT, 58-59)

Thus the Stein text was endlessly copyable and could perpetually be continued and kept going There was, in Leo's version, never any revision, and most significantly in this context no cutting or paring down For Gertrude Stein all text written down seems to have been significant Joyce composed synchronically and paradigmatically almost in categories slotting new examples onto the general structure He made a structure that was endlessly open to new additions to its categories, and herein lies his text's open-endedness (although of course the presence of an all-encompassing structure indicates a certain closure) Stein on the other hand could forever add new text, without this affecting previous text, composing diachronically and linearly

The working methods of these two individual writers can be used symbolically for two types of writers The rejection of closure by all-inclusive works like *Ulysses* or the ultimate example *Finnegans Wake* is an aspect of modernism rightly considered as among its most incisively revolutionary For the first time, the literary text aims to include all and everything, to encompass reality into itself, making the text almost as all-powerful as a biblical text Needless to say, this is the goal of the ultimate literate, who aims to make the text so strong and powerful that it can describe if not create everything In this way, the male open-ended modernist text is employed to a

different purpose from the female rejection of closure In *Ulysses*, a mythical structure is upheld to envelop the story and give it authorial significance Despite the equally diffuse and different voices sounding throughout *The Waste Land*, there is a similar version of authorial closure in the notion that, after Pound's edits, this is the definite version, the construct which Eliot presents to his readers The closure consists of this intellectual challenge thrown at the readers, to which we respond by reading the footnotes and researching the quotations

Male modernist 'closure' also resides in the positioning by Pound, Eliot and Joyce of their texts in relation to a literary tradition, where 'good' authors are assigned a place of importance This masculine literary tradition can be opposed to Stein's suggestion in *Everybody's Autobiography* concerning a literary prize established by Avery Hopwood Asked for her advice in distributing these 'rewards for those who were at the university and wanted to write in an original way', Stein suggests a forum very much like the Independents' Salon in painting publishing 'a large volume of it every year not taking out anything' (EA, 195) Stein's interlocutor, significantly 'the man in the English Department', responds they already do this, taking out only 'what is manifestly not worth anything', upon which the woman author of 'incomprehensible' avant-garde texts responds 'who is to judge of that manifestly not worth anything No the thing should be without jury and without reward' (sic) (EA, 195-196)

Moreover, the open-endedness of works by women modernists usually does not have this aim of all-inclusive reality-engendering textuality, as the collation of a number of quotes can attest May Sinclair picks this up in her review of *Pointed Roofs*

> Chapter Three of *Pointed Roofs* opens with an air of extreme decision and importance "Miriam was practising on the piano in the larger of the two English bedrooms," as if something hung on her practising But no, nothing hangs on it, and if you want to know on what day she is practising you have to read on and back again It doesn't matter It is Miriam's consciousness that is going backwards and forwards in time The time it goes in is unimportant On the hundredth page out of three hundred and twelve pages Miriam has been exactly two weeks in Hanover Nothing has happened but the infinitely little affairs of the school, (Sinclair 1918, 3-12)

Similarly, Woolf, although her only really modernist novel is *The Waves*, underlines this democratization of the topic of literature in her review of *Ulysses*

> Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day The mind receives a myriad of impressions - trivial fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old, (Woolf 1984, 149-153)

She continues with her now much quoted metaphor 'Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged, life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end' (Woolf 1984, 150) It is interesting to compare Woolf's review of *Ulysses* with Eliot's (Eliot 1923) Equally favourable towards Joyce, Eliot stresses the 'mythical method' of comparing contemporary life with the mythical perspective The fact is that Joyce does both Via the stream of consciousness technique he registers the thoughts and emotions on Bloom's mind, but this is combined with an underlying, highly artificial, learned and literary structure Perhaps Joyce, more than Stein felt the need to protect his novel by a literary tour de force Mina Loy's definition of modernism also chooses to stress a different version of the 'modernist revolution' from many of her male colleagues

> The flux of life is pouring its aesthetic aspect into your eyes, your ears - and you ignore it because you are looking for your canons of beauty in some sort of frame or glass case or tradition Modernism says Why not each one of us, scholar or bricklayer, pleasurably realize all that is impressing itself upon our subconscious, the thousand odds and ends which make up your sensory every day life?
> Modernism has democratized the subject matter and *la belle matière* of art, through cubism the newspaper has assumed an aesthetic quality, through Cezanne (sic) a plate has become more than something to put an apple upon, Brancusi has given an evangelistic import to eggs and Gertrude Stein has given us the Word, in and for itself (Loy 1924, 429-430)

The ironic attitude considered so typical for the modernist text, indicating a self-consciousness about literacy and the literary text another sign of deeply interiorized literacy, is absent in many texts by women authors The modernist woman autobiographer is not ironic The crisis of literacy is not their main problem, since they were not yet sufficiently established within literacy On the contrary, for modernists like Richardson, H D or Stein, literacy formed a liberating experience, allowing them to present themselves in their text The open-endedness of their texts tends to be connected with an autobiographical intention

Consequently, when assessing the influence of women modernists one cannot merely add the notion of gender to the traditional interpretation of modernism By focusing on female modernism, we allow a different interpretation of modernism to come forward, to counter the male stress on impersonality, elitism, genius and the literary tradition One such major function of writing stressed by many female modernists is the wish for closeness with the reader, for an almost oral contact Not a modernist herself, Q D Leavis shows a distinct nostalgia for the earlier, more oral-based audience, who still had greater respect for the significance of the written word This surfaces when she compares the situation of early journalism with the contemporary context

> The modern reader is at once struck by the body of traditional lore the people must have possessed which served instead of the 'knowledge' (*i.e* acquaintance with a mass of more or less unrelated facts, derived principally from an elementary school education and the newspaper) that forms the background of the modern working-man's mind and all this supported an idiom rich in proverbial wisdom that explains in some degree the wealth of allusion in the drama and pamphlets of the age so tangled to us whose minds are furnished with mere information, a kind of knowledge not rooted in the soil but depending on print and who have been accustomed for two centuries to have the writer smooth the way for us compared with the Elizabethan pamphlet twentieth-century journalism is pre-digested food (Leavis 1990, 86-87)

Leavis's argument says as much about the early twentieth century as her own worries concerning the effects of commercialized literacy 'Defoe's luck lay in having a pure contemporary idiom in use, he wrote as he spoke and thus was able to write so fast and so well' (Leavis 1990, 103) The alienation she deduces at the heart of the commercialization of literature is expressed in terms of a lost continent It was a prelapsarian time, when people wrote as they talked, when the oral and scripted languages had not yet separated, and significant text was sustained by the community and magic of oral talk. Now, 'a separate semi-literate public' had arisen 'to interfere with the book market' (Leavis 1990, 146) There is a real awareness that the system has got out of hand, has been wrested away from the intellectuals by sheer force of numbers Leavis romanticizes the earlier situation 'Dickens is one with his readers, they enjoyed exercising their emotional responses, he laughed and cried aloud as he wrote' (Leavis 1990, 157) In her book, Leavis specifically introduces the discussion of the audience as a vital part of the literary process She remarks on how the technicalities of writing have been changed, compared to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

> Since that time we have cleared up our habits of punctuation, spelling paragraphing and sentence-construction, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries sat down to read with different expectations from the readers observed in Part I Reading was then almost inseparably associated with reading aloud (punctuation for instance, was for the voice and not the sense), as it seems to have been with the Romans, and this would tend not only to slow down the tempo of reading but also to disentangle the threads (Leavis 1990, 218)

Almost obsessively, she returns to the topic, mourning the attentive, conscious, concentrated reading which she transfers onto an earlier, pre-commercial reading age

> The mere appearance of the printed page has altered, in the direction determined by Northcliffe, so that its contents are to be skimmed the temptation for the modern reader is *not* to read properly - *i.e.* with the fullest attention (the practice that died only with the last generation of reading aloud in the family circle was the best possible insurance of good reading habits - and mere trash, moreover will not stand this test) (Leavis 1990, 226)

Leavis clearly remarks on the absence of significant texts, but unlike Pound, she relates this to the disappearance of an earlier, aural audience, and does not focus solely on the threat to literature Richardson too considers the topic of her audience in connection with an article on her style and punctuation In a very similar argument she too complains that 'the machinery of punctuation and type, while lifting burdens from reader and writer alike and perfectly serving the purposes of current exchange, have also, on the whole, devitalized the act of reading, have tended to make it less organic, more mechanical' (Richardson 1924, 991) Her review of Wells' *In the Days of the Comet* criticizes the male writer for just this lack of a relationship with the reader

> One hopes he may get rid of this rather irritating dummy and, along with her, of all his stage machinery - his men in towers, and men with voices, and men at writing-desks - and begin directly without either apology or explanation, - laborious and altogether obstructive attempts to establish a rapport between himself and his readers (Richardson 1990_a, 400)

Virginia Woolf's final remarks to her reader in 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' are positive exhortations to actions on their part

> May I end by venturing to remind you of the duties and responsibilities that are yours as partners in this business of writing books, as companions in the railway carriage, as fellow travellers with Mrs Brown? In one day thousands of ideas have coursed through your brains. Nevertheless, you allow the writers to palm off upon you a version of all this, an image of Mrs Brown, which has no likeness to that surprising apparition whatsoever It is this division between reader and writer, this humility on your part, these professional airs and graces on ours, that corrupt and emasculate the books which should be the healthy offspring of a close and equal alliance between us (Woolf 1928, 23)

Mina Loy similarly stresses the need for a creative audience in the case of Gertrude Stein's writing

> To interpret her description of the lizard you have to place yourself in the position of both Gertrude Stein and the lizard at once, so intimate is the liaison of her observation with the sheer existence of her objective, that she invites you into the concentric vortex of consciousness involved in the most trifling transactions of incident (Loy 1924, 428)

It is not surprising, then that she concludes 'Like all modern art, this art of Gertrude Stein makes a demand for a creative audience, [which] leaves us unlimited latitude for personal response' The prospective Stein reader must 'go into training to get Gertrude Stein' (Loy 1924, 429, 427) More importantly, it is the 'common reader' and not the critic who effectively keeps literature alive in Woolfian theories of the reader

> [L]iterature both past and present must rest in the hands of the people who continue to read it Milton is alive in the year 1922 and of a certain size and shape only because some thousands of insignificant men and women are holding his page <u>at this moment</u> before their eyes (Woolf 1979_b 328 - emphasis mine)

There seems to be a lot of explicative value in the notion of the common reader who can unseat the critic, a highly democratic concept by a feminist

> The whole hierarchy is powerless to unseat the judgment of an ignorant boy or girl who has read the play to the end It is I who have read the play I hold it in my brain I am directly in touch with Shakespeare No third person can explain or alter or even throw much light upon our relationship (Woolf 1979_b, 329)

This is interesting looked at in combination with Woolf's presentation in *A Room of One's Own* of being shooed out of a university In a strong reaffirmation of the

ordinary male and female reader, she calls up the revolutionary anti-establishment background of the oral tradition, in which anonymous authors could mock in song (Woolf 1990_b, 680) From Woolf's enduring interests in this artist from the oral tradition, 'Anon', it is possible to regard a more coherent theory on writing and the female author 'Anon' is far removed from the official literary tradition, unnamed, an inherent close part of the audience, woman or man, and very subversive

> Thus the singer had his audience, but the audience was so little interested in his name that he never thought to give it The audience was itself the singer, "Terly, terlow" they sang, and "By, by lullay" filling in the pauses, helping out with a chorus Every body shared in the emotion of Anons (sic) song and supplied the story Anon is sometimes man, sometimes woman He is the common voice singing out of doors (Woolf 1990_b, 680)

Woolf's discussion of orality and literary history in 'Anon' seems a very Ongian theory, as in the two following quotations

> Caxtons (sic) printing press foretold the end of that anonymous world, It (sic) is now written down, fixed, nothing will be added, even if the legend still murmurs on, The printing press brought the past into existence It brought into existence the man who is conscious of the past the man who sees his time, against a background of the past, the man who first sees himself and shows himself to us The first blow has been aimed at Anon when the authors (sic) name is attached to the book The individual emerges (Woolf 1990_b, 682-683)

> It was when the playhouses were shut presumably that the reader was born
> It is here that we develop faculties that the play left dormant + Now the reader is completely in being He can pause, he can ponder, he can compare, he can draw back from the page and see behind it a man sitting alone in the centre of the labyrinth of words in a college room thinking of suicide He can gratify many different moods He can read directly what is on the page, or, drawing aside, can read what is not written There is a long drawn continuity in the book that the play has not It give (sic) a different pace to the mind We are in a world where nothing is concluded We have lost the sound of the spoken word, all that the sight of the actors bodies (sic) suggests to the mind through the eye We have lost the sense of being part of the audience (Woolf 1990_a, 697-699)

As already discussed in Chapter 1, women do not have the same relationship to speech as men in most patriarchal societies They are usually not the oral artists, mostly forming part of the audience to an artistic or religious performance In a shared conversation, they do not have the same rights to speech, or their speech

must serve different purposes like the calming and soothing presence of the Victorian angel-in-the-house The impact of literacy will consequently have affected women differently By virtue of their unassailable right to speech men had immediate rights to the new technology, which they perceived as increasing the efficiency of speech Struggling with this new technology, they developed the psychosexual relationship to the pen described by Gilbert and Gubar Without the initial free right to speech, women, on the other hand, became objects of the text without the potential to redress the balance Already circumscribed by writing and literacy, women's belated move into literacy occurred via the late eighteenth-century novel D H Lawrence was only one of many male writers and philosophers pointing out this lack of a natural right 'women when they speak or write utter not one single word that men have not taught them' (Lawrence 1931, 92) With the success of the popular novel in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the female novelist was considered to be at the heart of this uncontrolled textuality

Every woman's entry into literature, then, is belated by virtue of their unequal status in the talking situation The threat of non-presence in the speaking situation, leaving the woman speaker ignored or misrepresented, her speech circumvented and taken away from her, cannot be ignored in the experience of living Consequently, with a different relationship to both the spoken and written language women modernists did not share the artistic ideals of the men The defence of the literary tradition against rampant textuality was not their main issue - since they were to a large extent identified with it by society Richardson, Stein and H D were all three involved in an autobiographical project which literally was never to finish, and it is their self-representation as perpetual autobiographers which undermines literary authority These are not authoritative autobiographers like the morose Henry Adams or the frustrated Rousseau There is no definite 'message' or definitive view on life coming out of *Pilgrimage*, Stein's 'autobiographies' or '*Bid Me To Live*'-*Her*-*The Gift*. Based on their experience of the oral and literate versions of themselves, women modernists in fact gratefully used the literate text for an oral purpose to present themselves and their reality in an ongoing autobiography to perform themselves, to research making a consciousness alive in the text Their interest is the kind of female reality that can be expressed in a text, naturally autobiographical, inevitably individualist, not backed up by a tradition Stemming from their frustration as a speaker, they attempted to include the specific experiences of the speaking situation into a written text Their goal was to make themselves present in a written text, as

this was problematic for them as speakers For them, the written text was both an escape route, allowing them a more definite because written 'presence', and a mode to be enriched from the speaking situation

The 'obsession' of these women modernists with the autobiographical position or, in a wider definition, self-writing, is a literary goal not generally regarded as part of the modernist esthetics This is frequently combined with a strong belief in the innate capacity of women to possess a greater knowledge of existence than men This 'female mysticism' is a reaction to claims in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that women did not possess a strong personality, that their language was parroted In an essay called 'Women in the Arts' and discussing the lack of female geniuses so far, Richardson describes contemporary man as driven by an ambition which is a kind of despair

> And it is a form of despair to which men are notoriously more liable than are women A fact that ceases to surprise when one reflects that, short of sainthood, a man must do rather than be, that he is potent not so much in person as in relation to the things he makes (Richardson 1990_b 421)

Consequently, women had different expectations of literature and literacy In her own words, Dorothy Richardson attempted 'a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism' (Richardson 1989_a, 9) The 'reality' that they are trying to get into print is the psychological reality, the 'reality' experienced by the perceiving (female) individual In an essay on feminism and concerning the question of women's adjustment to a man's world, Richardson discusses her fascination with the Da Vinci portrait of La Gioconda Unlike the artistic tradition, however, she does not see a mysterious beautiful woman but the strength of a woman's presence, a presence strongly founded in female everyday existence in the home Men, she says, prefer the mystery of the Mona Lisa to the present day modern woman but they have basically misinterpreted the picture and its object

> And the most amazing thing in the history of Leonardo's masterpiece is their general failure to recognize that Lisa stands alone in feminine portraiture because she is centered, unlike her nearest peers, those dreamful, passionately blossoming imaginations of Rossetti, neither upon humanity nor upon the consolations of religion
> It is because she is so completely *there* that she draws men like a magnet Never was better artistic bargain driven than between Leonardo and this lady who sat to him for years, who sat so long that she grew at home in her place, and the deepest layer of her being, her woman's enchanted

> domestication within the sheer marvel of existing came forth and shone through the mobile mask of her face Leonardo of the innocent eye, his genius concentrated upon his business of making a good picture, caught her, unawares, on a gleeful, cosmic holiday (Richardson 1990$_c$, 412)

Richardson's Mona Lisa is a 'womanly woman' but presented as more active She is the partner in an artistic bargain, and as such is involved in an autobiographical activity of her own Her 'cosmic holiday' is her power to exist, in the face, for once, of an innocent male artist who forgets to mould the woman subject Striking Richardson, moreover is the duration of her artistic presence as she changes in front of the painter It is an autobiographical presence, an artistic medium poignantly made to perform the being the presence of a woman [21] In this sense, Richardson's version of *La Gioconda* is symbolic for the literary efforts of modernist women autobiographers like Gertrude Stein, Hilda Doolittle or Dorothy Richardson straining to show woman's presence forcing through the artistic medium *Pilgrimage*, for one, is obsessed with 'being there', with being a consciousness-in-action aware in performance, heard and not just seen The modernist female autobiography does not describe the spiritual development of an artist in the romantic tradition, but instead the reaction by a woman experiencer to being turned into the silent, non-individualized Other of visualist ideology Compared to the alienation from speech in her everyday domestic dealings with men, the performance of and the presence accompanying successful orality becomes a topic which they paradoxically can only fulfill in a text In this way the modernist woman autobiographer offers her readers the performance of poignant, 'unignorable' female presence In order to strengthen this presence, her text will be infused with characteristics from the oral sphere and oral performance Not having a strong tradition of literacy to defend, women modernists instead felt the urgent need to force their presence into text, to prove that women individuals existed with the same power and impact as men To express their presence, they use the techniques of orality and oral performance, anathema to male theorists like Pound and Eliot who were trying to stem the flood of female or 'feminized' print

Female modernist autobiography then is a paradox, the attempt to speech-write the female presence It attempts to extend the text of the novel onto an oral level

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21 In fact this statement by Richardson reminds of the excellent covers to the Virago edition of *Pilgrimage* four details of the Gwen John painting *The Convalescent* (c 1920) portraying the same woman Gwen John herself in almost similar positions

rejecting the limitation of narrative and traditional life stories, the textuality that hems women in and makes them resemble each other as 'Woman ' The absence central to the writing mode allowed the woman writer to express herself in print so much earlier than in public speech However, if writing a text was one way of acting as a Subject, the nature of writing also includes the opposite the death of the author The fickleness of 'inspiration', literary conventions, publishing conventions, plot, the illusion of the writer as a unified self all these circumstances hinder, obstruct and preclude the woman writer from really 'being' in the text from forcing herself as a powerful and speaking subject onto the reader, interacting with the reader, influencing the reader The text slides away from the writer, eludes her control Moreover, the finished text, even more so the finished autobiographical text, makes this self definitive unchanging stable killing the living presence of the writer The modernist autobiographies under discussion try to avoid this by calling in the advantages of orality This perverse combination, rather than simply the rejection of traditional plot lines is the true 'writing beyond the ending' of modernist women writers or even it is a writing to fend off a textual ending In an attempt to keep herself present and existing in front of the reader, Richardson would prolong her 'life' by publishing 'chapter' after 'chapter' in a never-ending autobiography Doolittle also focuses on her own life as a speaking and writing presence, by constantly re-drawing and reinterpreting her life Gertrude Stein virtually speaks to us in print, present in a conversation that in one case meanders on for 940 pages Thus the never-ending, 'oral autobiographies' of these women writers preclude the dangerous 'aura of accomplished death' associated with textuality

Chapter III Dorothy Richardson Living with Miriam

1 Introduction

Dorothy Richardson died in 1957 at the age of 84 When *March Moonlight* was published in 1967, another posthumous 'chapter' was added to her autobiographical collection *Pilgrimage* She had in fact come full circle in the continuous description of her own consciousness, since *March Moonlight* brought her life story up to her own beginnings as a novelist The protagonist Miriam writes her first novel, which in Richardson's own life had been *Pointed Roofs* (1915), the first volume of *Pilgrimage*, thus writing herself into existence as a writer In between, we follow Miriam in Germany and around late nineteenth-century London, in circles quite unusual for the middle class girl of the period, going to meetings of the Lycurgan (Fabian) Society, learning to ride a bicycle, snacking in the new ABC eating houses This London consists of independent working women-with-latchkeys, barely surviving off poorly paid new jobs, like the secretarial work that Miriam performs at the Wimpole Street dentists' office It is a world outside the boundaries of interest of ordinary literature, neither the fin-de-siècle bohemian world of male decadent poets and writers nor the marriage intrigue of traditional novels It is however a world with a new species evolving the New Woman leaving the well-circumscribed private family roles of daughter, wife and mother behind, to define her own, individual, and often independent way of life The topic of the New Woman was a hot issue, and a slightly unnerving one, in both fictional and journalistic writing of the period It is a sensational term covering a semantic vacuum for the term 'new' indicates something unseen before, something in the process of coming into being The main character of *Pilgrimage*, Miriam Henderson, is in the process of creating for herself such a life as a new woman She has jobs, pays the rent, lives apart from her family and moves about London with friends or by herself The creation of an identity beyond these simple characteristics is one of her greatest concerns

In *Clear Horizon* (1935), Miriam introduces two of her friends to each other her boarding house friend Amabel and the famous writer Hypo Wilson The meeting disappointingly underlines for her the separate existence of these two worlds, and the impossibility of separating Wilson from literary and bohemian society to make him understand their different lives He berates them for not realizing their good luck, calling them 'you modern young women with your latchkeys and your

freedoms' Even with Amabel's help, Miriam is unable to counter this pat definition, or to fight Hypo's patronizing assessment of the New Woman When he belittles their enjoyment of a Lycurgan meeting, Miriam is outraged, and, interestingly, her thoughts vacillate between oral and visual imagery

> 'But, you know, you don't *know* how fortunate you are, you modern young women with your latchkeys and your freedoms You've no *idea* how fortunate you are '
> Here, if one could tie him down and make him listen, was an outlet into their own world, far away from the formal life of men, yet animating it Both she and Amabel, as seen by him, had run away from certain kinds of enclosure But there was no question, there of good or ill *fortune* No deliberate calculation either Just refusal His picture of what they had run away from would be as ill-realized as his vision of their destination (CH, 316 - emphasis mine)

Miriam next interprets the reactions of Amabel, her fellow-escapee into genuine freedom and 'reality'

> [H]er shame and disappointment, made endurable to herself by a seasoning of malicious glee, over one's failure to handle him, over the flagrant absence of any opposition, to him and his world, of themselves and their world, the serene selves and the rich deep world that were to have confronted him, even though only indirectly, with the full force of their combined beings And here one sat, actually encouraging his collection, in cheap, comic pictures, of the externals of their existence (CH, 317 - emphasis mine)

To Miriam's disillusion their full presences are basically invisible to Hypo as he interprets merely according to type Instead of hearing or sensing their vibrant existence, his visualism only allows him access to the cheap comic pictures of two naive New Women Miriam feels the essential is ignored, not 'heard'

In her own autobiography, Bryher describes *Pilgrimage* in surprisingly strong terms as radical and revolutionary

> Colette will be read for her style, Dorothy Richardson for her share in the evolution of the novel but a few years after we who survive are dead, who will recognize their courage and their honesty? Both were true revolutionaries, fighting not for dogmas of any colour but for the elementary rights of an inarticulate body of women who were treated like slaves until the end of the First World War (Bryher 1963, 34)

In this sociological interpretation, one may wonder what exactly Bryher refers to by these 'elementary rights' in connection with *Pilgrimage* The novel's feminism is undeniable, but hardly consists of inflammatory incitement However, the crux of Bryher's statement lies in her mention of women's inarticulateness In fact, these rights are the same need for existential presence, so acutely felt by Miriam in the previous passage

2 The Rejection of 'Plot', or 'Plunging' into the Text

In her own life, Dorothy Richardson saw the emotional and financial bankruptcy of the marriage plot so typical of the Victorian novel With the financial failure of her father, who tragically rejected his trade background to live the life of a gentleman and the suicide of a passive mother, Richardson's Victorian family unit was broken up before her eyes An independent worker, she ventured into the London ferment of alternative life styles, a strange mixture of émigrés, revolutionaries, anarchists, Fabians vegetarians and suffragists In her own life too, she sidestepped the typical marriage plot, by a determined isolation from friends and potential lovers When she chose an affair with H G Wells, a notorious womanizer, the result was an unmarried pregnancy which ended prematurely Richardson eventually did marry the artist Alan Odle, but the marriage was far from conventional A man whose health was considered highly precarious upon his marriage - according to Gloria Fromm Richardson did not expect him to live beyond a couple of months into the marriage - Odle seems to have been attractive to Richardson because he too enjoyed privacy and isolation, while making no heavy emotional demands upon her [1] It seems strange then that a woman so protective of her privacy should write a series of strongly autobiographical novels, carefully charting potentially embarrassing episodes in her private life

In a review of Richardson's novels for *The Little Review*, May Sinclair stresses there is no plot or drama in the first three novels and refers to complaints of 'formlessness'

> Nothing happens It is just life going on and on It is Miriam Henderson's stream of consciousness going on and on And in neither is there any grossly discernible beginning or middle or end (Sinclair 1918, 6)

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1 She did do a lot of caring work for him, protective and motherly but Odle was not dominant in the marriage like her father had been (Rosenberg 1973)

In *The Tunnel*, Richardson offers the solution to this problem of formlessness by a reference to Goethe's Bildungsroman, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* ' What we're having is wanderyahre, the next best thing to wanderyahre' (T, 92) This 'autobiography' merely offers Miriam's 'years of wandering', her everyday experiences without the benefit of authorial hindsight [2] Interesting in this connection are Richardson's alternatives to May Sinclair's well-intended but 'lamentably ill-chosen' definition of her style, 'pursuing its foolish way' in literary criticism (Richardson 1967, 180) Instead of 'stream of consciousness', she suggests a fountain of consciousness or even a sea She objects to the linearity of the term which implies she in fact still writes like the romantic and realistic authors 'Horizontally' (Richardson 1959, 19)

> But his consciousness sits stiller than a tree its central core, luminous point, tho more or less continuously expanding from birth to maturity, remains stable, one with itself thruout (sic) life (Kunitz 1933, 562)

Literature too stems from a stable consciousness This belief in a stable centre with an expanding faculty is where Richardson differs from Bergson (Kumar 1962) Shirley Rose concludes 'in speaking of the consciousness as Dorothy Richardson conceives of it we require metaphors that indicate expansion without movement or change We therefore must regard consciousness in spatial terms without the usual correlative of time' (Rose 1969, 369) Instead of stressing the plot lines, the emphasis is on the presentation of Miriam's consciousness and gives an effect 'of an extreme concentration on the thing seen or felt'

> Her novels are novels of an extraordinary compression and of an extenuation more extraordinary still The moments of Miriam's consciousness pass one by one, or overlapping, moments tense with vibration, moments drawn out fine, almost to snapping point On one page Miss Richardson seems to be accounting for every minute of Miriam's time (Sinclair 1918, 7)

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2 In qualifying this view on life May Sinclair produces a quotation from de Goncourt Badly spelt by the typesetters of *The Little Review* it rejects the traditional novelistic interpretation of life as impoverishing Focusing on the great movements of plot and emotion is ignoring the many moments of full consciousness in between 'Si la vie en soi est un bienfait le fait meme de vivre le contient tout entier et les grands mouvements de la sensibilite loin de l'enrichir l appauvrissent au contraire en concentrant sur quelques partis de nous-mêmes envahies au hasard par la destinee l effort d attention qui serait plus uniformenent (sic) reparti sur l ensemble de notre conscience vitale De ce point de vue une vie ou il semblerait ne rien se passer que d elementaire et quotidien serait mieux remplie qu une autre vie riche en apparence d incidents et d aventures ' (Sinclair 1918 11)

Frequently, chapters open on a new situation for Miriam exhaustively described This leads readers to believe that this scene or period must be highly significant only to be followed by similar treatment of yet another scene In the train to Oberland for instance, Miriam's escape from sharing her carriage with a pushy Frenchman, is only a very temporary victory, leading to the intense discomfort of a second class carriage Richardson thus subverts the expectations of her readers, who, based on their knowledge of textuality, expect development to be significant (O, 15) Frequently, Miriam's feelings in a situation are described to some extent, only to have their importance subverted In fact, textual quantity is the novelistic rule most consistently broken in Richardson's fictional 'autobiography' Conventional writing is parsimonious, devoting attention and text only to events of lasting significance In the traditional view on plot, events and characteristics synecdochically stand for many other similar incidents, which the author chooses not to relate in order to make the text manageable and transparent Richardson's 'plot' is a sequence of feelings, reactions, but the quantity of text devoted to an incident does not reflect significance This copiousness subverts our usual experience of information gathering in text For many, this has made *Pilgrimage* virtually unreadable because so subversive to the basic organizing principles of textuality In fact, readers need to adopt a different attitude towards the 2000 pages of *Pilgrimage* not expecting or searching for plot and significant, signalled sections As Richardson herself indicated her sequence of novels can be started at any point, need not be read from beginning to end to be 'understood' to deliver its significance Like all modernist novels, however read, it will bear 'the stamp of the author's consciousness' (Richardson 1967, 192) Significantly, Miriam remarks that she finds the descriptions of things and backgrounds the most interesting in novels Reading 'The Story of Adèle', Miriam is enchanted by a description of Adèle's life at the château, by '[t]he figure of Adèle flitting about in an endless summer' (B 228) But the book eventually disappoints

> [S]he glanced on, gathering a picture of a woman walking with Adèle along the magic terrace, talking - words and phrases that fretted dismally at the beauty of the scene Examining later chapters she found conversations, discussions, situations, arguments, 'fusses' - all about nothing She turned back to the early passage of description and caught the glow once more But this time it was overshadowed by the promise of those talking women That was all there was She had finished the story of Adèle (B 232)

Equally, Miriam rejects a tragedy read by Mrs Corrie, because a 'clever' author has again 'deliberately' set out to write 'a tragedy', 'something black and twisted and painful, come to egotism' (H, 383) Reading only for the plot, unlike Miriam, other people need to read a book from beginning to end 'It was a sort of trick a sell Like a puzzle that was no more fun when you had found it out' (H, 384) Good books, according to Miriam, are obviously so

> [A]ny bit of it, a page, even a sentence - and the "stronger" the author was, the more came That was why Ouida put those others in the shade, not, not, *not* because her books were improper It was her, herself somehow Then you read books to find the author! That was it (H, 384)

The quote combines two interesting perspectives on books On the one hand, Richardson is here, via a naive Miriam, rehearsing the idea that any book bears the stamp of the author, that there is an unavoidable autobiographical connection to the text Moreover the best books in this definition are the ones written by the 'stronger' author In the case of Ouida the suggestion seems to be that the strength of her personality paradoxically caused her performance of herself her presence in the text

> But it was true and exciting It meant things coming to you out of books, people, not the people in the books, but knowing, absolutely, everything about the author She clung to the volume in her hand with a sense of wealth Its very binding, the feeling of it the sight of the thin serried edges of the closed leaves came to her as having a sacredness and the world was full of books They were people More real than actual people They came nearer In life everything was so scrappy and mixed up In a book the author was there in every word
> Why did this strange book come so near, nearer than any others, so that you *felt* the writing, felt the sentences as if you were writing them yourself? He was a sad pained man You don't have to sympathize with authors, you just get at them, neither happy nor sad, like talking, more than talking (H, 384-385)

This is not merely the intentional fallacy writ large by an inexperienced reader Miriam is here also expressing an interpretation of the text as a conversation with the presence of an author

Virginia Woolf's review of *The Tunnel* immediately defines Richardson's fourth novel as 'natural', not the result of a perverse chasing of the new

> [I]t represents a genuine conviction of the discrepancy between what she has to say and the form provided by tradition for her to say it in She is one of the rare novelists who believe that the novel is so much alive that it actually grows (Woolf 1979, 188)

The traditional Victorian realist novel on the other hand is contrived

> [T]he odd deliberate business the chapters that lead up and the chapters that lead down, the characters who are always characteristic, the elaborate construction of reality the conception that shapes and surrounds the whole (Woolf 1979, 189)

However, Woolf herself is typically ambiguous lauding the revolutionary perspective on 'reality' while mildly complaining that Miriam's reality remains 'distressingly near the surface', and 'never, or only for a tantalizing second, in the reality which underlies these appearances' (Woolf 1979, 190) Woolf's persisting wish for some 'deeper' authorial guidance stems from more traditional literary values She concedes she may be 'asking too much', reading a modern new novel with the demands for profundity and textual significance of the old realistic novels In true Woolfian style however, she sublimates this feeling of unease ' the extent of our asking proves that *The Tunnel* is better in its failure than most books in their success' (Woolf 1979, 191)

We can productively oppose Woolf's comments with Miriam's considerations of life as she experiences it in *The Tunnel*. Interestingly, Richardson here describes an awareness of life whereby access to any deeper meanings underlying the surface is precluded by the pressure of new experiences

> Life went on and on, a great oblivious awfulness, sliding over everything Every moment things went that could never be recovered on and on, and it was always too late, there was always some new thing obliterating everything, something that looked new, but always turned out to be the same as everything else, grinning with its sameness in an awful blank where one tried to remember the killed things If only every one would stop for a moment and let the thing that was always hovering be there, let it settle and intensify But the whole of life was a conspiracy to prevent it It could not be a coincidence the way life *always* did that (T, 249-250)

From the same phenomenological perspective, May Sinclair also discusses the impossibility of approaching reality with traditional textuality 'Reality is thick and deep, too thick and too deep and at the same time too fluid to be cut with any

convenient carving knife' (Sinclair 1918, 4) Sinclair describes Richardson as a novelist who 'plunges' into reality, like Joyce, the brothers de Goncourt, or Marguerite Audoux

However, Richardson's wandering autobiography was intensely connected with her feminism It explicitly presents a perspective on reality experienced by women but barred from and suppressed by men Frequently, Miriam accuses men of having no true contact with 'real' things with 'reality' Acting out the wifely role she knows appeals to Mr Tremayne, she is appalled at the ease with which her role playing succeeds 'What a hopeless thing a man's consciousness was How awful to have nothing but a man's consciousness One could test it so easily if one were a little careful, and know exactly how it would behave' (T, 27) At the Wilson dinner in *The Tunnel*, Miriam criticizes his unbending, rigid scientific stance 'his way of stating things as if they were the final gospel and no one else in the world knew anything at all' and she calls it 'wrong and somehow wicked' (T, 119) Even Mr Hancock, the likeable dentist with a humanist interest in art and science, thinks in statements and categories, thinks as the result of male ideology and science

> His own thoughts were statements things that had been agreed upon and disputed and that people bandied about, competing with each other to put them cleverly They were not *things* He liked women who thought in these statements Perhaps there was something in it Something worth cultivating, a fine talent But it would mean hiding so much, letting so much go, all the real things The things men never seemed to know about at all (T, 107-108)

This man too thinks along pre-fabricated tracks, which prevent him from knowing certain things The same blinkered existence in reality is repeated concerning two men Miriam meets in *Oberland*, although, interestingly, the central metaphor used to express this is here again not visual

> And his dogmas, and his amazement in hearing them questioned, and his anger, dull brown like his clothes and hers that had cured her, and his sorrow and belated willingness to look at alternative interpretations, and his obliteration by Eaden in whom the same dogmas, being held thoughtlessly, had seemed so much more monstrous and implacable And seemed at this moment not to matter so very much Neither Guerini's nor Eaden's nor Densley's nor any man's to matter perhaps at all, except to themselves Thought of all together, reverberating over the world in all its languages, they seemed just an unpleasant noise, like the chattering of those born <u>deaf</u> (DLH, 150 - emphasis mine)

Reality is described by Miriam as multi-sided, and she feels men lack awareness of this multi-sidedness, and as a result have a far smaller being-within-reality Hypo Wilson is ever described as in part an uncreated man, '[a] man achieving, becoming, driving forward to unpredictable becomings, [a]nd also a man seeming uncreated, without any existence worth the name' (DLH, 220) Women, on the other hand, realize that reality has many different sides and angles existing simultaneously A governess in the Corrie household, Miriam observes the men at a weekend party eating and talking, and decides that she opposes what she considers the basis for male thinking and epistemology, their hate

> Men are all hard angry bones, always thinking something, only one thing at a time and unless that is agreed to, they murder My husband shan't kill me I'll shatter his conceited brow - *make* him see two sides to every question a million sides no questions, only sides always changing (H, 438)

The argument is repeated in *The Tunnel*, where Miriam realizes, after extensive visits to Shakespeare plays that here lies the seat for true tragedy

> Things are not simple right and wrong There are a million sides to every question, as many sides as there are people to see and feel them, and in all big national struggles two clear sides, both right and both wrong (T, 189)

Richardson discussed the same topic again in an article on feminism, indicating a belief that the essence of womanhood is removed from the experience of men She distinguishes more 'manly' women, who have compromised in a sense and are intelligible to men On the other hand, there is the 'womanly woman', who is now to join the world of men too

> But her gift of imaginative sympathy, her capacity for vicarious living, for being simultaneously in all the warring camps, will tend to make her within the council of nations what the Quaker is within the council of religions (Richardson 1990_C, 414)

This awareness of all aspects of reality, in Richardson's reasoning, is the reason why women have not succeeded as artists to the same extent as men

> Neither motherhood nor the more continuously exacting and indefinitely expansive responsibilities of even the simplest housekeeping can so effectively hamper her as the human demand besieging her wherever she is, for an inclusive awareness, from which men, for good or ill, are exempt (Richardson 1990_b, 423)

Unlike Woolfian theory, this is not the case of practical circumstances obstructing the woman writer but of a different female existence Richardson is an essentialist, and it is interesting to consider how she came to these conclusions In the same essay, Richardson further depicts male epistemology as a separation between the epistemological subject and its object while women develop different, 'synthetic' relationships with the phenomena they are trying to know

> Relatively to man she sees life whole and harmonious Men tend to fix life, to fix aspects They create metaphysical systems, religions, arts, and sciences Woman is metaphysical, religious, an artist and scientist in life (Richardson 1990_d 404)

All the characteristics stressed by Richardson in male epistemology can in fact be connected with visualism and interiorized literacy Women's grasp on the world is not fixed, but fluid, less a matter of control more a case of the manifold aspects of reality forcing themselves on female consciousness This feeling for the powerful presence of 'reality' within women, who cannot objectify it into systems in fact fits in with a more oral-aural relationship with what is outside the self For Hypo Wilson, Miriam's way of existence is not in fact recognized as living Upon his question what she has done this week, she answers 'living', which he considers as 'agreeable loafing that leads nowhere', nothing significant

> For so dismally, in every one, he saw only what they were becoming or might become, and of the essential individual knew, and wanted to know, nothing at all (DLH, 220)

Whereas Wilson is regarded as stressing plot causality, development in an individual Miriam emphasizes the 'being', a distinction reminiscent of the inability of some illiterates to define themselves (see Chapter I) Miriam feels Wilson will never really know her, because of Wilson's servility to time, to plot, to becoming Miriam, on the other hand, stresses the 'living' as essential a moment-to-moment existence which always remains the same Discussing with a male friend in *Oberland*, Miriam in fact rejects the Darwinian view on women

> "The thing most needed is for men to *recognize* their illusion, to drop while there is yet time their newest illusion of life as only process Leave off trying to fit into their mechanical scheme a being who lives all the time in a world they have never entered They seem incapable of unthinking the suggestions coming to them from centuries of masculine attempts to represent women only in relation to the world as known to men " (O, 92)

The circumstances preventing women from being in touch with the female knowledge of the world are summed up in Richardson's ambiguous interpretation of 'worldliness' At one of Mrs Corrie's weekends, Miriam undertakes a walk in the woods talking to an actor The male presence in a conversation leads Miriam to a realization of her own changed behaviour as a woman talking to a man as she suddenly finds the access to her self and to honest, intense communication with the surrounding reality blocked She pretends interest in his talk, and serves it, keeps it going to prolong the pleasant atmosphere Later this is defined as 'feminine worldliness, pretending to be interested so that pleasant things might go on' (H, 388) and as 'perpetual hard work and cheating and pretence at the door of a hidden garden, a lovely hidden garden' It is the alienation women subject themselves to, in the line of their social conversational duty in Richardson's analysis of patriarchy Neither do men reach beyond the state of alienation but the difference seems to be that they are hardly aware of the proximity of this 'garden'

> Masculine worldliness meant never being really there, always talking about things that had happened or making plans for things that might happen There was nothing that could happen that was not in some way the same as anything else Nobody was ever quite there, realizing (H, 388)

Obviously, the goal is 'being there', or 'realizing' - in both meanings of the word - the now, communication with continuous reality *Attracted as Miriam is by the power of men, repulsed by the powerlessness of women, she nevertheless rejects 'worldliness',* the patriarchal mode, since it ignores this now-moment, this present 'reality' The men and women in Richardson's text have a different access to reality They experience engendered 'contacts' with reality

The same avoidance of 'worldliness' results in a drastic democracy of the subjects under discussion in *Pilgrimage* Woolf's article on *Revolving Lights* written in 1923 similarly connects Richardson's style specifically with the description of a woman's experience, 'a woman's mind', interested in states of being and not in actions (Woolf 1979, 191) Woolf's review contains the much-quoted characterization of

Richardson's style as 'a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender' (Woolf 1966_a, 124-125) True to form, she expresses a basic unease with the resulting chaos in signification 'in reading *Revolving Lights* we are often made uncomfortable by feeling that the accent upon the emotions has shifted' (Woolf 1979, 192) Miriam faced with the hypothetical situation of a dead man at her feet might actually subvert the obvious plot as well as her feminine role

> A man might fall dead at her feet (it is not likely), and Miriam might feel that a violent-coloured ray of light (sic) was an important element in her consciousness of the tragedy If she felt it she would say it (Woolf 1966_a, 124-125)

Rationally, Woolf applauded Richardson's attempts at putting forward a new reality, but emotionally she was the conventional reader craving significance above all

As can be seen from Woolf's reactions, *Pilgrimage* frequently proved difficult and unsettling to read It requires a great investment of the reader's time and in that sense is importunate Moreover, the thirteen 'chapters' entertain very ambiguous relationships with their readers It is both obvious and significant that Miriam's existence as we have it is necessarily tied down to textuality It could never exist as an oral story No narrator could remember so much detail, no audience could keep the story line in their heads, a matter already difficult enough for a mere reader It belongs clearly to a historical period with a firm control over print technology Not even a society where books need to be handwritten and copied could afford to spend two thousand pages copying the psychological ruminations and discoveries of a fairly average female individual Even the print technology of the Victorian period would or could not print and disseminate Richardson's text It really needs a very efficient and cheap printing industry to allow Richardson's voluminous and unpopular work to be printed

Moreover, stories told to audiences in an oral situation typically were already known by the audience, who remembered them from previous tellings and re-tellings The 'plot' of Miriam's life is not pre-known, and is even quite difficult to assess for readers, as we have seen earlier In another sense, however, the pattern of a young woman's life in the late Victorian period should be known and pre-conditioned with no need to be written down Richardson 'wrote' to escape from these 'oral' limitations, while print allowed her to create a Miriam who subverts her plot inviting

a chaos only textuality can (barely) support She toys with actual readability, making her text perversely 'illegible', confronting her audience with the fact that textuality is in the end not a match for 'presence'

Richardson had a lot of problems getting into print and for a while owed her publisher money which had been sent to her by way of an advance (Rosenberg 1973,67) Her books always had fairly small printings, so Richardson was only too aware that her target audience was small Sinclair's review of the first three novels was written for *The Little Review*, the magazine 'which makes no compromise with the public taste', as their front page proudly states However, she remarks ,'the pride of the editors of the *Little Review* is no mate for the pride of Miss Richardson which ignores the very existence of the public and its taste' (Sinclair 1918, 3) Significantly, ignoring the public is combined for Sinclair with the disappearance of the author

> Obviously, she must not interfere she must not analyse or comment or explain Rather less obviously she must not tell a story or handle a situation or set a scene, she must avoid drama as she avoids narration (Sinclair 1918, 5)

The selective viewpoint of *Pilgrimage*, a selective third or first person narrator gives readers the illusion of direct access to the mind and feelings of Miriam without third party involvement, the 'author' With Miriam Henderson's consciousness at the heart of *Pilgrimage* readers are forced into a continuous assessment how 'real' and exact her interpretation (and their text) is In extreme cases, this is dramatically fronted with the reader's basic uncertainty about what exactly is going on! We see things as Miriam's eyes register them, like the 'wild thought-filled little bundle of dingy clothes' approaching Banbury school just as Miriam is whimsically looking out of the window, who turns out to be Miss Perne (B, 228) Even more dramatic is Miriam's misinterpretation of Mr Hancock's mood in *The Tunnel* (T, 206-207) She leads the reader astray along with her expecting Mr Hancock's silence to indicate a reconciliation after their quarrel, she turns round only to find him gone - her scenario completely founded on air But the reader's uncertainty can involve bigger issues Why exactly Miriam leaves her teaching positions in Germany and Banbury School is left quite vague Most of the time neither reader nor protagonist can fathom the sympathies or antipathies of Fraulein Pfaff When Miriam leaves the East London school, the tears of her pupils and the leaving present cannot be 'explained' by readers who had received the distinct impression of a struggling uncharismatic

teacher Sometimes, information is withheld which even a selective narrator would be aware of Many chapters open in medias res such as the interview with the Pernes at the start of *Backwater* The readers' irritation at their helplessness (who is 'impure' at Fräulein Pfaff's is uncertain for a long time) can only be resolved by assuming an active attitude of exegesis, treating this aggressively as the alien text of a stranger, an outsider

However, the absence of a guiding 'author', or of an omniscient narrator, is strikingly combined with the wish for a close relationship with her readers, expressed in many of Richardson's theoretical articles As readers we are encouraged to become tourists, actively engaged on a 'conducted tour' towards the author's consciousness

> And is not every novel a conducted tour? First and foremost into the personality of the author who, willy- nilly, and whatever be his method of approach, must present the reader with the writer's self-portrait (Richardson 1967_a, 190)

As Shirley Rose remarks, this literary goal is in contradiction with the theories and/or practice of other modernists, who espoused some form of impersonality (Rose 1970, 30) [3] The creative activity of the author is matched by the reader

> In other words while subject to the influence of a work of art, we are ourselves artists, supplying creative collaboration in the form of a reaction of the totality of our creative and constructive and disinterested being (Richardson 1934, 94)

The combination of a wish for contact with the author does not clash then with the selective viewpoint of the novel Richardson indicates she wishes her creative activity to be mirrored by a similar energy from the part of the readers Richardson wrote an article on punctuation, where she follows a reasoning remarkably close to positions taken by Woolf and Q D Leavis discussed in the previous chapter Again we see the opposition of mechanized text, allowing for quick scanning, and the 'ancient manuscripts' appealing to all senses, because they slow down the reader

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3 Shirley Rose in a very general way emphasizes Richardson s anachronistic attempt 'Thus in a literary period when the author is trying to refine himself out of existence Dorothy Richardson continuously emphasizes a concentrated awareness of him in his every word' (Rose 1970 30)

> Only to patient reading will come forth the charm concealed in ancient manuscripts Deep interest there must be, or sheer necessity, to keep eye and brain at their task of scanning a text that moves along unbroken, save by an occasional full-stop But the reader who persists finds presently that his task is growing easier He is winning familiarity with the writer's style, and is able to punctuate unconsciously as he goes It is at this point that he begins to be aware of the charm that has been sacrificed by the systematic separation of phrases He finds himself *listening* Reading through the ear as well as through the eye And while in any way of reading the ear plays its part, unless it is most cunningly attacked it co-operates, in our modern way, scarcely at all It is left behind For as light is swifter than sound so is the eye swifter than the ear But in the slow, attentive reading demanded by unpunctuated texts, the faculty of hearing has its chance, is enhanced until the text *speaks* itself (Richardson 1924, 990)

The text achieves aural facilities, as it were addressing its reader, a faculty lost with mechanized printing This is not really a question of punctuation but of the 'strict and vital relationship' between reader and author, which had been made impersonal by the all-powerful influence of omnipresent reading matter and print Thus, the efficient standardization of punctuation and type in the modern period has 'devitalized the act of reading, [has] tended to make it less organic, more mechanical' and 'part of the machinery of book production' (Richardson 1924, 990-991) Henry James punctuates the right way

> Of the value of punctuation and, particularly, of its value as pace-maker for the reader's creative consciousness, no one has had a keener sense than Mr Henry James No one has more sternly, or more cunningly, secured the collaboration of the reader Along his prose not even the most casual can succeed in going at top-speed Short of the casting off of burdens, the deep breath, the headlong plunge, the sustained steady swimming, James gives nothing at all Gently, painlessly, without shock or weariness, as he carries us unhasting, unresting, over his vast tracts of statement, we learn to stretch attention to the utmost And to the utmost James tested, suspending from the one his wide loops, and from the other his deep-hung garlands of expression, the strength of the comma and the semi-colon His text for one familiar with it, might be reduced, without increase of the attention it demands, to the state of the unpunctuated scripts of old time So rich and splendid is the fabric of sound he weaves upon the appointed loom that his prose, chanted to his punctuation, in an unknown tongue, would serve as well as a mass - in D minor (Richardson 1924, 992-993)

In *Pilgrimage*, reading a foreign paper has the same effects on Miriam It is the very fact of 'hindered' reading forcing Miriam to slow down, which ensures that for the first time she actually experiences herself reading, is aware of the decoding that it

requires and is made conscious of the new potential for meaning in her face-to-face confrontation with this foreign text On arriving in Oberland, she finds a 'thin, heavily printed, continental' newspaper Translating, or reading a foreign language, results in the same effect of intense realization

> The simple text was enthralling For years she had not so delighted in any reading In the mere fact of the written word, in the building of the sentences, the movement of phrases linking part with part It was all quite undistinguished, a little crude and hard, demanding, seeming to assume a sunny hardness in mankind And there was something missing whose absence was a relief, like the absence of heaviness in the air Everything she had read stood clear in her mind that yet, insufficiently occupied with the narrative and its strange emanations, caught up single words and phrases and went off independently touring, climbing to fresh arrangements and interpretations of familiar thought (O, 58)

The same obsession with the effects of manuscript and type returns in Beresford's introductory essay to *Pilgrimage* Significantly, he discusses how he read the book three times, once in manuscript, once in typescript, and finally as a printed, 'finished' product As Beresford went through the stages of a book towards printing, he revised his view Having regarded it, in manuscript as objective, it seemed more subjective at the half-way stage of typescript Finally with all the force of the printing industry behind it, the book seemed both subjective and objective It is interesting to see that a book in manuscript carries the authority of a conservative knowledge with it, something destabilized by the typing technology while the printed book allows the reader to understand that a new, original type of 'realism' might be possible, a realism combining the subjectiveness of author presence and the objective presentation of a new feminine reality (Beresford 1921, v-viii)

Added to this text which situates itself so ambiguously towards the body of textuality, we have the presence of a double autobiographical intention Not only do the facts of Miriam's existence refer back unavoidably to Dorothy Richardson's own biography, *Pilgrimage* is also autobiographical in its communicative intentions, offering a tour of the writer's mind Almost as if they are involved in a conversation, the consciousness and presence of the author is intended to shine through the text As described by Richardson, there is between reader and author creative collaboration and immediate presence Now, the reader too becomes an active artist, responding with 'a reaction of the totality of our creative being' (Richardson 1934, 94) During Miriam's moves to the Quaker home, her previous holiday home in

Dimple Hill, or to the Pernes' or the Corrie home the main recurring thrust of the text is centered on the very similar and persistently novel experience of meeting others, round the effect of the presence of others on Miriam The secondary audience in this communication the readers, is to a very large extent in the same position, faced with meeting the author, and through Miriam the other characters Offered no guidance not even Joycean deep structure suggesting interpretative clues, the readers are left to encounter the full impact of the text and its conversations without any support services by the author They encounter the distinct disadvantage of not being present at Miriam's meetings, unable to profit from contextual information left in an aural position, but without the advantages of the aural context The traditional plot line of a novel is thus undermined by the tendency of the text towards presence and communication Richardson aims to stress the raw presence of people Readers are intended to feel a direct contact with the act of being in existence, by being forced to deduct, assume, conclude about people and situations as indeed happens in everyday life In other words, her readers are not fictionalized They are left to fend for themselves in this novel about consciousness and communication As a result, the 'autobiography' functions paradoxically as an 'oral text', mimicking an (imperfect) oral situation Miriam's life addresses us as a dialogue The fact that this is a difficult dialogue - we lack context - explicitates for the readers the activity which they perform in everyday life, while trying to assess other human beings, and their exact experience of situations It is an autobiography of consciousness which aims to recreate in its readers the workings of consciousness

3 Interiority and Space as a Topic in *Pilgrimage*

In a very positive review of *Finnegans Wake* Richardson ends with some advice to the reader of radical modernism

> Let us take the author at his word Really release consciousness from literary preoccupations and prejudices, from the self-imposed task of searching for superficial sequences in stretches of statement regarded horizontally, or of setting these upright and regarding them pictorially, and plunge, provisionally, here and there, *enter* the text and look innocently about (Richardson 1939, 51)

As was mentioned earlier, this is incitement to go against literary demands, to ignore the artist's position of impersonality Instead, the reader must get into the closest

possible relationship with the text, significantly regarding it as a building or a house In the text as house, the reader can exist three-dimensionally without the need to make linear sense of it The rejection of the visual aspect, and the distancing it involves, is followed by the living relation with the text A text one can 'enter' reminds us of Ong's characterization of the aural world as one of depth and three-dimensionality, whereas the visual world offers surface and division

In *Pilgrimage*, place assumes a great importance A German critic, Elisabeth Bronfen, describes *Pilgrimage* as not only the description of the consciousness of its protagonist but simultaneously of the signifying aspects of human spaces the '*literarische Raum*' (literary room/literary space)

> Ein grosser Teil des Romans besteht aus Beschreibungen der von Miriam gelebten Orte, der Stimmung die diese enthalten, und der Bedeutung, die sie für Miriam einnehmen Dabei ist wesentlich dass diese Raumbeschreibungen in gleichem Masse als semantisierte Raume eingesetzt werden, die den Text seiner Gesamtanlage strukturieren, wie als Darstellung der Wechselbeziehung zwischen Mensch und Umwelt, der Korrelation zwischen menschlichem Dasein und Raum (Bronfen 1986, 2)[4]

As a 'pilgrim', Miriam is seen largely in her relationship to the spaces through which she travels The individual's tussle with reality, so often the subject of the nineteenth century realist novel, is here narrowed down concretely to the rooms halls offices to which Miriam relates The pupils' dormitory in Germany, the Banbury Park classrooms, Miriam's office at Mr Orly's, and her various bedrooms, all these spaces affect Miriam's sense of identity In *Pilgrimage*, the interiors are almost as 'sensed' - if far less squalid - as in Honoré de Balzac's novels of Parisian life Significantly, she mentions the French master of the interior in her 'Foreword' (*Pilgrimage* I, 9), where this precursor for Richardson is referred to as 'the father of realism' [5]

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4 A large part of the novel consists of descriptions of the places inhabited by Miriam the atmosphere which these contain and the significance which they take on for Miriam In this respect it is significant that these descriptions of spaces are equally employed as signifying spaces which give the text its overall structure as the depiction of the correlation between human beings and the surrounding reality the correlation between human existence (presence) in the world and space ' (translation mine)

5 Using terminology borrowed from Bachelard Thomas Docherty remarks that the home is to a large extent also what gives us a spatial sense of identity 'The concept of home or familial house is essentially one which is used by people to give a sense of centralization to experience ' (Docherty 1987 69) and in that sense it backs up our spatial notion of the body as home as a unit demarcating us from experience

This attention to space, to the interiority of rooms is continued, even when Miriam is walking in nature The mountains and woods of *Oberland* suggest enclosedness, interiority, immurement, rather than wideness, openness, a far-viewing perspective In *Dimple Hill* Miriam constructs her outdoors writing spot like a room where she can be alone The quotation occurs, when having rediscovered the enclosed spot, she decides to fetch her writing material

> Her desire to inhabit this remote dilapidated little interior, dawning the moment she had looked in upon its dust-smothered ivy and festoons of spiders' webs, returned in strength to demolish the enterprise of achieving cleanliness for its own sake But now that the wooden seat was clean and the webs that hung too near were brushed away, enough was done The enclosure, habitable, still retained its appearance of untouched security and its peace, dwelling there so long alone and now to have an undisturbing guest (DH, 519)

But then a feeling for interiority belongs to the affective sphere of 'orality' It is a sensitivity which partly disappeared from our emotional 'spectrum' of the senses with the power of visualism Concomitant with aurality is this awareness of a felt surrounding world alive for the non-literate to an extent no longer possible for the literate Oral societies are existentially aware of the human voice reverberating within spaces Sound involves a sense of community within interiority, sight involves (potentially creative) alienation In *Oberland*, Miriam out on a walk is faced with the immensity of the mountain views In the same way that her gaze sidles away from looking at the spectacular view upon her arrival in Oberland, she here prefers a little Freudian track leading into the woods The surroundings are described in terms of vision and sound

> The track through the wood, wide and level for a while, with spired pines marching symmetrically by, narrowed to a winding path that took her in amongst them, into their strange close fellowship that left each one a perfect thing apart Not lonely, nor, for all the high-bulging smoothness of snow in which it stood, cold It was their secret, pine-breath, that brought a sense of warm life, and their close-clustered needles Out on the mountain-sides they looked black and bleak, striving towards the sun until they were stayed by the upper cold Seen close, they were a happy company bearing light upon the green burnish of their needles and the dull live tints of their rough stems And very secret, here thought was sheltered as in a quiet room
> Out in the immense landscape, in the down-pouring brilliance of pure light, thought was visible Transparent to the mountains who took its measure and judged, yet without wounding and even while they made it seem of no account, a small intricate buzzing in the presence of mighty, simple statement sounding just out of reach within the air, and invited

> thoughtless submission to their influence as to a final infinite good that would remain when they were no more seen there was pathos in their magnificence, (O, 72 - emphasis mine)

In *Dawn's Left Hand*, Miriam is considering leaving the uncomfortable surroundings of the Flaxman household and is musing nostalgically about her previous landlady, Mrs Bailey, and 'going home to Tansley Street' (DLH, 194) She can only move into a small room but views this new haven for her consciousness with all the force of the sensed surroundings of the house

> But all round it, the high, spacious house whose every staircase she knew and loved in each of its minutest differences from its fellows, of shape and colour and texture and lighting, of everything that makes up the adventure of ascending and descending flights of stairs - (DLH, 194)

Miriam cannot remember the sound of doors closing in the disliked Flaxman residence, but can remember Mrs Bailey's 'doors with their different voices in shutting or being slammed-to by the wind' (DLH 194) For a whole page, the sounds of seven doors in the Tansley Street household are lovingly described, sounds hinting at the size, atmosphere, character and status of the rooms, as a clue to their interiority Sounds give Miriam the feeling of three-dimensionality surrounding her

> The dining-room door, quiet, slowly-moving because of its size and weight, closing solidly with a deep wooden sound, slamming, very rarely, with a detonation that went up through the house The door of the little draughty room at the end of the passage, clapping abruptly to over its thin linoleum with a comfortless metallic rattle of its loose fastening The upstairs drawing-room's softly, silkily closing door, a well-mannered, muffled sound, as if it were intent on doing its duty in such a way as not to interrupt the social life going on within And, higher up, the heavy brown doors of the second-floor bedrooms still with wooden knobs like those below, closing leisurely and importantly, seeming to demand the respect due to the prices of the rooms they guarded, and the rooms above, whose yellow, varnished doors shut lightly and quickly, one with a soft brassy click, very neat and final, one with a sharp rattle of its loose metal knob echoing over the linoleum-covered stairs and landings of the upper floors (DLH, 195)

In Mrs Bailey's house she feels she will be 'supported and screened by the presence of the many rooms that made the large house' (DLH, 195) Miriam's emotional world is very much that of orality, appreciating intimacy, closeness, enclosedness,

surrounded by rooms and people whom she can hear and sense [6] Conversely, the discovery of Mrs Bailey's 'secret' den, the few rooms inaccessible to the boarders, leads to Miriam's realization that she too has a 'secret' life, a consciousness of her own (T, 285-286) In *Oberland*, Miriam has to relate to her new hotel room Significantly, the room is discovered to a large extent aurally and Miriam makes it her own via speech Again, the enclosure and sensing of the dimensions of the room, rather than sight, clinches the matter, more like a 'sensing' of perspective Miriam takes full, joyful possession of the room when she states aloud 'I'm in Switzerland' (O, 34) And even more sounds transform the room for Miriam into a feeling of space

> [She] was presently at the table in négligé and again ecstatically telling it her news
> The familiar sound of tea pouring into a cup heightened the surrounding strangeness In the stillness of the room it was like a voice announcing her installation, and immediately from downstairs there came as if in answer the sound of a piano, crisply and gently touched, seeming not so much to break the stillness as to reveal what lay within it
> She set down her teapot and listened and for a moment could have believed that the theme was playing itself only in her mind, that it had come back to her because once again she was within the strange happiness of being abroad (O, 35)

With this strong sense of intimacy and comfort in her private rooms, the independence of London finally means for Miriam the growth of a sense of identity, represented in the symbolical antithesis between the impersonal London of the ABC's, the British Library and the 'radiant pavement of sunlit Regent Street' (H, 417) on the one hand and the intimacy of her room on the other In a Freudian sense, Miriam's feeling of identity is based on this spatial difference Thus, she enjoys the impersonality of ABC's, where she is left alone and can be herself Her first encounter alone with London streets and pavements in chapter VI of *Honeycomb* leads to a complete ecstasy of identity culminating in a significant sentence, again confusing identity with terms relating to space

> The West End people, their restaurants and the theatres waiting for them this evening, their easy way with each other, the mysterious something behind their faces, was hers She, too, now had a mysterious secret face - a West End life of her own (H, 419)

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6 Although her sharing of rooms with Miss Holland is not particularly happy there is a very similar initial scene describing an initially happy and then claustrophobic Miriam hearing the soft movements of her companion hidden behind the separating curtain (Tr 430-433)

Elsewhere Miriam closes a consideration of her own separate identity by exclaiming, 'I am a Londoner', not 'I am a woman' or 'I am Miriam', but a Londoner related to the space she inhabits by that time

But the reality Miriam is faced with changes and recedes as she discovers different interests In *Oberland*, she has upon arrival maintained a very careful relationship with the environment She is almost communicating with the mountains and the scenery, at first virtually refusing to look at them in order that her experience of them does not diminish through familiarity But inevitably a change occurs when an enthusiastic Miriam discovers that she can teach herself tobogganning

> A subtle change came over the landscape making it less and more, retiring a little, as who should say then I am to be henceforth a background, already a mere accessory, it yet challenged her vow, an intimidating witness (O 67)

This combination supports the conclusion that space in *Pilgrimage* to some extent qualifies, controls Miriam's sense of identity, and the view on consciousness expressed in the work As Richardson has indicated by her choice of the fountain as a metaphor for consciousness Miriam the pilgrim deep in the core of her consciousness stays the same as she travels through places and experiences In the cyclus, Miriam matures and acquires experiences, like her movement into the Quaker atmosphere but we do not see the character change through the plot of the traditional story In our cultural tradition the pilgrim is never transformed into an other but remains radically 'himself' in order to collect experience and knowledge Miriam's pilgrimage is one of increased isolation, isolation amidst the London masses, increased contact with the unchanging self despite the permutations caused by the presence of others in an oral world It is a pilgrimage of identity, made up of moments of intense contact with herself

4 A Woman's Consciousness

At times Miriam discovers with some surprise that other women too lead independent thought-lives This fascination with the consciousnesses of other women liberates Richardson's women characters from the ideological model which only accepted the existence of two basic types The angel-whore duality did not recognize women's radical individuality, as testified by Nicholas Cooke or Otto

Weininger However, the sheer bulk of *Pilgrimage* counters the opinion that there is little point in concentrating on Everywoman's experience in text (DuPlessis 1985) Richardson's autobiographical text, moreover, persistently and obsessively presents women characters in the fullness of their presence

The stress is on the performance of these women characters and their effect on Miriam, as she is deciding what features distinguish them from the ideological type Unsurprisingly, Miriam adamantly rejects Darwinian determinism, often used in the 'scientific' writings of the early twentieth century to return women to their biological function and deny them any other individuality To Wilson, Miriam affirms strongly her belief in individualism 'Anything that can be put into propositions is suspect The only thing that isn't suspect is individuality' (CH, 328) Throughout the early books, Miriam visits the house of her old pupil, Grace Broom, whose life with her aunt has to Miriam the attraction of repetition, normality, steadiness, secure in a feminine role

> When next Miriam saw the black-robed Brooms and their aunt file past the transept where were the Wordsworth House sittings, she felt that to visit them might perhaps not be the ordeal she had not dared to picture It would be strange Those three heavy black-dressed women Their small new house She imagined them sitting at tea in a little room Why was Grace so determined that she should sit there too? Grace had a life and a home and was real She did not know that things were awful Nor did Florrie Broom, nor the aunt But yet they did not look like 'social' people They were a little different Not worldly Not pious either Nor intellectual What could they want with her? (B, 253)

Miriam is envious of their separate independent thought-life and their seeming sense of purpose They are faintly ridiculous, as shown by Miriam's short quip about Grace Broom, nearly saintly in her illness 'What a wonderful thing to have in your family' (B, 291) Nevertheless, she seems to feel that these very ordinary women are somehow more real than she is herself

At times, however, Miriam's interest in women can be combined with occasional intense misogyny, disliking the powerless status of women Considering a mother and daughter at church, the text presents them as individual beings with a strangely concrete presence 'During the sermon she rarely raised her eyes from the space they filled for her as they sat thrown into relief by the great white pillar' (B, 254) And yet, their age and unimportance leads Miriam to an exaggerated outburst of self-hate

> What was the good of their being alive a house and a water-system and drains and cooking, and they would take all these things for granted and grumble and snarl the gas-meter man would call there Did men like that resent calling at houses like that? No They'd just say, 'The ole party she sez to me ' How good they were, these men Good and kind and cheerful Someone ought to prevent the extravagance of keeping whole houses and fires going for women like that They ought to be in an institution *Why* should you have a house, and tradesmen calling? (B, 255)

Miriam's potential hate for women receives its most extreme expression in her impotent frustration as an unsuccessful invigilator when she half-consciously imagines stabbing Eunice, who has been talking We get a rare view of a more sadistic, impotent Miriam, 'feeling as she watched her that Eunice's pretty clothes were stripped away and she were stabbing at her soft rounded body' (B 288)

But the stress on describing women undoubtedly prevails In *Deadlock*, there is Miriam's landlady Mrs Bailey, whose illness gives Miriam access to her personal apartments There she is surprised to discover that Mrs Bailey too has a secret inner core, a consciousness as varied and valid as Miriam's 'But there was something vital, even cheerful in the atmosphere, conquering the oppression of the crowded space there was brave life battling in this room' (D, 33) A long sequence in *Backwater* describes Julia's nightmares, when she groans locked into a secret inaccessible world of her own The passage describing this girl with her frightening dreams and motherly attitude towards the pupils concludes in Miriam's ambivalence 'Julia was a deep, deep nook, full of thorns', a confession of inaccessibility, secrecy and wariness couched in spatial terms (B, 340) The later novels persistently stress the peculiar quality resting within the presence of each woman, her communication, her being In *Dawn's Left Hand*, Miriam considers the times she spent with her friends Mag and Jan

> Certain days stood warmly in her heart, gathering about them all the others that would need a special effort to call up, and all of one quality that amid innumerable variations had *never* varied the three of them their clearly defined differences, origins, characters, beliefs, and a fourth, something that was there in the room and that depended upon their being together, and being together at the heart of London and immensely at leisure, without past or future So that anecdotes, stories of the past, and speculations as to what might lie ahead - happening only when, for some reason, one or other of them was not quite there, or was withdrawn into some private preoccupation - drove it away (DLH, 205)

For these women, conscious existence is important ever-threatened by the causality of plot, stories, speculations, which dissolves the sense of presence, of being We are reminded of Woolf's description of her experiencing of Mrs Brown as opposed to the description of Mrs Brown in (male) text A similar intense attention almost violent in its involvement of smell to the presence of a woman can be seen when the male novelists finally leave Mrs Brown alone to the gaze of the female narrator

> Mrs Brown and I were left alone together She sat in her corner opposite, very clean, very small, rather queer, and suffering intensely The impression she made was overwhelming It came pouring out like a draught, like a smell of burning What was it composed of - that overwhelming and peculiar impression? Myriads of irrelevant and incongruous ideas crowd into one's head on such occasions (Woolf 1928,)

Similarly as *Pilgrimage* proceeds, Miriam has to recognize the idiosyncrasy of Miss Dean Mrs Craven, the strange Russian revolutionary Mrs Lintoff (RL, 293), and numerous other women who impress Miriam by their uniqueness while living under patriarchy Female characters receive a lot of attention in the text, even when they are fairly conventional or not even extremely sympathetic In fact, the attention is inordinate breaking the textual rule of significance Here the atmosphere of orality and presence must necessarily impinge on the rules of textuality, and Richardson's ideological interests supersede grammar and textuality Wilson's wife, Alma is the example of a socialized, feminine woman, always aiming at the comfort of the males she talks to In traditional textuality, she is exemplary and thus basically uninteresting Yet she is described with fascination by a 'masculine' Miriam who feels the attraction of the feminine woman in a way very similar to a man Opposed to the noise of the posing Wilson, Alma is so quiet that she is compared to her own photograph

> Alma, deafened by the clamour to the right and aware only of her quietly conversational bearing and, glancing at Hypo, of his attention absented inwards in contemplation of something just offered to his thought, let her eyes rest on Miriam's and sent forth, through the dreamy mildness shining from them because her lips were curved in a smile the deep magnetic radiance Miriam had found in one of her photographs a radiation of her inner being in payment for help given in the labours exacted by her perpetual stewardship of his well-being
> Receiving this radiance fully for the first time, Miriam felt she could kneel, with the world's manhood, in homage to the spirit of the womanly woman, yet shared as the radiance passed, their cramped uneasiness, the fear that makes them flee, once they are committed to the companionship of these

> women, from the threat of being surrounded and engulfed in insufficiency (DLH, 161-162)

Miriam clearly endorses the Victorian ideology surrounding the womanly woman, attracted by the quiet of the 'womanly woman', and repulsed by the claustrophobia she senses around her But beyond that, Alma's 'radiance' breaks through In *Oberland*, Miriam meets and even briefly becomes a competitor with a young child, Daphne, a small flirt who demands the complete attention of Eaden and other male guests, and after his departure seems to 'fall in love' with Miriam Yet even this little competitor is described in all her vibrant unconscious living Attention focuses on her basically individualist way of existing of experiencing life, rather than on the description of her as a fictional 'character' with a role in the plot The arrival of Daphne is preceded by her voice from the corridor, and it is to a very large extent through her speech that she is presented to us 'That's-my-beecely-German-nurse-I-hate-her' (O, 94) At times, she even sounds eerily Steinian in response to Miriam's question

> 'Why do you like Napoleon so much?'
> 'Because I like him because he's the good dear little big one Everybody is a big silly small one almost ' (O, 94)

But Miriam admires the way she is unconsciously alive, and to her she becomes a little symbol of unfrustrating, unproblematic straight access to the self Miriam's projections onto the child reflect envy of Daphne's freedom from the social trappings of the grown-up world

> Hitching herself into a chair, she sighed deeply, but not to attract attention, nor in the manner of a conversational opening She had, without self-consciousness, the preoccupied air of one who snatches a tiresome necessary meal grudging the expense of time Her compact stillness was the stillness of energy momentarily marking time Her face, distorted by efforts, mouth firmly closed, with a goodly bite of the stout little roll, was busily thinking and talking Continuous There was no cessation in her way of being, no dependence none of the tricks of appeal and demand that make most children so quickly wearisome Yet she was almost a baby sitting there, a lonely infant, rotund (O, 93)

Here we have the woman Miriam enviously considering a child which she assumes can have straight access to existence without too much socialization Daphne does not arrive with 'conversational' movements, unlike men like Vereker whose very way of sitting down is sociable, 'unfeignedly pleased to arrive' (O 50) Her way of being is

'continuous', has 'no cessation', as if she *is* without any threat to her being from the sociable outside world With 'the stillness of energy momentarily marking time' Daphne is seen as pure being existence simple undiluted energy Richardson describes her face as continuously talking and thinking at the same time, similar to Stein's continuous talking and listening as a description of perfect access to one's being Miriam is of course projecting onto the child the access to reality which she strives for so much She offers the reader a child with immediate contact to the self without the social world interposing itself between the individual consciousness and 'reality'

Miriam's admiration of the existence and presence of other women and girls is significant in its indications that she feels she has not achieved this presence herself Her feelings of not being a person of not having genuine access to reality are repeated in her envious attitude to her engaged sister Sarah, to her feeling has been given a role in the patriarchal plot and must now really 'exist'

> Sarah alone now, at last, a person, with mornings and evenings and her own reality in everything No one could touch her or interfere any more She was standing aside, herself She would always be Sarah, someone called Sarah She need never worry any more but go on doing things (B 341)[7]

The implications of getting married and escaping the family quandary seem to be becoming your own person WITH an own reality 'standing aside' in Miriam's strange and paradoxical phrasing for being in touch with oneself Another remarkable feature of the statement is the 'never' and 'always', implying an invulnerability, an unchanging continuous consciousness like Daphne's As elsewhere in *Pilgrimage*, a goal for true consciousness seems to be for the self to escape change Sarah is now, according to Miriam, safe from the interference of the social life To Miriam's experience, dealing with the everyday situations, especially the relationships with other people, prevents her from being with herself She deludes herself that Sarah can now separate herself from this, become permanent, 'stand aside' [8]

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7 DuPlessis correctly points out that throughout *Pilgrimage* Miriam successfully avoids the marriage plot Nevertheless what she envies about her sister s marriage is the status it brings with its illusion of individualist existence

8 As Miriam 'discovers a woman s consciousness is extremely fragile unexisting unless it refers to a man As a younger woman she only feels really alive and present when a man pays attention to her at a party official status in the patriarchal world She was secure landed in life dancing carelessly out and out to a life of her own ' (B 224)

Similarly, other women in *Pilgrimage* fear that somehow they will lose their 'self' Miriam's friend Amabel worries about this, because she has a married lover These New Women feel vulnerable, as if their consciousness will adulterate, become corrupt, as if they will fade away and become different Having a 'bad name', being a 'fallen woman' threatens them with disappearance At one of the first meetings with Miriam, Amabel remarks upon her own beauty, but soon turns wistful and sad

> 'It's like a peach Say it, say it '
> 'It is,' said Miriam, admiring the girl's open appreciation of her own beauty, at this moment newly created for her in eyes into which she gazed as into a mirror
> 'But not so *much*, since Basil ' She waited eyebrows up and painfully drawn together Communication was severed
> 'It spoils thee corners of thee mouth ' she whispered sadly 'They are never again so cleare and firm ' ,
> Another sadness a revelation spreading itself abroad over all humanity, added its bitterness to the surrounding air but before thought could beat back and find words, the girl said wistfully
> 'This makes a difference? You are repelled?'
> 'With all these women here it would It divides me from them They are pewre I feel a barrier ' (DLH, 188-189)

A liberal Miriam replies that it does not make a difference, but Amabel feels affected and devalued by her love affair, physically sensing herself as spoiled goods She believes her contours have become blurred, as if this 'fallen woman' could fade away, unable to sustain her own presence The scene points out the existential vulnerability of these late-Victorian women who imagine that the myth of the fallen woman can affect them physically Just before this dialogue, the two women have shared one of those moments immortalized in many of the nineteenth-century paintings discussed by Dijkstra Looking into Amabel's eyes is for Miriam like looking into a mirror In them she sees Amabel's beauty, but because they are like mirrors Miriam also sees her own beauty and necessarily also the same threat of corruption It is poignant that the scene, undermined by Victorian semiotics, has Miriam and Amabel mirroring each other, only to achieve a double fear of non-presence rather than mutual recognition The same vulnerability threatens Miriam, when she meets Hypo Wilson in the 'private' upstairs room of a rather dingy restaurant 'Again a distracting preoccupation with the world-wide vision of harpy disreputability offering facilities to the well-to-do' (DLH, 218) But, according to the general ideology, a woman's consciousness is so extremely malleable and easily

destroyed In *The Tunnel*, Mag Jan and Miriam discuss the moral question of a woman, engaged, who lets herself be kissed by another man the wistful conversation saying a kiss might be 'neither here nor there' soon turns to the term 'blunted sensibilities' and the worry if they 'can ever grow sharp again' (T, 87) This obsession with sharp contours, sharp edges to their selves, indicates women who never really feel that they are there, that they exist, but who fear instead that they might just fade away The one feature which Miriam seems to have in common with other women in *Pilgrimage* is the fear of her own unavoidable absence and disappearance

To counteract this fear of fading away as an individual, Miriam strives for the most conscious experiencing of every moment of her existence Contradicting Wilson, both New Women Amabel and Miriam agree in their definition of sleep Wilson represents it as the absence of activity as negativeness 'our little thought-mechanism poor dear, is unhooked and lying about in bits' (CH, 322) To his annoyance Miriam, 'booked for maternity' (CH 321) had been speaking about sleeping only at dawn and the invigorating waking that follows it

> 'It doesn't,' she said cheerfully, into the midst of the beginning of their interchange, 'require a surgical operation to rouse you when you wake, soon and suddenly, from the marvellous little sleep you have if you have been awake until dawn You realize sleep instead of taking it for granted, because, before dropping into it you had got out to where sleep is, to where you see more clearly than in daylight ' (CH, 321)

Amabel agrees 'Real sleep is being fully awake' (CH 321) Constantly striving to increase their presence, even sleep must be 'realized' These women are striving for complete control over their existence, for complete awareness, and enjoyment, even when they are asleep No mechanistic view on human beings for them, no unhooking of a thought-machine, but sleep as a continuation of consciousness

If there is a distinct movement in *Pilgrimage*, it is the movement away from the sociable Miriam involved in the communal life of the German boarding school, the Banbury school or the Corrie household towards the isolation and relative independence of her life in London With the speaking situation problematic for women's consciousness, Miriam feels the need to be alone to exist The necessary combination of awareness of consciousness and isolation is humorously presented in *Backwater* Miriam is considering leaving the school but the children crowding round her in search for sympathy threaten her

> 'An island is a piece of land entirely surrounded by water' Miriam kept automatically repeating these words to herself as the newly returned children clung about her the next morning in the schoolroom (B 332-333)

As she moves through the different stages of her life, Miriam develops and loses interest in several circles and groups, the socialite world of the Cornes, Germany, the Lycurgan society, Quakers, suffragists In *Clear Horizon*, she explains to Wilson why she cannot join any groups

> There are so many directions one can move in You see, there are so many societies Each with its secret And since, except in spirit, one cannot join all the societies with equal enthusiasm, one cannot whole-heartedly join any Because all are partial and to try to identify oneself with one is immediately to be reminded, even reproached, by the rightness of the others (CH, 330-331)

By mediating between solidarity and rejection a person constructs identity But Miriam seems to see this partially as a result of her femaleness She cannot join as a woman because she can always see the other perspective in any situation As a result, she must remain an outsider, a 'conscientious objector' The need for isolation seems an essential part of Miriam's self-awareness When she is with others, she loses access to herself, since a woman in post-Victorian society must necessarily be a social being Thus, on her way back from Oberland, Miriam encounters a disconcerting trio whispering conspiratorially Only after two pages does the truth emerge The 'conspirators' are merely eager that the woman traveller should travel together with Miriam They immediately assume that she will not object not even asking her permission It is taken for granted that women do not want to travel alone, but want company And Miriam immediately reacts as a social being

> In spite of the meagre promise, she found herself back within the warmth of shared life Flowing through her, it gave eagerness to her hands as they attacked the fastenings of her coat whose removal was part of the prelude to a social evening (DLH, 133)

Miriam's own gestures indicate sociability and she notices no difference from the woman who 'fell into speech as if her farewells had interrupted a conversation already set going' (DLH, 133) It would almost seem as if this woman had no personality save that of the social being, no real individuality Her abrupt speech suggests that she considers Miriam too as a well-known entity not different from

herself She composes herself for sleep 'without good night', and when they wake up her voice 'sounded at once' (DLH 134)

> It came forth, without emphasis and without colour, from the world in which she lived, a world that had never been made strange to her by any sort of astonishment over the fact of its being there at all The very way she took off her wrappings seemed to say that every one had the same clothes, and the same way with their clothes (DLH 133)

Miriam's individuality definitely does not receive any recognition by this woman, who considers that she must be very much like herself With the social life such a resentful discipline, Miriam's pilgrimage increasingly leads her away from other people and material comforts to an ever more lonely, impoverished but self-centred life This commit ment to an isolated, different self is in fact a highly literately achieved idea, something which members of oral societies cannot permit themselves As we have indicated, Richardson is rejecting the role of women as solely social beings, their silences merely the sign of a vacuous waiting for impulses from men, as Miriam assumes from Wilson's reactions The stress on the separate individual is not here romantic admiration for a hero, but the assertion of 'being', of an individual consciousness so threatened by demands on their social role

Very typical for the protagonist of a modernist 'novel' of consciousness Miriam experiences moments of heightened awareness, reminiscent of Joyce's 'epiphanies' Miriam revels while she is painting sea scapes both in images and in words (H, 429-431) Smoking sitting in a tram, standing strong on a hearth-rug experiencing spring or a beautiful night in London (T 95-99) all these are experiences of utmost importance to Miriam's sense of consciousness and she hates men when their presence (as a potential threat on her night walk through London) stops her from close contact with the experience However, these are not moments of 'insight', 'recognition' or any of these concepts based on visual metaphors Rather the comparison with Woolf's 'moments of being' suggests itself They are moments of intense self-awareness, of contact with the own consciousness, moments at which Miriam is strongly convinced of her own existence and importance They do not show Miriam any new knowledge, but consist of her managing to connect up with herself, to live full of awareness, to experience a performance of self in a certain place Miriam's glorification of the significant self-revealing moment her euphoria at life are an important motif in *Pilgrimage*, a dynamic force at plot level

A key memory for Miriam one referred to several times in *Pilgrimage* as well as in a short story, 'The Garden', combines a poignant moment of self-awareness in childhood with the garden as a metaphor for selfhood It is at the gates of this garden that women perform their social function The garden thus symbolizes the unchanging nature of Miriam's inner self, as opposed to the fluctuations and changes occurring in her daily, speaking self (Richardson 1989, 21-26) Miriam frequently remembers this picture of herself as a small child among the roses, her first realization of her own separate identity Despite the presence of bright sunlight, it is not the traditional view of an illumination Miriam sees herself as standing enclosed by flowers, her vision even more impaired by the unfrightening bees swinging unexpectedly in front of her eyes It is mainly also a memory of smells, the smell of the roses and the 'strange pleasant smell like burnt paper' (O, 213) Completely enfolded by sounds and smells, her vision to a certain extent bordered and framed directed inwards to what is in between the roses and the bees, Miriam's memory connects identity once again with the sensing of space and surroundings from a highly oral awareness Not a vision, this is awareness of an environment, a feeling of well-being, of shelteredness Significantly Miriam feels herself outside the normal world The garden she is standing in as a child associatively connects with the garden of her inner being, separated from the every day world The memory stands out incredibly potently, as it does when brought up in *The Tunnel* combined with Miriam's memory of her first realization that her parents will at some stage die, to leave her alone

> [T]here had been moments like that, years ago, in gardens, by seas and cliffs Her mind wandered back amongst these, calling up each one with perfect freshness They were all the same In each one she had felt exactly the same, outside life, untouched by anything, free But the moment she had just lived was the same, it was exactly the *same* as the first one she could remember, the moment of standing, alone, in bright sunlight on a narrow gravel path in the garden at Babington between two banks of flowers (T, 213)

In *Backwater* a 'curious buoyancy' of her body accompanies a similar moment, the same almost paradoxical feeling too of being outside life

> For a second, life seemed to cease in her and the staircase to be swept from under her feet 'I'm alive ' It was as if something had struck her, struck right through her impalpable body, sweeping it away, leaving her there shouting silently without it I'm alive I'm alive Then with a thump her heart went on again and her feet carried her body, warm and happy and elastic, easily on up the solid stairs (B, 245)

For Miriam, perceiving herself as a consciousness seems to need a temporary separation from her body, which then gives the body strength and vigour The scene concludes with Miriam's determination to continue seeking out the feeling

> Next time I'll make it stay It might whisk me right away There's something in me that can't be touched or altered Me If it comes again If it's stronger every time Perhaps it goes on getting stronger till you die (B, 245-246)

Shirley Rose quotes Richardson's description of the 'stable and expansive qualities of the human consciousness' (Rose 1969, 368), the fountain or sea of consciousness as opposed to the plot-determined stream Miriam's quest for access to her undivided, essential consciousness seems a strangely traditional, unmodernist interest However, more important than the avant-gardist literate discovery of a fractured identity for Richardson was the search beyond the social situation for this female self, this 'garden' Equally urgently a modernist woman writer had to establish the existence of a strong, present female consciousness not an ephemeral self-awareness dependent on the presence of a man, nor the stereotype type suggested by nineteenth-century ideology Significantly, Richardson opposes to Miriam's great moments of self-awareness the 'divided voices' of women, suggesting the non-presence and non-success of the female self as a valid 'speaker', as a self in performance Miriam's alienation as a woman is situated on the level of speech, as when she is considering the wife of her employer

> [F]ollowed by Mrs Orly, her unseen face busy with an interrupted errand He would not hear that her voice was divided No one seemed to be aware of the divided voices no men Life went on and on, a great oblivious awfulness, sliding over everything (T, 249)

Miriam's sense of a divided self is mainly a belief that she is prevented from accessing her most inner self due to this ambiguous non-presence as a 'speaker', as a being felt by herself in everyday life Richardson's motivation behind the prolonged creation of consciousness in *Pilgrimage* is consequently essentially feminist Not only

is language and the speaking situation poisoned for women, but, as Miriam regularly remarks, they are prevented from being in a full and thick reality that is the prerogative of women only

5 Alienation from Speech

As feminist autobiography then, *Pilgrimage* is a prolonged discussion on the differences between orality and textuality and their effects on the subject Miriam has already presented woman as a 'divided voice', an unsound speaker, whose servility makes her perversely absent where she should be most present in the oral situation Desperately striving to exist, it is however also on the level of speech that Miriam senses her biggest victories when she succeeds in a put-down or emerges victoriously from the contest of conversation [9] Richardson's text presents a young woman struggling to emancipate herself from her situation as the enunciatrix of invalid speech

As far as language is concerned Miriam finds herself in an uncomfortable position A recurring motif in the novels is the lack of preparation as a speaker of this late Victorian girl In dealing with the official, public world of men she has been given insufficient information frequently Miriam does not know the words thrown out casually by her (often male) interlocutors and she/her hides her ignorance She cannot find the 'leader' in the newspaper ordered to read by Miss Perne in *Backwater* (B 234) Similarly, at the Corries', Miriam hears about the Oscar Wilde trial The talk about the trial goes on 'behind the half-closed door' and excites all household members, except the young governess whose 'sympathies veered vaguely out towards the patch of disgrace in London and her interest died down' (H, 428-429) But this out-of-touchness of a young girl is only to be expected when all she knows of the playwright is that 'it was a woodland springtime name' (H, 428) Mrs Corrie, avid for scandal, giggles about his offence and hints "'It's the most awful thing there is It's in the Bible,"' (H, 428), leaving Miriam with a picture of burning cities, a sense of impending doom but very little useful information At times, Miriam's fascinated, determined grappling with the meanings of new words becomes an almost comic, pointed motif to the disadvantages under which she is labouring as an artist-to-be At the Wilson's for the first time, she wonders 'What was a Tudor mantelpiece?'

9 As already discussed earlier Walter J Ong has described the spoken situation as unavoidably agonistic even potentially antagonistic or competitive (Ong 1991 43-45)

during a 'clever' society conversation (T, 119) Listening to the arrogant scientific discussions to which as yet she has to remain aloof, Miriam's thoughts are again interrupted 'the avoidance of cliché what was cliche?' (T, 122) Likewise, she consoles herself

> [T]he pretty Italian wine in thin white long-necked decanters Chianti Chianti they all seemed familiar with the wine and the word, perhaps it was a familiar wine at the Wilson supper-parties, (T, 123)

Miriam's fascination with these words is the attraction of the outsider for a foreign language But these are conversations during which she must for the moment stay silent Even a foreigner outshines Miriam as Shatov explains Russian mysticism

> A *German*, not a Russian ethnologist and therefore without prejudice, had declared that the Russians were the strongest kinetic force in Europe Then why were the Russians more forceful? What was kinetic force? What was kinetic And religion was an 'actual force' in Russia! 'What is ki-'
> 'Ah but you shall at least read some of our great Russian authors at least Tourgainyeff and Tolstoi ' (D, 45)

Yet again, Miriam must remain completely passive under a man's theoretical onslaught because she does not possess the vocabulary to respond The language of the public world is foreign Miriam's newspaper 'leader' sends her musing upon the connection between politics, the colour of people's hair and 'Laissez-faire Lazy fair' the ignorama's play with words leads to a comic criticism of the liberal ideology of the time (B 244)

Access to language for the outsider is important, as her friends Jan and Mag indicate in a proto-Saussurian theory about language Talking about shorthand, they dissuade Miriam from learning it 'The more intelligent you are, the longer you take', or, 'You see it isn't a language It is an arbitrary system of signs'(T, 151) Miriam is diagnosed as too intelligent But as Miriam is only too aware, language is not an arbitrary system of signs It is, on the other hand, heavily biased against women

> *All* that has been said and known in the world is in *language* in words, all we know of Christ is in Jewish words, all the dogmas of religion are words, the meaning of words change with people's thoughts Then no one *knows* anything for certain Everything depends upon the way a thing is put, and that is a question of some particular civilization Whether you agree or not, language is the only way of expressing anything and it dims everything (T, 99)

Miriam discovers early on that women's talk has a definite function Walking with Max, another 'foreigner', she delightedly discovers that for once there is no need for her to service a man's conversation She can afford to stay silent

> She tasted a new sense of ease, walking slowly along with this strange man without 'making conversation ' He was taking her silence for granted All her experience so far had been of companions whose uneasiness pressed unendurably for speech, and her talking had been done with an irritated sense of the injustice of aspersions on 'women's tongues,' while no man could endure a woman's silence (B 219)

Similarly, noticing angry silences around the dentist's office tea table Miriam disastrously feels compelled to fill in these conversational voids

> There was nothing left now in the room but the echoes If now she could endure for a moment But her mind flung hither and thither, seeking with a loathed servility some alien neutral topic She knew anything she might say with the consciousness of his thoughts in her mind would be resented and slain (T, 171)

In this attempt to pretend normality, a frustrated Miriam 'hit out with all her force, coming against the buttress of silent angry forehead with random speech' (T 171) The expected happens Miriam's well-meant generality is retorted upon by Hancock and she discovers that she has inadvertently been tactless The result of her well-intended effort at feminine conversation to deflect a stormy situation is an angry impotent Miriam showing off her knowledge of languages

> 'Time flies ' responded Mr Hancock grimly She recoiled exhausted by her effort and quailed under the pang in the midday gas-lit room of realization of the meaning of her words
> '"Tempus fugit," I suppose one ought to say ' he said with a little laugh, getting up
> 'Oui ' said Miriam angrily 'le temps s'envole, die Zeit vergeht in other words ' (T, 171)

Miriam's servility, her pandering to male emotions via conversation, betrays her speech, as it leaves the man in full control to retort, and disinherits Miriam from her consciousness via a feminine mask Hancock's put-down shows her her verbal impotence Miriam often feels alienated from a language which does not have the words to express exactly what she means At a socialite party in the Corrie household, she again attempts to join the men's discussion of Darwinism and feels repulsed by both sexes Interestingly this happens because she intervenes in a heated gendered discussion with the wrong statement, for a woman

> 'We're not descended from monkeys at all It's not natural,' said Mrs Craven loudly, across the irritated voices of the men Their faces were red They filled the room with inaccurate phrases, pausing politely between each and keeping up a show of being guest and host How nice of them But this was how cultured people with incomes talked about Darwin
> 'The great thing Darwin did ' said Miriam abruptly,'was to point out the power of environment in evolving the different species - selecting '
> 'That's it that's it!' sang Mrs Corrie 'Let's all select ourselves into the droin'-room ' 'Now I've offended the men and the women too,' thought Miriam (H 380)

Poor Miriam, completely misinterpreting the decorum of her speech in this mixed company, states with authority where she is meant only to make weak jokes and 'sing' Miriam's conclusion on Darwinism moreover circumscribes the company, as she points out how they too have been selected for their environment Miriam herself however, is a fish out of water, an evolving species, the New Woman Miriam's social sin is to demand central stage, to partake of a male discussion Yet again she is in this sense a completely incompetent speaker

In an essay 'The Reality of Feminism', Richardson discusses a female 'invention', the social life (Richardson 1990_d) She thus credits women with creating what is basic about human beings, and Richardson is reclaiming for women what has generally been viewed as one of their negative aspects, their ability for social life, creating conversation

> Woman was a differentiated social human being earlier than man The "savage" woman who first succeeded in retaining her grown son at her side, invented social life Up to the era of machinery, *i.e.*, during the agricultural and civic centuries, the home was the centre of productive service (Richardson 1990_d 402)

A successful, home-based nurturing female sociability means that women for Richardson were essentially not belated to the oral world On the contrary, they had originated the most creative aspect of the oral situation, the socialization which lay at the basis of civilization The industrial age, however, turned woman into either 'an industrial pawn or a social parasite', and took her capacity for significant speech away from her

> Henceforth her sole asset was her sex her sole means of expression her personal relationship to some specific male - father, brother, husband or son She lived on her power to "charm" (Richardson 1990_d, 402)

Richardson is turning the tables, proving that women have only recently been alienated from what before was their authentic invention, the ability to knit social life together through everyday speech They have been reduced to servile talk, only to flatter, support and sustain male conversation and the masculine self-image This early woman seems Iocasta in reverse, since Richardson depicts an almost inverse Oedipal situation Richardson's primal woman speaker is a mother who manages to tie her son into society productively via speech, rather than lose him from society through her silent suicide as in the Greek myth Richardson specifically indicates that retaining the grown son in the female atmosphere is the single action which originated civilization Her presentation of the oral sphere of productively and truly talking women is a reversal of the many Freudian myths doing the rounds among her contemporaries Consequently, Richardson now advises women to advance into the world, 'doing the world's housekeeping', in order now to socialize and feminize the public world (Richardson 1990_d 402)

In this context it is significant that many of the successful, full meetings with women encountered by Miriam consist of a silent, wordless communication Alienated by language, Miriam feels more fulfilled in the oral situation by silence, and the communication is felt as more complete, less subject to misunderstandings or the manipulations of Wilsonite men (see also Hanscombe and Smyers 1987, 56) Connected with this is Miriam's appreciation of what she often calls the 'Quaker silence' of the Roscorlas in *Dimple Hill.* Her first arrival there sees her in the company of Miss Roscorla both of them staring at the view and saying very little (DH, 435-436) Miriam has the feeling that there is no need for talk The Quaker religion of course favours this kind of pregnant silence during their meetings, when every member of the congregation attempts a silent communion with God, and only

speaks when they feel called to The result is that a whole congregation is sitting together in silence, waiting for prayer While 'praying', Quakers are meant to open themselves up for communication, listening as it were, so that their silence is receptive, filled with communication and presence Such a view on prayer and communication appeals to the Miriam who has so far only encountered versions of Wilson's manipulative speech and manipulative silences

During another mental wrestling match with Hypo Miriam narrates how she met her grandmother and how a wordless silence between them conveyed a recognition of what they had in common She is here testifying to the importance of meeting women to a man, testifying almost in the religious sense, ignoring Hypo's lack of interest Again it is her grandmother's voice standing out in this memory told by Miriam, 'her voice, which always seemed to be laughing', but the communication occurs in silence (CH, 332)

> And I saw that I was looking at someone exactly my own age And it delighted me so much to see someone thinking and feeling exactly as I did, and beaming the fact at me and waiting for me to take it in, and being no older at the end of life than I was myself, that I went on upstairs, knowing, after the look that had reached me through her smile, that there was no need to speak and feeling eager to experience what I should have called, if I had had the words, the enrichment that had overtaken my lonely world through this recognition of identity (CH 333)

A number of times Miriam has this type of wordless communication with other women, like Alma, the Quaker Miss Roscorla, or in the devotional scene with Amabel A whole, intense chapter VI in *Dawn's Left Hand* is devoted to Miriam's second more close meeting with her new friend Amabel Amabel is clearly seen as a flirt - Miriam mentally calls her 'a fastidious little *grande dame* in the making' (DLH, 191) and could be easily reduced to a cultural stereotype Yet, the overall impressions received are of her presence, her aliveness, the fascination she exerts on her listener The emphasis is on the mutual reactions of the interlocutors, even on their reactions to these reactions As Walter J Ong put it, the speaker is simultaneously a listener to the reactions of the other, while the listener is already mentally preparing speech

> It was only because it could be no one else that she recognized this girl crouched on the floor at her side - , again producing the effect of being aware of the impression she made, and contemplating it in the person of the one upon whom it was being directed and also, to-day offering it as something to be judged, like a 'work of art,' detached, upon its merits (DLH, 187)

This doubling up of reactions is part and parcel of the specific type of autobiography written by Richardson, a self-portrait written via the reactions of others, the autobiography of a consciousness in being, in performance, in communication with others Befittingly, Richardson's autobiography is, for a writer showing affinities with the oral situation, written as the portrait of a woman as she deals with the world and the people around her *Pilgrimage* is a communicative self-portrait, paradoxically the autobiography of a female individual in performance

6 Men as Speakers

For men in *Pilgrimage*, speech and presence seem unproblematic and direct Mr Tremayne visiting Harriet and Gerald fills the room with talk, his stories rendering Miriam 'weary of his bantering tone'

> [H]e went on, making a story that was like a play, that looked like life did when you looked at it a maddening fussiness about nothing and people getting into states of mind He went on into a story about business life people getting the better of each other It made her feel sick with apprehension (T, 26)

Miriam misinterprets the conversational function of these stories, and worries about bankruptcies She also connects the stories about social innuendo and cleverness with a certain ideology of the speaker 'He saw her as a woman in a home, nicely dressed in a quiet drawing-room, lit by softly screened clear fresh garden daylight' (T, 27) Mr Tremayne narrowly escapes absurdity in his story of how he was interrupted by a man who came to tell to story, 'the two men sitting telling each other stories about drinks and people seeing each other home' (T, 26) Miriam only manages to stop his talk in the typically feminine tradition, significantly playing one of Mendelssohn's *'Songs Without Words* quietly into the conversation The room grew still' (T, 27) Miriam is playing the part of 'a very religious, very womanly woman, the ideal wife and mother' who will save him from himself, 'such an easy part to play being a "gracious silence"' (T, 27) Angrily aware of the success she has in acting out her role, she follows on with Beethoven, and this 'noise' ruptures her image as a

feminine woman (T, 28) Similarly, Wilson's control over conversation is limiting for Miriam He 'books' her for maternity, a word that is repeated several times and suggests the connection of Wilson's speech with bookishness (CH, 321, 324) Also it is a speech of duplicity, with hidden undercurrents and ambiguities that are hard to respond to

> She remained aware, as she seized and fled away with this last, incredible sample of the treatment she had escaped, of his voice beginning again, keeping going, in the way of voices all over the world, the semblance of interchange beneath which the real communications of the evening had flowed, silently and irretrievably to and fro, (CH, 322)

Portraits of Hypo Wilson always stress his manipulation of interlocutors, his reactions to her speech both predictable and completely manipulative, controlled During the fateful meeting between Amabel and Hypo in a restaurant, everything is artificial and aimed at the manipulation of his interlocutors in the presence of the audience at the next table This complete control over his speech is what Miriam feels limits his sense of reality His eyes are 'searchlights', but also 'sightless' 'moving from point to point' as he misinterprets Miriam's speech yet again [10]

As a woman who feels absent while she is present who feels alienated by men from her own speech and from contact with 'two-thirds of herself' Miriam frequently identifies with these men who seem so situationally strong Playing her father's role, she tries to smoke the cigarette she is merely meant to roll in order to feel what it must be like to be a man Haunted by even the sound of a grass mower as possible reprobation, she looks at 'little flecks of ash', how the cigarette consumes itself, how the unpolluted air is sweeter (B, 208-209) A small event like this becomes for Miriam an existential discovery She posits herself in the world by affecting her environment, by changing the smell of the room, only to hide all the signs swiftly Talking to Shatov about a party, Miriam first discovers the use of talk but also the bad effect of 'clever talk' She finds she can make Shatov laugh and discovers the inspiration that can occur while talking, and allows her to think brilliantly on her feet

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10 Not all men are presented this unsociably Vereker for instance is characterized as a successful social being 'His talk made a little symphony with his movements which also were conversational and he looked across each time he spoke but only on the last word a swift blue beam In all his answers there was this manner of apologizing for giving information' (O 50-51)

> She searched her memory to make him go on giggling It was extraordinary too, to discover what impressions she had gathered without knowing it, never considering or stating them to herself He was getting them If she ever stated them again they would be stale, practised clever talk, *that* was how talk was done saying things over and over again to numbers of people, each time a little more brilliantly and the speaker a little more dead behind it Nothing could be repeated (D, 122-123)

Clever male-influenced talk, then, pre-empts the speaker from being alive in her speech As Gertrude Stein will point out to some extent, repetition is deadening and the enemy of oral presence

As the result of Miriam's discovery of writing in *Deadlock*, a kind of pre-Derridean discussion of writing and talking is started In the following pages, Miriam experiments joyously with language - as she posits herself as a person to be reckoned with, a person who acts by talking (as men do) Thus she ticks off the unemployed men shocked at the Russian Shatov's singing and his presence with Miriam, and the ensuing conversation is for her a discovery of pleasant successful communication (D, 138) After her trip to Oberland she meets earlier acquaintances, to whom she manages to convey the feeling of the ski competition thus embarking on another successful story telling session

> Her experience was passing over to them she felt the threads of her discourse slipping away and looked across at the row of little villas on the other side of the road, the unchanging outposts of her life in this secluded room and found them *changed*. And turned back to the table to finish the picture of the ski-contest with the magical strangeness of the villas before her eyes within the background of the scene she was contemplating (DLH, 137)

Richardson together with Miriam here glorifies in the notion of a woman speaker who is so successful that she not only manages to hold her own but even effects magical changes on her environment Or, another successful moment of speech announces itself when Miriam starts speaking to Wilson and feels inspiration rising in herself 'and felt the topic, the only one immediately available, become as comfortably at home as she was herself It expanded in her mind as she spoke ' However, 'their voices collided' and she is prevented from elaborating (CH 326-327) Miriam's quest for successful speech stands out clearly as one of the main concerns in this communicative self-portrait

In all the novels of *Pilgrimage*, but especially in the opening ones, the combative nature of conversation is very keenly felt Due to the actual presence of speaker and hearers, as Ong indicates, an oral put-down is much more effective, more keenly felt more dangerous than a written one, and more liable to lead to violence Oral societies to a very great extent pay attention to the success of winning a conversation, or the disgrace of losing Rapping classical oratory are only a few examples of oral combat so important in societies where success is meted out in literally having the last word holding the field, unscathed, without status loss For women, consequently, it has been much easier to posit themselves by means of the written word than via public speech Writing a novel, in the absence of addressees, could be done in the safety of one's own home The step to public speech is a far greater and later one Entertaining her own contentious message, and speaking up, as well as being hushed or shut up are the experiences of Miriam at the end of the last and beginning of these centuries If books and silent reprimand are the combative tools of a Jane Eyre in 1847, Miriam is an aspirant talker Possibly this turned out to be one of the main objectionable elements in the novels for those readers who complained about her egotism She is a woman who keeps trying to grab the public field, trying to succeed in ever new public space This agonistic aspect of the speech situation with which the woman speaker is faced is clearly understood in the many dialogue scenes which *Pilgrimage* presents us with Even when Miriam is not actively disputing with someone, the situation of two people speaking is often represented agonistically or antagonistically The scene with Mrs Harcourt, for instance registers the respective position in the room of the interlocutors, Mrs Harcourt relaxedly leaning on the central heating of a room she has just entered (O, 42-49) Miriam feels the constant need to protect her inner self from attack by men like Wilson, and by their smug conventionalized view on reality and on women The result is that many of the meetings with Wilson turn into small battles for power Arriving at the restaurant room, Miriam is determined to keep control over the situation, to keep her self present to herself in the alienating presence of Hypo Wilson

> [A]nd to-night, at no matter what cost in apparent idiocy or ill-humour, she *would* reach that central peace, go farther and farther into the heart of her being and be there, as if alone, tranquilly, until fully possessed by that something within her that was more than herself If not, if she remained outside it, if he succeeded in making her pretend, though he never knew she was pretending, to be an inhabitant of his world, then again they would squabble and part (DLH, 219)

As a method of protecting this inner stable, 'unbecoming' self, Miriam significantly refuses him speech, the typically female function of conversation filler A contest of silence ensues, with neither of the interlocutors wishing to put themselves in the disadvantageous position of opening the conversation Miriam is aware of how even this goes against her

> He was curious as to what use she would make of the offered leadership, and at the same time sceptical, willing to give her time, at any rate time enough to prove to herself as well as to him that her silence was what he believed all feminine silence to be a vacuous waiting
> His patience, would give out Long before she could attain Well, let it give out (DLH, 222)

Rather than a scene of mutual recognition, this is a battle royal between male and female talkers Miriam does not always succeed in this type of situational battle Frequently, the agonistic perspective on the speech situation in *Pilgrimage* results in long drawn-out scenes presenting detailed responses by Miriam to the presence and speech of another In *Dawn's Left Hand*, she returns from Oberland and visits a friend, the doctor Densley, in his practice The meeting, presented in detail, becomes a drawn-out tennis game of speech, reaction, movement, minute changes in the relationship and the position of the interlocutors When Densley congratulates Miriam on her looks after the holiday, we get the verbalization of extremely complex and variable feelings on the part of Miriam Her feelings are also to and fro-ing between her own reactions and her reactions to her interlocutor

> Her happy blush revealed to her the shape of her body - as if for her own contemplation as if her attention were being called to an unknown possession that yet was neither hers nor quite herself - glowing with a radiance that was different from the radiance of the surrounding sunlight and turning to bend and gather up the gloves on which she had been sitting she seemed to journey far away from him and from herself into the depths of her being and mingle there with an unknown creature rising to meet and take her nature and transform it to the semblance of his ideal And in this semblance, a stranger to herself and nameless, she came upright with the retrieved gloves in her hand and turned to face him in the room's sunlight that now seemed the light of open spaces (DLH, 149-150 - emphasis mine)

She realizes that she is adjusting her self-image to Densley's flattery, becoming a different person in his presence It is the effect of male presence, and Miriam is

simply disappearing to become 'nameless' [11] The suggestion seems to be that Miriam reflects different selves when she is in the company of different people, that her personality in other words is to a certain extent defined by the presence of other people Even though Densley's suggestions attempt to transform her into the ideal, silent, womanly woman, the moment passes - it only concerns the time it takes for Miriam to pick up her gloves Miriam senses the effect on her and senses the room has changed Her alienation in a hierarchical speaking situation is what most dominates the pilgrimage of this individual woman to herself, and to which the text returns compulsively The changes in Miriam, then, belong to the oral situation of discourse, and the narration of this autobiography concerns the depiction of a set of oral situations, with their immediate effects on Miriam Thus, Miriam finds herself forced to attend to Densley's irrelevant speech, and made to wait Significantly, this is followed by a moment when the doctor completely shuts her out of the scene, typically by reading a book In Ongian terms, reading locks the readers into their own world of significance, which leaves Miriam isolated without an interlocutor Moreover, she cannot see the face of Densley, a man who had already once asked her to marry him, and whom she fears she has given new hope

> She wished the window-blind back in place that she might see more clearly, see his face when he left his books and returned discover whether his general strangeness to-day meant that on the strength of her absurd letter he was again minded to risk, was not expecting, a rebuff, and was yet, because he once had had one, proudly nervous and uncertain - and meanwhile she must remain here, balanced between return to her customary life and the way of being she had entered a moment ago and that could be, she now realized with sober astonishment, her chosen way till death - or whether he were simply engrossed in some sad case yet ready to laugh over her harsh comments (DLH, 150-151 - emphasis mine)

Miriam is left in a truly aural situation, and she can only hear his monologue With Densley in fact discussing Miss Dear's death, as 'he was bringing the comfort of his voice across the room', Miriam's sense of self once again responds agonistically to the situation (DLH, 151)

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11 In the same way she is called different names by other interlocutors suggesting that different people see Miriam as a different person Hypo Wilson even calls her by the superlative Mirissima' most Miriam of Miriams (CH 335)

> Her sense of her own being with its good and bad carelessly unmasked more at ease in this room than in any other but her own, was expanding beyond this corner she knew so well, taking possession of the unvisited parts of the room brought near by his perambulating voice, feeling its way into the wider spaces within the air that filled its visible limits But imperfectly, hindered by the direct glare of the sun and the presence of the patient waiting in the next room (DLH 152-153)

Her consciousness expanding to the size of the room, Miriam's self is literally feeling her way along the room, gauging its interiority in a typically aural attitude Frequently in *Pilgrimage*, Miriam's consciousness takes in the size of a room, or words or sounds are described as travelling across space, while the visual is reduced to a minimum In a sense, the situation is continued when Densley finally shows her the book he is reading, a picture of Venice with which he leads into another veiled marriage proposal The man Miriam had recognized as a typical male makes her watch only the picture while still keeping his face from her field of vision, as he lifts the book over and in front of her while standing behind her Again he watches, and she has to wait

> He was crouching at her side his face out of sight, just level with her own, one arm along the back of the low chair the other tilting the book inwards from the blinding light
> She felt him watching while she waited, gazing through the outspread scene, for words more in harmony than was this arch jocularity she was isolated in a mist of light far away from him and waiting for the sound of her name (DLH, 153)

The passage has been quoted to some length to indicate the extent to which *Pilgrimage* is obsessed with these topics of seeing, hearing speech and reading, and how dense the textual indications are Richardson's text is singularly aware of the aural-oral, agonistic aspects of conversation between the characters [12]

The same reaction to the performance of another person, watching another woman who is watching her, occurs in the meeting in *Oberland* with Mrs Harcourt At first she seems attractive but Miriam very soon becomes slightly suspicious, and she

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12 We can oppose this situation to one where Miriam does successfully intervene in the conversation between Wilson and Amabel Her voice is full and free and she quenched his response with the sound of her own voice Miriam manages to direct the conversation to her own liking This successful action however is accompanied by Miriam preventing the two from seeing each other clearly as she literally is described as putting a smoke screen between them so that they are forced into an oral situation only intently listening (CH 323)

draws conclusions *as* she is being subjected to the speech and the presence of this woman

> Though still immersed in her theme Mrs Harcourt was aware, when next she glanced to punctuate a statement, if not exactly that instead of the object she offered it was herself and her glance that was being seen - the curious steeliness of its indignation - at least of divided attention, a sudden breach in their collaboration, and immediately she came to the surface, passing without pause to her full bell note, with an inquiry Hoping to please But why hoping to please? (O, 46)

This doubling up of the awareness of the interlocutors shows Miriam's consciousness being there in speech, in full activity in fact, watching, deducing, fearing this woman may start to encroach on her privacy and loneliness We do not just get the presentation of a consciousness we see this consciousness in its performance, in speech Miriam's intense desire to experience for herself, to being there consciously herself, her experiences unadulterated by others reaches almost extreme forms here (O, 46) Thus Miriam gradually realizes what is the reason behind the look Mrs Harcourt is 'suppliant, and afraid of failure' towards a male interlocutor (O 46) Miriam senses the shadow of a husband in her speech And Miriam the New Woman defines Mrs Harcourt as the typical nineteenth century angel-in-the-house emanating warmth and care Miriam 'had the sense of pouring words into a void', a 'gentle presence' playing her part (O, 46) Again Miriam realizes that the woman realizes her wariness

> She was scenting apology and retreat And did not know that it was retreat not at all from herself, but from her terrible alacrity and transparence the way the whole of her was at once visible (O, 47)

Gratified, Miriam assumes it is her own 'mannish mental hardness' which is attractive (O, 46), and, typically, she subscribes to her own visualism in order to counter this appeal from an unwanted female presence It might seem that even with a New Woman a womanly woman cannot win, with an assertive Miriam this time stressing Mrs Harcourt's non-existence in her own mannish presence 'When she had gone she vanished utterly There she was, actually in the next room yet utterly forgettable' (O 48) Similarly, Miriam repeatedly affirms her identity vigo_rously by taking over symbolic masculine space, when she stands in front of the fire place on the rug, central to the room, existing-as-a-person and experiencing this masculine power She experiments with her increasing ability to function in the

oral sphere In *Honeycomb* she thus orders her father not to quarrel with her in the presence of her depressed mother, a determined stance brought about by her protection of another woman (H, 349) Comparing herself with the personless maid of the Pernes, Miriam stands 'planted on the hearth-rug watching her', 'instead of sitting as usual at the far end of the table pretending to read' Flora is represented, from Miriam's point of view, as unconscious to the extent that death will surprise her and leave her crying like a child Miriam on the other hand is all potent creativity in the sense of her being, imaginatively taking on a male role

> Why was it that for some people, for herself, life could be happy now? But Flora had known and somehow shared her triumph felt her position in the school as she stood planted and happy in the middle of the Pernes hearth-rug (B, 332)

When writing the situation of the writer is largely irrelevant to the product When speaking struggling for power in an oral agonistic world the place where one stands is of paramount importance for the message to be heard and inevitably hierarchical Miriam positions herself as a presence, in a position of power towards the servant who has to leave the room quietly, making no attack on Miriam's presence

7 Books and Textuality

Pilgrimage is not a true artistic Bildungsroman For a woman who comes to write a novel Miriam is strangely uninterested in the literary tradition Contrary to the emotional attitude Gilbert and Gubar have established for twentieth-century women writers, she suffers no anxiety of influence what she reads seems haphazard and consists mostly of popular writing Her delight as a naive reader of Corelli novels in *Honeycomb* is treated with irony, while her early experiences with textuality, the newspaper at the Pernes or school primers, are not entirely happy In her new job at the dentists' office she is assigned an encyclopedia to enlarge her knowledge, a 'liberal education in twelve volumes, with an index' (T, 219) A short-cut to the history of thought, it patently shows up the misogyny pervading the whole of culture, rendering Miriam frantic with the onslaught on women from so many directions as she reads the confident condemning assertions in easy relaxed masculine language

> There was nothing to turn to Books were poisoned Art All the achievements of men were poisoned at the root The beauty of nature was tricky femininity The animal world was cruelty Humanity was based on cruelty Jests and amusements were tragic distractions from tragedy Religion was the only hope But even there there was no hope for women No future life could heal the degradation of having been a woman Religion in the world had nothing but insults for women Christ was a man (*T*, 222)

The whole feverish, despairing tirade is in fact a kind of summary of 'liberal education' and the dilemmas of liberal Western thought Only, viewed from a woman's point of view, the picture is particularly dim, as a perceptive Miriam concludes in despair Both secular and religious sources of knowledge equally condemn women 'Science is true and will find out more and more, and things will grow more and more horrible' (*T*, 222) Even though Miriam can question vocabulary and male pedantry, science for her as a child of the positivist age is unassailably true She can find no argument to refute the easy assertions scientists make about reality 'Nature's great Salic Law will never be repealed' (*T*, 222)

> Boys or girls were much the same women stopped being people and went off into hideous processes What for? What was it all for? Development The wonders of science <u>The wonders of science for women are nothing but gynaecology</u> - all those frightful operations in the *British Medical Journal* and those jokes - (*T* 220)

Miriam's shocked response to these texts is almost that of one newly literate She can of course read, but approaches the text with the naivety of a largely oral person Very much like societies with a stronger oral input she believes that every word she reads is significant, because it is printed Reading for her is a face to face situation, initially making her nervous, like one who has to perform Confronted with a newspaper in Banbury Park School Miriam is at first horrified at not knowing how to act while reading a newspaper When she does read, in isolation, she approaches the articles with the determined interest of a stranger, an anthropologist faced with new data Deducing and concluding, she brings all her knowledge from other sources to bear on deciphering the text, in exegesis, as if she is reading a foreign set of signs

> She found a long column headed 'The Royal Commission on Education ' The Queen, then, was interesting herself in education But in England the sovereign had no power, was only a figure-head Perhaps the Queen had been advised to interest herself in education by the Privy Council and the Conservatives people of leisure and cultivation A commission was a sort of command - it must be important, something the Privy Council had decided and sent out in the Queen's name (B, 243)

Miriam's alienation with the English of the public sphere is so extensive that she reads the paper like a student of the classical languages Suffering from the same naivety as her mother, the cynical intelligent daughter too believes everything printed (i e public) and says 'The room was quite changed' (B, 243) But as Miriam progresses, reading develops a more positive association In *Backwater* Miriam's avid bookreading strangely puts her in touch with the freer Miriam she was before the experiences in Germany and Banbury Park

> But she found when the house was still and the trams had ceased jingling up and down outside that she grew steady and cool and that she rediscovered the self she had known at home, where the refuge of silence and books was always open Perhaps that self leaving others to do the practical things erecting a little wall of unapproachability between herself and her family that she might be free to dream alone in corners, had always been wrong But it was herself, the nearest most intimate self she had known And the discovery that it was not dead, (B, 282)

Books too lead Miriam to a joyous sense of her own consciousness, as she discovers her own difference by an intense dialogue with the text

> The mere sitting with the text held before her eyes gave her the feeling of being strongly confronted The strange currents which came whenever she was alone and at ease flowing to the tips of her fingers seemed to flow into the book as she held it and to be met and satisfied (B 286)

The same sense of vigour, as if electricity through her fingers, is followed by a familiar self-assertion 'I am older than any one here in this house I am myself' (B, 286) Reading a book for Miriam means being confronted by a forceful presence, contradicting any Derridean interpretation of reading as absence

Via her correction of a Frenchman's lecture, Miriam finally comes to writing herself Her correction sheet, as she slowly defines what is wrong about the style of the lecture, reminds her of a poem

> The pencilled sentences made a pleasant wandering decoration The earlier ones were forgotten and unfamiliar Re-read now, they surprised her How had she thought of them? She had not thought of them She had been closely following something, and they had come, quietly, in the midst of engrossment but they were like a photograph, funny in their absurd likeness, set there side by side with the photograph of Mr Lahitte They were alive, gravely, after the manner of her graver self It was a curious marvel, a revelation irrevocably put down reflecting a certain sort of character more oneself than anything that could be done socially, together with others, and yet not oneself at all, but something mysterious, drawn uncalculatingly from some fund of common consent, part of a separate impersonal life she had now unconsciously confessed herself as sharing (D, 132)

This quote, then shows a strange combination of an awareness of the absence involved with writing (the photo, the surprise at the re-reading) and of a strong, living presence Writing, then, unlike most talking puts Miriam's diffuse consciousness back in contact with her half-remembered half-realized self It counteracts the alienating effects of the everyday female social life She feels as if she has been at a happy social event, or as if there is a presence in the room 'It was as if there were someone with her in the room, peopling her solitude and bringing close around her all her past solitudes, as if it were their secret They greeted her, justified' (D, 133) Face to face with the vagaries of writing Miriam is offered poignant contact with a 'younger' self in a way that speech does not But the text, this younger self 'narrated', will never 'reproach' her Miriam here discovers the strange alteration of absence and presence in the written text, and paradoxically presents the text in performance, as it is having its living effects on a writing Miriam Significantly, the text has a sound is aural as much as it is visual

> The sound of the pen shattered the silence like sudden speech She listened entranced The little strange sound was the living voice of the brooding presence She copied the phrases in a shape that set them like a poem in the middle of the page, listening intently to the voice of Mr Lahitte pouring forth his sentences, (D, 133)

She is communicating with the translation, and becomes aware of the rush of inspiration Writing here is an almost tangible presence, creating an environment for the writing subject This is what Richardson chooses to stress over and above any visualist, objectifying, distancing effects of writing

> Avoid, she wrote, searching, some word was coming it was in her mind, muffled, almost clear, avoid - it flashed through and away, just missed But this was life! These strange unconsciously noticed things living on in one, coming together at the right moment part of a reality (D, 133)

As on the day of her arrival, Miriam uncovers the ink stains on her little writing table This other kind of writing, this metaphorical stain, proves the autobiographical strength of the writing environment

> The years that had passed were a single short interval leading to the restoration of that first moment Everything they contained centred there, her passage through them, the desperate graspings and droppings, had been a coming back Nothing would matter now that the paper-scattered lamplit circle was established as the centre of life Everything would be an everlastingly various joyful coming back Held up by this secret place, drawing her energy from it, any sort of life would do that left this room and its little table free and untouched (D, 134)

The inkstain and the writing table have the strength of a 'spell', as if 'an actual presence' (D, 135) For Miriam it is a promise of contact with herself It signals the reason behind the autobiographical exercise a newly-found contact with herself via writing The novel here temporarily receives a structure, a movement towards Miriam's self-recognition as a writer to form a 'companionship that now spread like a shield between her and the life she had so far dealt with unaided' (D, 135) For the woman writer, the inkstain forms an alternative to the literary tradition, not as a canon of monuments but as an environment, a presence bolstering to the female self

Equally, Amabel's letter to Miriam is a strange combination of the written medium and the almost oral or bodily presence of women in their handwriting and their voices

> Glancing through the pages she found some, in a larger and still more hurried hand where no single word showed its meaning directly Between each letter of each word was as much space as between the words they were supposed to compose Yet each was expressive, before its meaning appeared Each letter, carelessly dashed down, under pressure of feeling was a picture, framed in the surrounding space
> When meanings were discovered, they sounded, as if spoken
> It was this strange, direct, as if spoken communication punctuated only by dashes sloped at various angles like the sharp, forcible uprights of the script, and seeming to be the pauses of a voice in speech, that was making the reading of this letter so new an experience From its enchantment part of her mind was still held aloof by its strangeness inquiring, considering Her eye, not yet accustomed, kept pausing over the expressiveness of the

> new words attaching themselves to those already read, moving as well as sounding while they came, set together by her eye to their proper meaning Alive These written words were alive in a way no others she had met had been alive (DLH, 215)

This is the writing appreciated by Richardson, despite the absence generally associated with literacy It is writing expressing a reality for women, voiced via a text 'stretched' towards orality Amabel also expresses her love for Miriam by writing on a mirror, after a secret visit to her room The situation is highly symbolical, with Miriam casually glancing in the mirror intending to 'exchange over her shoulder a smile of congratulation with her reflected image' (DLH, 196) Miriam is here in the situation of so many women in Victorian paintings, glancing into a mirror However, she is not herself a vacuous mirror image reflecting a mirror She wants to communicate with herself, in the mirror of autobiographical recognition Instead, she finds the writing, 'the unaccountable presence that had been silently witnessing, unpardonably mocking', while through the writing Miriam sees the memory or rather receives a memory she did not have of Amabel sneaking into the room to write her message (DLH 196)

Writing then puts Miriam in touch with her consciousness in its epistemological sense Writing itself is an autobiographical act, putting the writer in an intense awareness of existence, of identity This 'women's writing' stresses new and different functions of literacy, it is a writing in performance It associates text with life, companionship, presence It is in fact a throw-back to an earlier vision of writing, more in tune with a society which uses writing but has not yet completely interiorized it the text as magic, life-giving and a presence Feeling herself alienated in the oral situation, Miriam believes that a true realization of the self needs isolation perhaps the isolation that is brought to an individual through the silence of writing, as happens in a number of isolated occasions in the novels, especially in *March Moonlight*. There, with Miriam making herself an environment, as it were a room, in the garden of the Roscorlas, there is a sense of the liberating feeling of writing, and of the isolation of writing for an individual tied by gender to the need for sociability This is the second aspect of the egotism of the female writer which some critics found so shocking in *Pilgrimage* Not only does the woman writer address her own subject as a valuable topic of literature, but the act of writing, an activity necessarily performed in isolation, demands the exclusion of others For a woman, who should traditionally cater to the comfort of the men she is attached to, this is a radical

attack on all the men surrounding her Moreover, Miriam's writing radically brings forward her own presence, rather than an absence It constructs a world of her own with her self at the centre It must irritate men and is seen by Miriam repeatedly as one of her distinctive features She is the woman who refuses to pander to men's needs, and delights in the social awkwardness and the social punishments which this entails It is interesting that a woman autobiographer like Richardson would exactly stress this aspect of her hero Presenting Miriam as a woman living in a world of men, she is constantly weighing up the two modes of communication, as they favour or confine her individuality Women who want to speak to Wilson must shut off 'three-fourths of their being', and Amabel agrees with Miriam that 'between men and women there can be no direct communication' (DLH, 223) In having to meet men halfway, women are speaking a foreign language, are alienated On her holiday in *Oberland* Miriam had already come to the same conclusion

> And again, as in early days at the Alpenstock, while bathing in the light created by the men and women about her, she was in conflict with the convention that kept urbane women alert at the front gates of consciousness to guard the ease of men waiting to be set going on their topics (DLH, 158)

Richardson's autobiographical writings then are in fact a profoundly feminist experiment for women to get back in touch with these complete selves, which their relations with conventional men make them lose *Pilgrimage* thus presents itself as essentially anti-masculine in the sense that it aims to verbalize those parts of women completely alien to the awareness of defining men, the 'wilderness' area of Elaine Showalter (Showalter 1982) Miriam's repeated assertion that she can only achieve her true self in isolation, seems a strange doubling message to come out of a basically autobiographical novel Richardson presents us with an autobiography which presents these scenes of a woman performing herself via writing We must consequently deduce that Richardson's own text is the result of a similar autobiographical pursuit an attempt to write the autobiography of a woman by creating herself in front of the audience, performing herself, forcing her readers into accepting this slow development of her self in performance The purpose of Richardson's writing seemed to be what she called in *Pilgrimage*, 'true reality' and a getting in touch with and clearly expressing '[t]he motionless unchanging centre of her consciousness' (CH, 305) The escape from sociability strived for by Miriam in order to write parallels the isolation and privacy sought by Richardson during her

life [13] Thus we can assume that the actual activity of writing an autobiography formed an essential because isolatory part of life for Richardson, the only escape route for a consciousness struggling under patriarchy Richardson may be a modernist, employing modernist techniques of disjunction and diffuseness Her novel may be likened in parts to an artist's Bildungsroman But the woman becoming a modernist or an artist is subordinated to the woman truly getting in touch with reality and her self [14] The writing of autobiography becomes in this way a feminist experiment

In her own 'Foreword', Richardson refers to Balzac, who is called 'the father of realism' One of the grounds for this 'fatherhood' is 'the power of a sympathetic imagination, uniting him with each character in turn', thus giving 'to every portrait the quality of a faithful self-portrait' (*Pilgrimage* I, 9) Dorothy Richardson thus stresses Balzac's movement towards the literary self-portrait in her interpretation of his novels The inter-permeation of reality and textuality, of life and autobiography increases if we consider that Richardson lived with her one great opus for 42 years, allowing for an inter-influencing of memory and the writer's present, the writing present Living with Miriam all those years, must have changed Miriam as well as made 'Dorothy' inevitably the hero of her own future autobiography 'Dorothy''s experiences will have affected Miriam's reactions to earlier experiences, so that in several ways the book and the life double back on each other It is a critical fallacy to equate the author and the hero of a book, even for an autobiography, but this seems an oversimplification in the case of *Pilgrimage* We are here faced with an author who is part of the signification set up by the text, making it essential for us to know who wrote the text, as well as her biography, in order to assess it

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13 Gillian Hanscombe records that Richardson shied away from friends and relations who became too demanding She quotes from the correspondence of Rose Odle In 1932 when my life broke up (I had 18 wretched and difficult years & a family to support alone for most of that time) I tried to tell D something I don't want to know ' (Hanscombe 1982 160) After this communication with Richardson ceased until after Alan s death The marriage of Richardson s two friends Avice-Veronica Leslie-Jones and Benjamin Grad is another well-documented example of such self-defence not in the least because Richardson herself described the episode in *Clear Horizon*. Grad had asked Richardson to marry him but she had refused the role of traditional housewife he would wish while Veronica s intense friendship was starting to wear her down Suggesting their marriage Dorothy managed the best of both worlds keeping her two friends but at a safe distance (Hanscombe 1982 159)

14 Gillian Hanscombe and Virginia L Smyers equally consider women modernists as closely basing their work on their own lives 'what it was like *to be* them (Hanscombe and Smyers 1987 9) and they call their Richardson chapter 'Dorothy Richardson s life-style of writing' (Hanscombe and Smyers 1987 47-63)

The ambiguous relationship between 'truth' and fiction is finally established in Richardson's attempts to bring to life a female consciousness in action, in performance for the audience of readers *Pilgrimage* is the autobiography of a perceiver (as well as of a perceiver aware that she is being perceived) [15] Frequently, in conversation situations Miriam feels that her feelings, her case can be easily restated, and misstated by the men she is talking to What she has said, can be too easily corrupted Since she frequently gets no joy as a speaking subject, so to write is to truly be Writing, in that respect, is a liberating experience, as well as a chance to protect what was said by having it in a more permanent form, via the solidity of the text Printing what was written takes this one step further, makes everything more permanent

But written autobiographies have an more sinister relationship with time As Ong warns in the 'Text and Monument', the written text 'carries with it necessarily an aura of accomplished death', unlike an oral situation which necessarily has both a living speaker and a living hearer present (Ong, 232) The traditional autobiography is very much the self-definition of an individual, in the uncomplicated nineteenth century term, for the use of posterity Ong points to the strong cultural connection between the text and death Richardson's text, however, is never conclusive, never leaves a message, as it in fact never seems to end On the contrary, she continuously writes and re-writes her protagonist Miriam, never closing her off, in an attempt to keep her alive in text Having recognized a hitherto unknown presence in the writing experience, she is attempting to instill oral elements of presence, reformulation, copiousness of definition into her text Ong refers to the 'distancing' as the result of interiorized literacy, so that increasingly literature is looked at as an object under control of the writer *Pilgrimage* is not such a finished object, separated from the writer as if the umbilical cord was cut (to use the childbirth imagery of so many male writers) The autobiography could continue after *March Moonlight*, and the constant looping of the time structure - Miriam thinking about her future memories and then attempting to create the right memories for the future in the present - causes the past to be continuous in the

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15 Interesting in connection with this notion of a slow performative autobiography is the almost imperceptible difference in the covers of the four Virago collections of *Pilgrimage* All details stemming from Gwen John s *The Convalescent* they show a woman in very similar position reading books and pamphlets possibly a self-portrait by John These cover pictures are as interconnected and as inherently distinct in their presence as the Miriam character in the novels

present situation, with references to the future It is an attitude closer to the time aspect of an oral situation than of the literary text Moreover, this is combined with a typically 'oral' copiousness Miriam's experiences are repeated so many times that the text seems to be remorselessly hammering certain topics, such as men's aggressive oral presence, their limited experience of 'reality', the strength of female presence, the rejection of romance Each of these themes is illustrated again and again, in fact too repeatedly for a correctly written 'literate' text, breaking the textual rule of economy of signification Richardson thus stands at the opposite pole from contemporary journalism, the sensational snippets of information making *Tit-Bits* such an example of interiorized literacy Richardson offers us a picture of Miriam suffering under Wilson's misrepresentation, and then offers us another, and yet another The autobiographical novel has broken down into these long drawn-out scenes, in which Miriam's detailed reactions to the situation are registered, to an extent quite impossible in the traditional novel or autobiography In fact, Richardson is stressing what Derrida found the most reprehensible in our Western attitude towards writing, the illusionary desire for presence Richardson, however, is trying to extend literature towards this impossibility, minutely describing actual presence in a situation In order to achieve this, precision is needed, and Richardson develops this copious, expansive style, in order to state and re-state exactly what it means to be herself-in-existence Meeting new potential friends in *Oberland*, Miriam finds that one of them, Vereker, has been to Cambridge, and remembers the sound of a church bell

> It was absurd to be holding to her solitary chime in face of his four years' residence But it seemed now desperately important to state exactly the quality she had felt and never put into words She sat listening - aware of him waiting in a sympathetic stillness - and presently found herself speaking with reckless enthusiasm (O, 52 - emphasis mine)

Despite the rule of copiousness - Vereker was able to experience the quality of the bell for much longer than Miriam - Miriam insists that she must state what it feels like *for a woman like her* to hear it In a similar way, Richardson rejects the belatedness of women in the oral and scripted world So Richardson combines stressing the processes of presence and performance in the oral situation, with the comforting 'fixing' of this female existence that is one of the major advantages of literacy Obsessed with 'being there', with being a consciousness-in-action, with being heard and not just seen, *Pilgrimage* must textually extend the novel into an

oral sphere, to keep on 'being there' She thus rejects the limitations of plot and narrative, which hemmed women into the silent type of 'Woman ' Richardson in fact attempts to expand the field of writing, to expand the functions of literature beyond the simple telling of a story of events This combined need for a both firmly fixed and ever-continuing presence in text may explain why, to the frustration of many readers, *Pilgrimage* was never 'finished', never reached a point of rest The feminist act of writing as an act of presence could never be allowed to end In this way, we do not have in *Pilgrimage* a typical autobiography Intent on avoiding the 'aura of accomplished death', Richardson presents us with the topic of a woman's radical need for self-presence which results in a text which must never be allowed to end, in a self-writing which strives for perpetual self-performance

> Here, amidst the dust-filmed ivy leaves and the odour of damp, decaying wood, was the centre of her life The rickety little table was one now with its predecessors, the ink-stained table under the attic roof at Tansley Street, first made sacred by the experience of setting marginal commentaries upon Lahitte's bombastic outpourings, and the little proud new bureau at Flaxman's, joy for her eyes and, later, depth, an enveloping presence in whose company alone, with an article for George Taylor being written on the extended flap, she could escape both the unanswerable challenge of the strident court and the pervading presence of Selina, and becoming, the permanent reminder amongst easy and fluctuating felicities of one that remained, so long as its prices were faithfully paid, both secure and unfathomable (DH, 523-524)

Chapter IV Gertrude Stein 'Autobiography is Easy'

1 Introduction

In the 'Preface' to *Everybody's Autobiography*, Gertrude Stein describes a conversation with the crime novelist Dashiell Hammett during her successful lecture tour of America, famous at last They are discussing the genre of autobiography and its relationship to the literary tradition

> Anything is an autobiography but this was a conversation
> I said to Hammitt (sic) there is something that is puzzling In the nineteenth century the men when they were writing did invent all kinds and a great number of men The women on the other hand never could invent women they always made the women be themselves seeing splendidly or sadly or heroically or beautifully or despairingly or gently, and they never could make any other kind of woman From Charlotte Brontë to George Eliot and many years later this was true Now in the twentieth century it is the men who do it The men all write about themselves, they are always themselves as strong or weak or mysterious or passionate or drunk or controlled but always themselves as the women used to do in the nineteenth century Now you yourself always do it now why is it He said it's simple In the nineteenth century men were confident, the women were not but in the twentieth century the men have no confidence and so they have to make themselves as you say more beautiful more intriguing more everything and they cannot make any other man because they have to hold on to themselves not having any confidence
> Anyway autobiography is easy like it or not autobiography is easy for any one and so this is to be Everybody's Autobiography (Preface EA, xxiii)

In a nutshell, the conversation combines a number of interesting topics A typical Steinian web of associations successively ties in the literary tradition, modernism, the genre of autobiography, gender and dynamic everyday talk There is the comparison between male and female literary traditions, a story of inverse confidence Stein's interpretation of these trends indicates that she considered modernism and her own writing in the light of what preceded it. Interestingly with regard to the mental attitudes described in Chapter Two, she seems to read twentieth century male writing, presumably including the male 'version' of modernism, as a search stemming from literary insecurity Significantly she explicitly combines writing with the topic of autobiography, in its wider definition of self-writing, to which she briefly and obscurely opposes 'conversation' Autobiography is easy,

because of a need she observes in literary writing, the need to present the writing self It is interesting that Stein sees an autobiographical urge, in the broad sense of self-representation of the writer, underlying all contemporary writing, rather than opting for the 'objective', 'impersonal' characterization of literature by many of her male contemporaries Whatever is written drags in the presence of the writer, she states to the male practitioner of a genre where traditionally the author is considered to be the least present

Conversely, at the end of *Everybody s Autobiography* Stein looks back on her literary activity in a conversation with another male writer, Thornton Wilder, and a new, vital set of literary topics emerges

> I said I had done things I had really written poetry and I had really written plays and I had really written thinking and I had really written sentences and paragraphs but I said I had not simply told anything and I wanted to do that thing must do it I would simply say what was happening which is what is narration, and I must do it as I knew it was what I had to do Yes said Thornton
> And now I almost think I have the first Autobiography was not that, it was a description and a creation of something that having happened was in a way happening not again but as it had been which is history which is newspaper which is illustration but is not a simple narrative of what is happening not as if it had happened not as if it is happening but as if it is existing simply that thing And now in this book I have done it if I have done it (EA, 264)

The phrase 'this book' of course refers, strangely enough, to the very text Stein is writing and the reader is reading Opposite to Stein's strong assertion the repetition of 'really written', she posits herself as a speaker, 'simply telling' The latter concept is equated with the ideal of conveying what exists irrelevant from plot and narration Stein's terminology is always somewhat inconsistent - her repetition of the word 'narrative' in the second paragraph seems contradictory, and every appearance of the word 'narrative' needs to be carefully interpreted in context But in her discussion with Wilder, Stein opposes two functions of 'reality' which can be expressed in her version of literature Writing the plot, writing 'what is happening' is opposed to 'telling' what exists Stein the writer is shaking off plot with the help of Stein the speaker Narrative in this new, redefined sense is presentation of the 'existing' of a 'thing' [1] Significantly, this Steinian revolution of literature not as a

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1 In a lecture delivered in 1934 entitled 'What is English Literature' Gertrude Stein re-defined English literature almost as a problem of epistemology a description' of the daily island life 'The thing that has

conveyor of plot but of what is existing will occur to a large extent via the autobiographical position

Stein's two 'explicit' autobiographies, *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* (1933) and *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937) were less radical, and certainly more popular than previous work like *Three Lives* (1909) or *The Making of Americans* (1925) Basically, however, they too attacked plot and grammar alike, following a deliberately conversational, Sternian structure with mostly associative links between topics With her decision to write an explicit autobiography however untraditional, Stein attempted a new genre and a new literary tradition She did not write with simple nostalgic intentions, but was in fact tackling reality 'what exists', in yet another new genre The explicitly autobiographical work in fact came at the end of a long period of genre experimentation The novel, the literary portrait, 'opera' and 'plays' were investigated to consider how their conventions affected prime Steinian concepts like identity, narrative, time, plot These concepts would then be tested under the different laboratory conditions of a new genre [2]

The Making of Americans Being a History of a Family's Progress by its very title refers to a literary genre, the family history Spanning several generations, the genre usually presented the decline of a bourgeois family within the context of late nineteenth-century Europe Emile Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart* (1871-1893), and Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901) as well as John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* in England (1906-1922), are well-known examples of this 'master narrative' of nineteenth century 'realism' and 'scientific' naturalism Significantly, this realism was meant to be 'revelatory' (Tuchman and Fortin 1989, 10), aspiring to illustrate how the generations of a family behave under different social and economic circumstances and with different parentage But, equally, the realist family history incorporated the great bourgeois message that families are built up by a hardworking, self-sufficient individual entrepreneur, and decline sets in when habitual wealth and luxury has corrupted children or grandchildren, who have lost his resilience and self-reliance Stein's American family seems at first a successful transposition of this formula to a new and still youthful continent The narrator of

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made the glory of English literature is description simple concentrated description not of what happened nor what is thought or what is dreamed but what exists and so makes the life the island life the daily island life (Stein 1988_a 14-15)

2 Wendy Steiner describes the move towards autobiography and later to detective fiction (!) as yet another investigation via another genre of identity and its expression in narrative (Steiner 1978, 166)

Americans remarks upon a certain characterlessness among the American-born members of her family, unlike the almost eccentric European ancestors like the grandfather coaxed and cajoled out of his European home by an enterprising wife Typically, Stein's younger generations are a mixture of their parents' character traits Consequently, the narrator claims that almost scientific deductions can be made for whole families, a conclusion which supports the tenets of the realistic family saga (MA, 42) Although we never get a full picture - the family history concentrates towards the beginning of the novel - Stein's family too seems to be on a downward trend, with children like Martha Hersland and Julia Dehning making slightly unsatisfactory marriages But this is where any resemblance stops Stein writes her great American novel with the revelatory realism of the European family novel in mind But these interests start to explode, when the narrator's discussion of family background leads to overlong descriptions of the Hersland's neighbours, their servants, their seamstresses In fact the narrator is hijacked by her own Zolaesque 'scientific' framework She follows the rules of the 'realist' novel to laughable ends, and ultimately the family history turns into an unceasing and chaotic expression of the 'being' of several categories of people Having become obsolete, the actual story of the Herslands is then tossed aside and, in mid-stream the narrator develops a new writing plan for the patient observation and description of 'every one' [3] *The Making of Americans* is an important text in Stein's career Taking a long time to write, from 1906 to 1911, it testifies to a crystallization of her ideas and a singular combination of autobiographical and modernist intentions The perseverance with which Stein pursued its publication, as well as continuous references in the 'autobiographies', indicate that she considered it a vital text [4] What is in fact so exciting about *Americans* is that it is the first scientific primer in which we are not presented with theories but with ideas as they are coming to fruition, being discarded, reinstated, contradicted, reinstated The genre of the family history has been 'bent' into another description of some kind of 'existing'

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3 To a large extent, Stein could see herself and her generation as a huge disappointment in the mould of the realistic novel Exiles dabbling in art writing and art collection they lived off inherited money having sold the family tram business, an invitation to family disaster This was unacceptable as was in the light of a brand-new America still being created the idea that individuals are mere deterministic mixtures

4 *The Making of Americans* was published in 1925 by Robert McAlmon s Contact Editions In *Everybody s Autobiography* and *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* however Stein is still furthering the cause of this text, rehearsing what she described in *Americans* almost advertising her beloved book (ABT 47 63 78-79 124 - EA, 82 200 217 231 260)

Stein considered the same topics of 'reality', writing, audience, plot in the laboratory of other genres As a result of *The Making of Americans*, she concentrated increasingly on non-narrative portraits, stressing the importance of 'exact' description over narrative *A Long Gay Book* (written in 1909, as dated by the Yale Catalogue, published in 1932) was followed by *Many Many Women* (1910), a series of portraits of women merely described as 'she', 'one', 'some', a work characterized by a despairing Bridgman as 'of unparalleled opacity', 'a desert' and 'a formal rarity' (Bridgman 1970, 104) Also frequently mentioned in the two autobiographies, the 'portraits' are, according to Wendy Steiner, at the centre of Stein's work and interests (Steiner 1978, ix - ABT, 124-126, 143-5, 240) But the 'portraits' are hardly in line with their own literary tradition, associative prose poems with often surrealist connections with their sitters Equally, when Stein moved on to the most popular narrative of her day, the detective story, her version was hardly comparable with contemporaries like Hammett or Chandler *Blood on the Dining-Room Floor* (1948) or the many small detective plots of *The Geographical History of America* (1936) or *The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind* (1936), will not 'thrill' and Stein's declarations on detective fiction reflect her views on writing and reality rather than a considered interpretation of the genre itself Throughout her writing career Stein consistently 'misread' the genres she tackled In the case of detective fiction she suppressed vital characteristics like plot and causality in favour of new definitions 'I like somebody being dead and how it moves along' (EA, xxii) Later on in her career, she arrived at an equally original definition of plays as 'landscapes', a highly interesting and innovative view on theatre, radically rejecting the causal plot in favour of the experience of performance Another genre with strong connections to painting, landscape really came into its own for Stein during her first flight of the US trip, when the pattern of the fields took on the look of an abstract painting suggesting an underlying, deeper reality (EA, 164-165) 'Alice' comments earlier 'She says a landscape is such a natural arrangement for a battle-field or a play that one must write plays' (ABT, 145) Like a highly stylized dance, or a World War I battle, Stein's plays seek to investigate stasis, and existence (EA, 168) The 'autobiographies' belong within this ongoing discussion of genres As an autobiographical subject Stein could now explicitly use her own existence to reflect upon thought-processes, identity, description, the writing self, audience and 'reality' 'Autobiography' was to be another redefined genre, now hinging on the performance of a writing self and a speaking self

But within all these alternative genres, the move to the explicit autobiographies had always been present Many of Gertrude Stein's works can be considered 'autobiographical', in the sense that they use elements from her personal history in fictional and epistemological contexts It is well-documented that *Q E D* (1950) or, by its earlier title *Things As They Are*, is based on Stein's infatuation for a Johns Hopkins friend, May Bookstaver, herself entangled in a possessive relationship with Mabel Haynes The agonizing affair lasted for several years and left its mark on Stein's early writing This first novel in fact the last to be published posthumously in 1950, investigates the relations between each member of the triangle until the relationship evolves into a state of static impasse, or 'things as they are ' The later title is the formula ending a logical or geometrical proof - 'Quod Erat Demonstrandum' or 'what was to be proven' - indicating that the deadlock is the inevitable result of interacting forces within the triangle The fictional treatment of her life meant the application of order and logic onto a confusing relationship, allowing Stein to turn the past into a case study as for the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine Gass calls it 'a stratagem against the self to take its secrets', a reworking to understand or rationalize disturbing memories (Gass 1978 88) Parts of *Three Lives* and *The Making of Americans* deal with similar relationships, only now translated into a heterosexual triangle

By *The Making of Americans*, Stein's interest in the variegations of the autobiographical position has significantly evolved This 'novel' is the autobiography of a listener and observer Stein's text devotes itself not only to a description of categories of people, but rather to the perception of others, to the learning processes of getting to know others and the need in the author to communicate this 'This is now a little description of learning quickly, one' (MA, 313)

> Then I saw this one, then I looked intensely at this one, then this one was a whole one to me Then the whole being of this one was inside me, it was then as possession of me I could not get it out from inside me, it gave new meanings to many things, it made a meaning to me of damnation I had then to tell it to this one, that was the only way to loosen myself from this one who was a whole one in me This is then one way of learning a whole one, by seeing them completely by one long looking at them (MA, 313-314)

Or she describes the perception and re-evaluation of another 'one'

> One then I have been describing was to me a very slow long learning Always in the beginning the repeating I was hearing, feeling, seeing coming always out of this one was to me a complete history of the being of this one, the being I was first describing that every one who knew this one felt was the being of this one More and more then hearing this repeating was irritating, more and more then there was in me always a beginning again of listening to, of seeing, feeling the repeating coming out of this one Slowly then there came to be in me puzzled feeling Slowly there came to be in me a feeling that it was not a complete repeating I was hearing, not a complete history of her being Always I was hearing feeling seeing every one else feeling listening to, seeing this one Slowly then this one came to be a complete one to me Slowly then every one, everything always helping, slowly then, I always listening, looking, feeling always then I slowly, always hearing seeing feeling came to have this one to be a whole one to me, came to have this one to be a whole one inside me Always then more and more I heard and saw and felt all the repeating always telling the whole being in her, more and more then I had in me a completed friendly feeling of the whole being that was this one (MA, 310)

This is the close description not of a person, but of the epistemological process of acquiring intense knowledge of that person From recognition, through irritation and hesitation, to having the person *in* her the narrator presents herself as essentially and exclusively involved in the process of learning about other people The narrator's persistent efforts at a sincere knowledge of others have the almost messianic feel to them of the suffering artist, almost a prophet, devoting her whole existence to this knowledge of and communication with others

> Always then from the beginning there was in me always increasing as a conscious feeling loving repeating being, learning to know repeating in every one, hearing the whole being of any one always repeating in that one every minute of their living There was then always in me as a bottom nature to me an earthy, resisting slow understanding loving repeating being (MA, 301)

The whole of page 303 is a description of how Stein knows people 'There are many that I know and always more and more I know it They are always all of them always repeating themselves and I hear it ' Actually, we here briefly glimpse the biographical Stein at the heart of the modernist movement, knowing more and more people as her fame increases through the subculture and later to America The assertion and re-assertion of this narrator personality continues unabashed She promises 'a little description of my coming to completed understanding of some now' and later 'a description of earlier learning' (MA, 304)

> Many times I begin and then begin again Always I must not begin a deadened following, always their repeating must be a fresh feeling in my hearing, seeing, feeling Always I must admit all changing
> There are many that I know then They are all of them repeating and I hear it, see it, feel it More and more I understand it I love it, I tell it I love it I live it and I tell it Always I will tell it (MA, 305)

Both as an autobiography and as a history *The Making of Americans* refuses to deal with the present as a result of the past Rather it focuses on a radical present, changing as the narrator writes For Stein, the 'repeating' she notices in herself and others must be a realization perpetually confounding and fresh (MA, 371) If this is to be done with absolute honesty, it is too tall an order for any writer As will be discussed below the autobiographical Stein will be forced to perform rather than write

With *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* written by Gertrude Stein, Stein wrote her first explicit autobiography, only immediately to break a basic rule of the genre By impersonating her companion Toklas in an autobiography of which she herself was the subject, Stein caused a complicated narrative situation only clarified explicitly on the last page Mellow describes how the first edition of the autobiography presented no author's name on the front cover, but opposite the title page showed a picture of Alice and Gertrude standing, Alice in the background Gertrude Stein of course explains that she wrote the book, or rather 'Alice' explains that Gertrude wrote it But positive identification only comes in the very last, remarkable sentences

> About six weeks ago Gertrude Stein said, it does not look to me as if you were ever going to write that autobiography You know what I am going to do I am going to write it for you I am going to write it as simply as Defoe did the autobiography of Robinson Crusoe And she has and this is it (ABT, 272)

There are a number of ambiguities and logical loops in this final statement The book closes on the increasing excitement about Stein's writing, with Sherwood Anderson arriving Toklas setting up their Plain Editions press, the French translation of *The Making of Americans*, and a growing clamour among friends and publishers for the Stein autobiography (ABT, 261-271) First as a joke, but then as a serious alternative, Alice's autobiography is suggested From Stein's ironic titles, it is obvious that she herself is still to be the main subject 'My Life With The Great, Wives of Geniuses I Have Sat With, My Twenty-five Years With Gertrude Stein' sound

gushingly sycophantic (ABT, 271-272) Stein in fact writes a pastiche of a typical companion-to-the-great autobiography Both Lynn Z Bloom and Elizabeth Winston discuss the possible reasons for Stein's appropriation of her companion's voice (Winston 1980, 109) Bloom points out that Stein used this ambiguous narrative mask to prevent derision by trapping her readers into sympathy with the narrative game, while Winston adds that Stein thus paid Alice B Toklas a tribute, while carefully avoiding spelling out their relationship as would be required in a formal Stein autobiography It is true that the book, while focusing on Gertrude, underlines the symbiosis of the two lives rather than a genius-cum-companion focus There is also the fact that judging from some letters in *The Flowers of Friendship* many friends seem to have had trouble remembering and spelling Alice Toklas's unusual name The autobiography effectively put a stop to that [5] But Stein's tour de force also allows her to take that fictional, because impossible look at herself from the outside, merging the genres of autobiography and biography Alice B Toklas's autobiography is in fact her biography, and, conversely, Stein's biography is an encoded autobiography

Another ambiguity concerns the reference to Defoe's hero Robinson Crusoe Stein intends to write Toklas's autobiography 'as simply as Defoe did the autobiography of Robinson Crusoe' (ABT, 272) Thus she further undermines the autobiographical intention by indicating that she has written the autobiography of a fictional character (Bloom 1978_a, 81-82) She is in fact teasing out the question of 'truth' at the heart of every autobiography Comparing her work with the writings of another exile twinned with a helper, Stein is in fact writing Friday's autobiography for him/her *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* is clearly an anti-autobiography, subverting its most basic suppositions like the unity of the author (Stein) subject (Stein) and narrator (Toklas) Narrative time and narrative viewpoint become involved in contradiction in the very last sentences The account flaunts its fictionality, and yet it is an account of Stein by Stein As Stein, the object of narration, turns out to be the subject the end of this 'autobiography' refers back

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5 Donald Gallup's collection of letters to Gertrude Stein *The Flowers of Friendship* (Gallup 1979) offers a number of apologetic acquaintances kindest regards to your charming friend whose name I can t spell (letter from Henry McBride 28 August 1913 Paris in Gallup 1979 83) 'Give my kindest regards to Alice It's hopeless I can t recall her last name (Henry McBride 7 January 1918 New York in Gallup 1979 124) 'With every good wish from 2 to yourself and Miss (whose name I dread mis-spelling)' (Alfred Kreymborg 9 August 1921 Como in Gallup 1979 142), Miss Toklis (pardon wrong spelling)' (Stuart Davis 1 May 1929 Paris in Gallup 1979 231)

to its beginning After a series of texts investigating 'what is existing' - or perhaps 'truth' - in various genres Stein's dealings with autobiography lead her straight to that niggling question at the heart of the genre autobiographical 'truth'

The 'Preface' to *Everybody's Autobiography* shows that the book is intended as a continuation of the previous 'autobiography' The modest traditional 'I was born ' (ABT, 7) is now replaced by a bang and a preface

> Alice B Toklas did hers and now everybody will do theirs
> Alice B Toklas says and if they are all going to do theirs the way she did hers
> In the first place she did not want it to be Alice B Toklas, if it has to be she at all it should be Alice Toklas and in the French translation it was Alice Toklas in French it just could not be Alice B Toklas but in America and in England too Alice B Toklas was more than Alice Toklas Alice Toklas never thought so and always said so
> That is the way any autobiography has to be written which reminds me of Dashiell Hammitt (sic) (EA, xxi)

Everybody's Autobiography opens immediately on a much more avant-gardist narrative style If Alice B Toklas introduced Stein's modernism in a popular book, then the next autobiography took everybody's education one step further Lynn Z Bloom remarks that a narrative trick like 'Alice' is only possible once (Bloom 1978_a, 91) In fact, a similar narrative ambiguity resurfaces in the first sentences of *Everybody's Autobiography* Although readers cannot fail to notice the aggrandizement of Stein's scheme - after Alice's autobiography she is now writing Everybody's - they may fail to notice that Stein is again climbing into the skin of a fictional/real character, only this time she is ghostwriting the autobiography of a plural subject 'The way she did hers' refers to Stein's acquisition of Alice's voice to write the autobiography of Stein [6] Now writing everybody's autobiography Stein is no longer describing Alice's meeting with Stein, but what happened after that, the impact of her fame on everybody, or the impact of everybody on Stein, and on her sense of identity This fits in with the content which is to a large extent dominated by Stein's new success, the result of the first 'autobiography' Stein first dealt with the history of Alice's reaction to her, now she is dealing with how the world responds to her and how she observing, undergoing this, is responding to the world Rather

6 It is interesting that 'Alice s' complaint concerning the first autobiography concerns her name the way she was called Alice B Toklas and not Alice Toklas The mis-naming suggests that perhaps now her family name was firmly instilled in the minds of the audience but nevertheless her identity is still based on a mis-naming as inevitably with a written text

than traditional autobiographies, these are relational ones, describing the mutual impact of the autobiographical subject and the surrounding world This interpretation combines with Stein's interest in identity, already discussed with reference to *Americans*, as well as her distinctions between inside-outside, how her fame makes her feel inwardly and how she feels regarded outwardly In the rest of this chapter, Stein's experiments with genre to highlight 'what is existing' will be related to her particular gender position as a (lesbian) woman autobiographer

2 The Laboratory of Vocabulary

Scattered throughout Stein's work are her worries that her writing is too simple, that it lacks in art, or even that it is only the product of a confidence trickster Thus she frequently affirms that her writing was indeed **intended** to be 'common-place and simple' (EA, 271) Concerning her play *Four Saints in Three Acts*, she repeats with approval the remark of 'Saint Theresa' that her dialogue contained 'such natural words to say'(EA, 167) Nevertheless, anxiety is only a second away

> Of course naturally in the meanwhile I went on writing, I had always wanted it all to be common-place and simple anything that I am writing and then I get worried lest I have succeeded and it is too common-place and too simple so much so that it is nothing, anybody says it is not so it is not too common-place and not too simple but do they know anyway I have always all the time thought it was so and hoped it was so and then worried lest it was so I am worried again now lest it is so (EA, 271)

While writing *The Making of Americans*, 'Stein' the narrator repeatedly intervenes to comment upon her style and most vulnerably to admit - almost flaunt - her uncertainty In fact she is forcing her readers to see modernism in action, to be made aware of the 'shame' and anxieties of being an avant-gardist departing into unconventionality This is prosaically brought home by Stein's comparison of her own writing with her fondness for bright red handkerchiefs, even though she feels guilty 'in liking things that are low' (MA, 463)

> [Y]ou like eating something and liking it is a childish thing to every one or you like something that is a dirty thing and no one can really like that thing or you write a book and while you write it you are ashamed for every one must think you are a silly or a crazy one and yet you write it and you are ashamed, you know you will be laughed at or pitied by every one and you have a queer feeling and you are not very certain and you go on writing (MA 485)

She goes on to describe that when someone first likes what she does, 'says yes to it', she gets a 'complete feeling' in a way impossible with a later public But Stein's art clearly causes her serious anxiety and she repeats her fear of mockery 'when every one thinks you are doing it for the joke of the thing It is hard then to know whether you are really loving that thing It takes very much courage to do anything connected with your being that is not a serious thing' (MA 488) In *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* she deals with the same question regarding Picasso, in response to Alice's startled reaction to the Picasso paintings

> Only that Picassos were rather awful and the others were not Sure, she said, as Pablo once remarked, when you make a thing, it is so complicated making it that it is bound to be ugly, but those that do it after you they don't have to worry about making it and they can make it pretty, and so everybody can like it when the others make it (ABT, 28)

Stein also worries about her position towards the literary canon In *Everybody's Autobiography*, she poses the question what is great literature? The question arises concerning the literary prize already discussed in Chapter 2 Her suggestions for artistic freedom, without rewards or jury, are rejected by the upholder of the canon the man from the English Department (with some of Stein's sparse capital letters) The anecdote camouflages the anxiety beneath it, for Stein although by now fêted, famous and in the English Department, had herself been considered worthless

> One day some one knocked at the door and a very nice very american young man asked if he might speak to Miss Stein You see, he said slightly hesitant, the director of the Grafton Press is under the impression that perhaps your knowledge of english (ABT, 76 - sic)

The question into great literature, Stein's famous title 'What Are Master-pieces and Why Are There So Few of Them' (1936) takes on a more poignant connotation Stein reacts with all the ambivalence of an anxious outsider, and to a certain extent she flaunts her outsider's position, questioning the creation of the canon championed so much by Ezra Pound In *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein wants to visit places mentioned in a Winston Churchill book *The Crisis* a one-time best-seller fallen into obscurity This sets off a worried, grammatically confused paragraph opposing the simple nineteenth-century situation, when a best-seller was also a masterpiece, with the contemporary confusion now that publicity obscures the picture The paragraph itself maintains an ambivalent relationship with the readers, evading content, forcing re-readings and an analytical deconstruction of its deep structure Questions

puzzling Stein address the longevity of the canon what makes a masterpiece 'go on being' (EA, 224), when other novels too are well-written and moving? But with the next point Stein's questions strike home 'it is the same thing that knowing inside in one that one is a genius, what difference is there inside in one from the others inside in them who are not one' (EA, 225), in other words how can Stein be sure she is a genius if this is not corroborated by the objective outside? There is the typically modernist worry about publicity in both autobiographies, reflecting her awareness that publicity may be the underlying and undermining basis of the canon The paragraph closes on a triumphant assertion covering her underlying confusion of standards

As a defence against this ever-present threat of worthlessness Stein the anxious modernist frequently aligns her writing with science explaining how her description of subjects during the experiments in Harvard led to her description of people in *The Making of Americans* With approval she quotes the critic Marcel Brion's comparison of her writing to a Bach fugue, mentioning her 'exactitude, austerity, absence of variety in light and shade' and her 'refusal of the use of the subconscious', which again aligns her more with the controlled experiment of the scientific pole (ABT, 57) The Bach fugue, harmonic, calm, emotionally controlled and almost scientific in its complexity is to her an acceptable metaphor Towards the end, *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* increasingly sounds like literary criticism Exactitude is again stressed, and the Bach fugue crops up once more

> Gertrude Stein, in her work had always been possessed by the intellectual passion for exactitude in the description of inner and outer reality She has produced a simplification by this concentration, and as a result the destruction of associational emotion in poetry and prose She knows that beauty, music, decoration the result of emotion should never be the cause even events should not be the cause of emotion nor should they be the material of poetry and prose Nor should emotion itself be the cause of poetry or prose They should consist of an exact reproduction of either an outer or an inner reality In Gertrude Stein the necessity was intellectual, a pure passion for exactitude It is because of this that her work has often been compared to that of mathematicians and by a certain french critic to the work of Bach (ABT, 228)

The quotation could almost stem from essays by Pound and Eliot, were it not for the rambling conversational style which undermines the stringent scientific message, and which would be anathema to Pound and Eliot In *Everybody's Autobiography*

the topic is continued Frequently, Stein felt she had to defend herself against the accusation of automatic writing [7]

> No, writing should be very exact and one must realize what there is inside in one and then in some way it comes into words and the more exactly the words fit the emotion the more beautiful the words that is what does happen and anybody who knows anything knows that thing (EA, 231-232)

Exactness is beauty Stein's method of concentrating on objects, persons and her own responses to them is represented as science and objectivity Not only Stein drew the modernist comparison with science, however Bryher too stresses both Stein's 'science' and her sense for presence

> I read some of the magazines of the period over again recently and it is Gertrude's work that now seems the most alive It is not dated She was a scientist and one of the few among us who had almost entirely freed herself from the past although her "electronic brain" was stocked with knowledge Her attack on language was necessary and helped us all even if we did not follow her Some of her books are both so simple and so profound that we can read them whether we are eighteen or eighty The rest of her work is experimental, highly technical and should be reserved for specialists (Bryher 1963, 215)

Mina Loy was another contemporary who fell in with Stein's own myth In a poem Loy significantly compares her to the 'Curie/of the laboratory/of vocabulary' (Loy 1924, 305)

Gertrude Stein is at her most unsettling and alienating when she moves around this laboratory The topic of vocabulary or 'names' is a sustained one in *Everybody's Autobiography* and is already introduced on page 2, where the introduction of Picasso leads to a discussion of Spanish naming Immediately, Stein considers that Picasso's name is not his original name, but the result of choice

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7 At various times in the Autobiographies - and to readers it seems like protesting too much Stein defends herself against the charge of automatic writing 'Alice mentions the experiments in automatic writing performed by Stein and Leon Solomon under Münsterberg (although they were not really into automatic writing) When tackling the question if these experiments influenced any later automatic writing she neatly skirts the question by an ambiguity her article in the *Harvard Psychological Review* is interesting because it already shows her later method of writing (ABT 86) leaving open whether automatic reading is that method By the second autobiography Stein is ready to set the matter straight 'Then I concluded that there is no such thing as automatic writing among the people as one knows them' (EA, 229)

> Picasso's name originally was well anyway his father's name was Ruiz and his mother's was Picasso In Spain you take your father's and your mother's name like Ruiz y Picasso like Merry y del Val del Val was Spanish and Merry was Irish and finally the names pile up and you take your choice (EA, 2)

The joke concerns another moment of 'sloppy speech' by Stein, when her example of the typical Spanish way of dealing with names turns out to be half-Irish But unlike Anglo-Saxon names there is an element of choice for the subject of the name To this Stein adds the example of Chinese servants who pick new names for themselves when they are in the West, because they gamble away their reference and 'perhaps a name there is not a name' Significantly, she says about the servants, 'the name they say they are' (EA, 2) Stein's concerns seem absurd and unimportant but centre on the element of choice in name assignation, the lack of an inherent relationship between the signifier and the signified in words Out of this results an anarchic as well as a creative potential in the possibility of emptying words of their meanings and connecting them with new contents The idea of oriental servants thus leads Stein to the xenophobic French concept of 'peaceful penetration' referring to the infiltration by foreigners (EA 2) Stein ignores this meaning and wittily only addresses form, 'nice words and quiet words and long but not too long words' Punning absurdly, she then connects them with 'pacific defence' referring to the Southern French trenches, an equally 'peaceful' defence against this peaceful penetration The puns here actually regulate the story line, as Stein jumps from anecdote to anecdote in order to knit the words and phrases together (EA 2)

The same feature makes *The Making of Americans* such a hard text to read Stein contextually changes the contents and associative values of words As she is ruminating over and around a topic she defines and redefines existing vocabulary until the words are slightly on a tilt from general usage The phenomenon happens with key words like 'description', 'history', 'realizing', 'remembering' The word 'being', used to describe everyone's particular awareness of living, actually increases in usage as *The Making of Americans* continues It soon crowds out all our other notions of history or family to become **the** topic of the whole text

> Certainly he was one being living when he was being a young one, he was often then quite certainly one being almost completely interested in being one being living he was then quite often wanting to be one being completely interested in being one being living, (MA, 801)

One of the basic rules of successful oral communication in a non-scriptive society is to drive home the same words again and again, so that quantitatively they come to dominate the message However, continuous usage shifts the meaning of words much quicker for the oral communicator than for the writer forced to acknowledge the dictionary Stein's text resembles an oral message in that the meanings of her central vocabulary become fluid in an extreme way, depending literally on the surrounding text It becomes virtually impossible to find an a-contextual stable denotation for these words

'Stupid being', another one of Stein's frequently repeated concepts receives its own 'history' The conclusion seems to be that 'stupid being' refers to a basic, 'dumb nature', a characteristic underlying everybody's psychological traits It is an attitude so basic that it cannot be resisted or improved upon, almost like the Freudian subconscious before socialization by the laws of the 'superego'

> Many who have independent dependent nature in them who have attacking as the natural way of fighting in them who have weakness or vagueness or sensitiveness or emptiness as the natural bottom of them, in all of such of them stubborn resisting is almost always a part in them of the stupid nature in them of the stupid nature every one has in them (MA, 207)

But meanings shift subtly and a few pages later Madeleine Wyman and Mrs Hersland are characterized as having 'dependent independent' being in them The narrator concludes 'Resisting and yielding then in both of them was not stupid being in them Attacking then for both of them was stupid being' (MA, 275) Here, 'stupid being' seems to indicate acting and believing contrary to one's basic being Strangely enough, Stein has already stressed in the earlier quotation that we all have 'stupid being', which then must seem to be a perverse need to attempt to act out of character Likewise there is the term 'important being' for one's most profound sense of a self Thus one can act according to one's important feeling, and contrary to one's nature or according to one's 'stupid being' (MA, 252-253)

Stein's other well-known phrase of the 'bottom nature' seems to appear for the first time on page 136, where she practically offers a scientific definition of its denotation

> There are many millions of every kind of men, there are many millions of them and they have each one of them more or less in them of the kind of man they are and this makes a different being of each one of the many millions of that kind of them that, the quantity in them of their kind of being, and the mixture in them of other kinds of being in them There are many millions of each kind of men and other kinds of being are mixed up in each one of each kind of them but the strongest thing in each one of them is the bottom in them the kind of being in them that makes them The bottom to every one then is the kind of being that makes him, it makes for him the kind of thinking the way of eating the way of drinking the way of loving, the way of beginning, and the way of ending, in him (MA, 136)

As we leisurely find out, bottom natures seem to lie at the heart of our actions and our ways of being, seen by Stein as a series of performances, eating, drinking, dying All these actions of daily life are used as metaphors for the bottom being, every action and attitude to be considered as expressions of their ways of being Describing Mary Maxworthing Stein mentions that she is not unpleasant, nor nagging and has 'very little nervous character' 'pleasant gayety' Her 'stupid being' and her 'interfering' then doesn't come from her anxiousness, but from 'the little impatient being in her' and especially 'the fact that she had not a very large bottom in her to her, she had a little sensitive bottom in her' (MA, 215) Perhaps Mary is not anxious but she seems to have a very small sense of self Bottom natures are harder to deal with than originally obvious because they can occur in mixed form in people who are the products of the bottom natures of their parents (MA 150) At times Stein's classification indeed resembles a scientific exploration of subjects in an infinitely expanding system Her basic categories the 'independent dependent' and the 'dependent independent' become increasingly complex and sophisticated when children combine the natures of parents in them, and their children project again a new combination [8] Thus, she describes Alfred Hersland at unbelievable length

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8 In *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* Stein offers a reason behind her categories in *The Making of Americans* Matisse intimated that Gertrude Stein had lost interest in his work She answered him there is nothing within you that fights itself and hitherto you have had the instinct to produce antagonism in others which stimulated you to attack But now they follow /That was the end of the conversation but a beginning of an important part of The Making of Americans Upon this idea Gertrude Stein based some of her most permanent distinctions in types of people (ABT 73) Elsewhere Stein bases the origin of her categories in the Harvard experiments with Leon Solomon (ABT 86)

> I was describing the being in Alfred Hersland that made of him to me to very many knowing him a part of a being He has in him only one kind of being but as I was telling pieces of it get separated off from other pieces of it by not being completely acting, flavors, reactions, by-products get disconnected and keeping on going in him and things get all disarranged in him so that this one is a part of a one in living, the bottom in him resisting and engulfing is not rich or thick or solid or ample or active enough in acting to make a complete being in my feeling in him, and always then that is there as being in him (MA, 589)

However naive Stein's style and her categories may sound, her 'system' shares with scientific systems the need for continued observation and refinement, the realization that as yet unknown factors may work on what was at first thought a known quantity In a sense, Stein's work on the description of people ignores all acquired psychological knowledge and gives the elementary feeling of the 'scientific' works in the late middle ages and early modern periods Most of *The Making of Americans* sounds as if it is a writing style still to a very large extent influenced by the largely oral society of the early print period The text sounds like the many 'treatises' then written and the categories of people very much like the Renaissance 'humours', initially suggested by a mixture of folk lore and observation With her scientific system Stein is in fact starting anew, pretending that several centuries of research into human nature have not existed She wipes the board clean, and starts afresh with her two categories In fact, a whole limited vocabulary arises out of the text, limited and only denotative (if fluid) like scientific language 'Anxious feeling', 'impatient being', 'queerness' (MA, 238) are all categories cropping up again and again, the only difference with authentic scientific language being the lack of explicit definition at their first introduction, and their contextuality Closely linked with the categories of dependent and independent to give yet another example, are categories of 'resisting' and 'attacking'

> Now there will be a little more description given of these two kinds of substances and their way of acting and the kinds in each kind of them and then there will be given short histories showing learning kinds, learning individual ones by knowing this way of seeing, feeling bottom nature in men and women First then to consider the general resisting group of men and women, considering them now only the bottom nature, which is resisting, in this group of them, leaving out now any considering of mixing in them (MA 345)

These categories too eventually double up into attacking-resisting and resisting-attacking, and it is clear that Stein envisages her categories in a more sophisticated

way than merely as opposition Resisting is for some their way of attacking, in others it is an unnatural way of behaviour Stein's habit too of announcing 'there will now be a description of' is very reminiscent of the early scientific, highly descriptive titles already announcing what will be treated in the next chapter, indicative of the writers' need to guide readers along almost orally Thus, Stein calls herself to order again after a diversion about Julia Dehning's excitement 'Julia and Alfred and Dehning family living and loving and learning and quarrelling' (MA, 644) It almost sounds like a title, but at the same time we clearly hear Stein the speaker Similarly, there is 'To begin then The resisting kind of them' (MA, 346), 'This one then,' (MA, 384)

Marianne DeKoven defines Stein's text as basically anti-patriarchal because of this play with meanings

> The modes Stein disrupts are linear orderly, closed, hierarchical, sensible, coherent, referential, and heavily focused on the signified The modes she substitutes are incoherent, open-ended anarchic irreducibly multiple, often focused on what Roland Barthes calls the "magic of the signifier" (DeKoven 1983, xiii-xiv)[9]

But the experiments in Stein's laboratory of vocabulary are more extreme than the creation of open-ended multiplicity In this text, which sounds like emergent textuality, as if the writer has not yet quite mastered the skill of composing and structuring text Stein attacks the ideology encoded in the technology of writing Stein's basic two categories in *The Making of Americans*, the oppositions 'dependent-independent' / 'dependent-independent' and 'attacking-resisting' / 'resisting-attacking' stem from traditionally gender-related poles Stein, however, combines them to undermine their gender specificity As the French Feminists have shown, dualistic poles like these are usually ascribed to either men or women In terms of the early twentieth century, this would assign the positive poles, 'independence' and 'attacking', to men, while women were culturally considered 'resisting' and 'dependent', even clinging and smothering as the Dijkstra examples show Stein, however, effectively muddies this gender picture Not only are her types a combination of the two quantities, their resisting is often considered as a kind of attacking It is a paradox which strangely makes sense, or for which, put differently,

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9 Interestingly DeKoven consequently claims to refuse to give readings' or interpretations of Stein s work in the experimental period she discusses (DeKoven 1983 xv)

the reader is invited to create a sense Resisting maybe in a Nietzschean way could be a devious, careful method of attacking others, whereas independence could be masking a very basic dependence on others Because she combines what according to culture should remain a definite opposite, Stein is emptying the concepts of meaning, and inviting the reader to develop new concepts and a new way of considering the individual Because the poles of the scale have collapsed, one can no longer be a 'real man' or a 'real woman' The masculine pole could be an indication of femininity and vice versa Coming from a lesbian writer this seems to be a very potent form of revenge on the culture which kept Stein out of the mainstream, and made Toklas a 'companion' in the handbooks for years to come

But what needs to be remembered above all is the combination of Stein's semantic slipperiness with a very oral-sounding conversational narrator Meaning can be derived but is radically tied to context, so that the basic Steinian vocabulary would have to be presented with a history of its usage in context This is not the association of words caused by Joyce's perpetual puns but shifts in meaning as context shifts for the helpless dictionary-less oral speaker The confusion and revolutionary impact lies in the co-presence of so many different contexts and meanings, and in this verbal generosity Stein resembles Richardson Every statement concerning a word is equally important, deserving of inclusion, and Stein rejects the evolution towards a static, defined conclusion preferring to go on talking

3 Plot and Characterization

In the traditional novel, character description is inextricably linked to plot Consequently, Stein's need to really describe 'what is existing' must result in a radical rejection of plot It is a situation not so far removed from Richardson's perpetual sliding away from a strong plot line in her presentation of Miriam's being Equally, Stein's new system of character description is combined with the notion of a stable consciousness, reminiscent of Dorothy Richardson's stable centre Nobody in *The Making of Americans* or the two 'autobiographies' ever really changes

In *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* the 'characters' are Stein's fellow modernists, famous painters and writers Stein's clear self-promotional intention in writing these more traditional narratives prevent her from alienating the essential audience The main plot lines of the two autobiographies, the growth of a modernist coterie around

Stein, and the story of their post-fame trip to the US, however, are consistently undermined by the many sub-plots and small narratives which are associatively linked Thus, small vignettes and anecdotes reduce the *history* of this radical combative artistic movement into a harmless, well-meaning coterie of charming eccentrics The anecdotes told by a talky Stein-narrator, concerning Epstein and his wife, the succession of servants to the Stein-Toklas household, the many people they meet during their American trip, are all thrilling stories detracting our attention from the main plot line Again despite Stein's own ideological hang-ups concerning this modernist movement, these books lead to interesting insights on identity The portraits of Matisse, Braque, Picasso, Marie Laurencin, Guillaume Apollinaire are often described mainly by way of short anecdotes in which one of their typical traits is synecdochically raised to signify their whole person in a method very reminiscent of *The Making of Americans* [10] Matisse, for example is characterized by way of paradox

> Matisse had an astonishing virility that always gave one an extraordinary pleasure when one had not seen him for some time But there was not much feeling of life in this virility Madame Matisse was very different, there was a very profound feeling of life in her for any one who knew her (ABT, 42)

Marie Laurencin's story moves from a stability through emotional upheaval to stability When first in the Steins' atelier, she proclaims with certainty 'I prefer portraits and that is of course quite natural, as I myself am a Clouet' (ABT, 68) She is so certain of her own identity that she can tell the story of her life to Gertrude, even though (the hesitation is Stein's) she is an illegitimate child At the death of her mother, Marie Laurencin loses 'all sense of stability' (ABT, 69) stops seeing Apollinaire, marries disastrously, only to return to normal life with a divorce and Armistice,'at home once more in the world' (ABT, 70) Identity seems restored, as she and her new lover Eric Satie are 'both Normans and so proud and happy about it' (ABT 70) The small portrait ends on the key word 'strange', concerning her portraiture at the time When Marie Laurencin crops up in *Everybody's Autobiography*, she is again described in terms of internal stability, and self-knowledge 'Marie Laurencin is always Marie Laurencin' (EA, 21) Likewise, Apollinaire is the likeable, talented but tragic young artist, the War hero who dies on

10 In the earlier 'history characters had been suggested by their way of eating drinking washing or thinking about death characteristics which had been elevated to metaphorically represent their essential 'being'

Armistice day, tragically mistaking the French chanting 'a bas Guillaume' (down with Kaiser Wilhelm) for his own name (ABT 67) Much later on, Hemingway is defined only in terms of his career, whereas other artists receive very scant attention indeed (ABT, 230)

> Then there was McAlmon McAlmon had one quality that appealed to Gertrude Stein, abundance, he could go on writing but she complained that it was dull
> There was also Glenway Westcott but Glenway Westcott at no time interested Gertrude Stein He has a certain syrup but it does not pour (ABT, 236)

Contrast again, as syrup which doesn't pour meets dull abundance Stein in fact interprets her fellow artists' lives in this autobiography very aggressively She treats them very much like her 'Americans', searching for a basic metaphor for their 'being' The difference of course is that these are historical figures Picasso, Braque and otherswere to return fire autobiographically in *transition* (Testimony Against Gertrude Stein, 1935) [11]

In *The Making of Americans* Stein regularly 'characterizes' people by passing through the stages of their life, refusing any suggestion that plot could affect character

> This one was then once a very little one, a baby and then a little one and then a young girl and then a woman and then older and then later there was an ending to her and that was the history of this one
> This one always then was the same one, sometimes she was bigger than at other times sometimes she was fatter, sometimes she was sicker, sometimes she had children around her, always she was held together to be one, to be a whole one by the skin of her, always she was of the independent dependent kind of them always this was all the history of her (MA, 386)

Not only does this person never essentially change The events and causality which to us differentiate one life from another, which constitute the biography, are no match for the characters' self-belief

Frequently, Stein omits to indicate the gender of the protagonists in her stories, another movement away from plot towards the pure presentation-description of the later portraits With subjects described as 'one', a paragraph of description can pass

11 We are offered Stein s reaction to the latter in *Everybody s Autobiography* where she denies that Braque could have written the text since it was written in English a language he didn't speak

before the attentive reader can work out whether the description concerns a man or a woman Not distinguishing between rich, poor, male or female, Stein's classification is completely democratic and unsexist However, another effect is that all the tags which hold our attention as readers and allow us to follow and actually remember a story have been left out We soon forget that this history concerns a merchant whose daughter Julia makes an unsuccessful marriage [12] Plot, grammar and memory here show how closely intertwined they really are We only know it concerns a 'one' and another 'one' who are being described in their present existence The metaphoric elements of grammar - describing people as merchants or daughters - have been left out favouring only the deictics, this 'one' or that 'one' Deictics are highly successful in spoken language, where they offer a shortcut to indicate a certain person whom speaker and listener can see They are unsuccessful in written language where reader and writer are physically apart and have no situation in common Then the writer is reduced to resorting to metaphor to indicate the 'one', i e the one that is a merchant and has a daughter, and can far less avoid the ideology that comes in with metaphor The deictics in spoken language allow it to be plausibly less burdened by metaphor and ideology Consequently, oral language can be used to attempt a more liberating, politically avant-gardist approach Stein's highly oral-sounding style here combines with her avant-gardist political message as an expatriate, and as a lesbian outside of the traditional plot The oral style supports her attempt at a totally novel epistemology a new way of looking at reality, to be transferred to the feeling of listeners not readers The democracy and sense for equality in Stein's 'system' means that spinsters, servants, seamstresses, and the Herslands' poor neighbours, all the people traditionally absent from the centre of the text, are here strongly represented, even superseding the Herslands' history Similarly, the story of two cousins falling out largely rejects plot, to become almost unintelligible The cousins are not characterized, are not given a definite function in the plot, and are, once more, mainly genderless The story is centered on another cousin, whom we do know to be a woman, and it is meant to explain her type of 'soft resisting' being

12 Frequently in *Everybody s Autobiography* Stein claims to have dealt with a topic in *The Making of Americans* which does not necessarily take on the importance she has assigned to it in the later work like the family history which soon fades away

> Once some one, a young cousin, this one I am describing was then coming to the beginning of the middle living in this one, once a young cousin told this one, the cousin was very fond of this one, that the cousin never wanted to be eating dinner at the house of another one another cousin of this one, that he liked very much indeed being with his cousin but he did not like it at all for a place to be dining, this was then all that was said just then Later then the first cousin the one that said this to the one I have been describing, asked this cousin who had just come to be engaged to be married then to come and take dinner with him This one then the cousin asked to dine by the other cousin of the one I am describing happened to mention to the one I am describing that he was going to be dining next week with this cousin This one I am now describing had then completely inside this one an injured feeling for this one that was going to be dining with the other one that this one should be going to be dining with the other one when the other one would not dine with that one because it was not a pleasant thing and so this one I am describing told the one going to be dining with the other one what that one had said about dining with him Then of course this one would not dine with the other one (MA, 561)

It is a confusing story, and Stein cannot completely avoid using gender indications we know that one cousin is a woman one a man We find it hard, however to figure out who is telling what The lack of efficient plot indications and the reliance on deictics make this into a typically oral story, admittedly by an inefficient narrator In life we all know and have told similar, complex stories to strangers concerning family feuds between aunts, uncles and cousins But there is a clear refusal to transpose this kind of anecdote into a properly written story 'This one' 'that one' or '[t]he one I am describing' does very well in an oral situation, but readers are not only forced to make up for the lack of a context They are also made to realize how these banal, day to day unheroic stories have no space in the written context, but belong to everyday conversation where gossip and talk subvert the ideology of what is significant what should be written down Generally considered 'uninteresting' and therefore unfit for textual processing, women's stories and anecdotes are typically spoken Moreover the sheer confusion actually suggests the subversiveness of speech already seen in Richardson's *Pilgrimage* By repeating speech in a mode with a different rules, Stein effectively destroys the purpose of the written text Readers of *The Making of Americans* can very well imagine the voice of this narrator droning on Frequently however, they are forced to question the point of reading this text at all

Another aspect of plot rejection characteristic of this narrator is her refusal to distinguish between important elements in a person's life and the trivial ones For almost a page and a half David Hersland's friends are discussed The narrator restricts herself to mentioning how sometimes he was with one and sometimes with

several close friends But we do not receive the expected division between important friends and unimportant acquaintances until we get the feeling that they basically all served the same purpose

> Sometimes he was with more than four Sometimes he was with five Sometimes he was with more than five
> When he was in between not being any longer a quite a young one and being one not being an older one, when he was at the ending of the beginning of being living he was sometimes with three (MA, 855)

With the amount of space and time devoted to these friends one would expect that informatively too this is an important paragraph But Stein again perversely chooses to focus on the continuation of people's lives than on indicating what information about Hersland is important In a similar way we receive more information about the people living with the Herslands than some characters from the Hersland family we find out relatively less about Mrs Hersland than about her friend Madeleine Wyman And the friends and acquaintances of Julia Hersland in later life form one long enumeration over several pages (MA, 702-705) This democracy of narration ensures that Stein radically undermines the ideology of plot within narration Plot intends to separate the important elements from the less important, the heroes from flat, background characters Stein's text, however, does not assume that servants must be background characters and therefore 'flat' (MA 186-187) In this text the readers are consequently at a loss, unable to empathize because they receive no clear indications of importance All elements in reality seem to vie for space, and are to the oral narrator, equally worth the precious time devoted to their discussion

Briefly, Stein offers a potential reason for her discussion of so many women

> I like to tell it better in a woman the kind of nature a certain kind of men and women have in living, I like to tell about it better in a woman because it is clearer in her and I know it better, a little not very much better One can see it in her sooner a little, not very much sooner, one can see it as simpler, things show more nicely separated in her and it is therefore easier to make it clear in a description of her (MA 205-206)

The suggestion is that women are less tainted by ideology, perhaps because of their relatively low status within patriarchy, and that their characters are somehow a purer mixture 'they have less in the conditions of their living to make the natures in them mix together with the bottom nature of them to make a whole of them than

most men have it then in them' (MA, 141) Stein's system does not use the male gender as the norm and cloaks women and the poor under the same general indications The spinster sisters Cecilia and Lillian Rosenhagen are explicitly presented contrary to the general early twentieth century feeling towards the 'surplus' women They are 'different' from each other, by no means predetermined because of their unmarried status Likewise, the reasons for their unmarried state are manifold and subtle the subtle difference between to come to want to marry and to want to marry

> Cecilia Rosenhagen was very different from her sister Lillian She had in her anxious feeling as the bottom and the whole of her being No man wanted her to marry him It was different with her from her sister Lillian it was for a different reason Cecilia Rosenhagen had in her anxious being as the bottom and the whole of her being In her, anxious being was always in her excited feeling any one who saw her knew this in her, she always had a new woman friend to pity her and to commence with her, she never had any man who wanted to take care of her or marry her It was different in her from her sister Lillian, neither of them ever came to marrying
> Cecilia Rosenhagen was a true spinster Lillian Rosenhagen was not married because nobody had came (sic) to want her enough to take her These two were very different in nature
> There is every kind of being in women who have it in common to have a spinster nature Later there will be much discussing of this spinster nature Now it is enough to know that Cecilia Rosenhagen had it in her (MA, 199)

Stein defends the individuality of spinsters, women who are by society classed together due to their lack of a husband At the same time she talks about a 'spinster nature', hinting that their common situation does affect all these women, however different at heart they may be

However, democracy, anti-sexism, avoidance of ideology and oral chattiness causes Stein's text to blossom out of control Here are more of Stein's programmatic interruptions for her text

> Sometime and that will be a great thing there will be a history of each one, of the bottom nature of each one and the mixing of different being or kinds of being with the bottom nature and the way it comes out in her living
> anyone can see then by looking hard at any one living near them that a history of every one must be a long one (MA, 182-183)
> There will be here then written the complete history of every one Martha Hersland ever came to know in her living the fundamental character of every one, the bottom natures in them, the other natures in them, the

> mixtures in them, the strength and weakness of everything they have inside them (MA, 377)

Lucky readers we are that she does not quite fulfill her plan (cfr another promise of a 'history' MA, 179-180) But these aims hang together with a major reworking of the ideology of the novel She stresses that everybody is allowed as much time to be hero of their own stories, that everybody has a story to be told 'They are it they live it and sometime I know it They are it, they live it, sometime they show it sometime I understand it and now I will tell it the way I see it' (MA, 346)

Significantly, Stein states in one of her *Lectures in America*.'Narrative is a problem to me I worry about it a good deal these days ' (Stein 1988_C, 232) Prose and plot do not address the intensity of existence, and Stein ends the lecture on her intention to turn prose into poetry As she formulates it, 'the noun must be replaced not by inner balance [part of her previous characterization of traditional prose] but by the thing in itself ' (Stein 1988_C, 246) Once again, we see the rejection of plot, in favour of the performance of reality Similarly, Stein's rejection of the traditional realist plot means that she can dispense with the recognition of Martha as only an injured wife, but instead can attempt to present the being of Martha to us As in *Pilgrimage* Stein characters in *The Making of Americans* can have any event happening to them Their nature and being has not been reduced to the role which they are going to play in a future plot A traditional Martha would already have the overtones introduced with her which would explain why the adultery plot happened to her and why she reacted in a particular way This deterministic movement is inherent in the nature of plot of revelationary realism, which has reduced women to pawns in a plot of marriage It ignores the confusion we experience with everybody we meet, the opacity, the resistance to transparence of a person in our presence This (irritating) feeling of basic originality in the being of everyone is one of the acutest conclusions to be drawn from *The Making of Americans* Even the Stein classification is constantly being resisted, as she concedes many times herself

Significantly, however, this was the third time that Stein attempted material which was at heart autobiographical This suggests the conclusion that precisely the choice of this autobiographical material resulted in a rejection of plot which would have reduced the autobiographical self to one function in the plot of the eternal triangle In *Q E D*, she had attempted a 'scientific' approach, perhaps to exorcise the

material In *The Making of Americans* she has realized that the plot will always hijack the characters The only alternative is to focus on character, to front Martha's inevitable mysteries - as we can never really grasp those we know - and moreover to present her via an oral narrator, thereby avoiding that the authority of the writing author should 'kill' the being of the character Significantly, to avoid the ideological trappings of the Victorian narrator, Stein chooses a much older more oral-based method of narration

4 Alienation for the female speaking subject

Like the power-infested stories of *The Making of Americans*, there are many scenes in the autobiographies where Stein the character is shown as having the upper hand in a conversation, correctly assessing a situation, or struggling with another talker On the other hand, Stein's version of the quarrel with Leo over her writership shows how a woman in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century would find the speaking situation and her relative powerlessness pertinent, unavoidably irritating or frightening (EA, 59-61) Stein consequently needed to present herself as a talker in talkative autobiographies establishing her actual presence in an oral situation, to avoid the relative absence of her silence

Amid the huge mass of statements and restatements in *The Making of Americans* there are relatively few real narratives However most of these fairly unimportant anecdotes concern the power of speech and writing A young Martha Hersland is seen throwing her umbrella in the mud because nobody is listening to her The little story reads like a parable and is indeed briefly introduced as typical of Martha when young A powerless speaker, young Martha repeats her threat of throwing the umbrella in the mud with increasing despair, since there is no one to contradict her or even listen Both Speech Act Theory and Rhetorics teach us that a statement is 'grammatically' (situationally) invalid if uttered under the wrong circumstances Launching an oral challenge in the complete absence of listeners is functional misuse of the language, which for Martha results in her 'bitterness' and despair and she throws the umbrella in the mud

> This one, and the one I am now beginning describing is Martha Hersland and this is a little story of the acting in her of her being in her very young living this one was a very little one then and she was running and she was in the street and it was a muddy one and she had an umbrella that she was dragging and she was crying "I will throw the umbrella in the mud," she was saying she was very little then, she was just beginning her

> schooling, "I will throw the umbrella in the mud" she said and no one was near her and she was dragging the umbrella and bitterness possessed her "I will throw the umbrella in the mud" she was saying and nobody heard her, the others had run ahead to get home and they had left her, "I will throw the umbrella in the mud," and there was desperate anger in her, "I have throwed the umbrella in the mud" burst from her, she had thrown the umbrella in the mud and that was the end of it all in her She had thrown the umbrella in the mud and no one heard her as it burst from her, "I have throwed the umbrella in the mud," it was the end of all that to her (MA, 388)

Martha's comic predicament ends in complete despair, since no one even hears that the threat has been fulfilled, and we get the picture of a desperate (female) child willing to be heard 'As I was saying Martha was throwing the umbrella in the mud with angry feeling as she was telling and nobody was hearing' (MA, 389) Interesting, however, is reader reaction to the sudden arrival of a compact piece of narrative Significantly, our attention receives a sudden boost, gripped by the narrative At last, our need for efficiency in writing is gratified The result is that many critics have mentioned the umbrella scene, and perhaps increased its importance beyond the paragraph that Stein decides to devote to it in a 900-page book For Stein ultimately tricks us, when she ends the story by affirming that the story gives us no further indication of the category we are to assign to Martha

Martha's adolescence, moreover, seems to take off with a shocking realization of patriarchal power, when she sees a man hitting a woman with an umbrella (MA, 414, 424)

> This was the way she was then when one day when she was alone in another part of the town where she had gone to take a lesson in singing she saw a man hit a woman with an umbrella, and the woman had a red face partly in anger and partly in asking and the man wanted the woman to know then that he wanted her to leave him alone then in a public street where people were passing and Martha saw this and this man was for her the ending of the living I have been describing that she had been living She would go to college, she knew it then and understand everything and know the meaning of the living and the feeling in men and in women (MA, 424-425)

In a sense these two moments of realization, both centered around an umbrella - as in *Everybody's Autobiography*, where a useless wooden umbrella is Miss Hennessy's only symbol of identity - form an entry into the symbolic world of language different from the Lacanian model Instead it is a conversational-female model as it were,

with a powerless Martha discovering that, talk as she may, if there is no one prepared to listen to her, her talk is pointless Lacan does not actually address the fact that the entry into language he envisages is entry into an oral system, where the male child finds himself listened to while the female child finds herself in a void In the second anecdote a man enforces silence on a woman by beating her, for Martha a sudden shocking recognition of her inferior status as a woman This is an element of power ignored in the psychoanalytic structure of Lacan He describes how the man-child responds to the authority of the father with acquiescence and rebellion, but accepts that the female child merely acquiesces and at most rebels like Nietzschean Untermenschen, by imaginary transference and allegiance The discovery by the adolescent girl that her self-love and self-importance is an illusion is a major psychological shock, and for Martha Hersland too it occurs in the oral sphere

Another amusing anecdote is narrated by Fanny Hissen's father when she writes him for advice on whether to attend a meeting as demanded by her husband

> "My dear child There was once a priest, a good man Once a member of his church came to him and said I have been thinking can I do this thing, can I go to a barber's shop and get shaved on a Sunday morning, is it wrong for me to do this thing The priest said, yes he must forbid it to him, he must not go to a barber's shop on a Sunday morning and get a man to shave him, it was wrong for him to do this thing it would be a sin in him Two Sundays after the man met his priest coming out of a shop shaved all fresh and clean But how is this, the man said to him, you told me that it was forbidden, Ah! said the priest to him, that was right, I told you I must forbid you to go Sunday morning to a shop and get some one to shave you, that it would be a sin for you to do this thing, but don't you see I did not do any asking " (MA, 62)

Even when Fanny Hissen's father writes, he sounds as if he speaks Again the anecdote concerns power, here the priest's power to forbid on religious grounds As soon as permission has been asked and the priest speaks the forbidding words, the man is forced to listen and obey The sting in the anecdote concerns the priest, who is clever enough to omit asking permission and to keep his trespass in the silent sphere A similar anecdote concerns a father and his son on the topic of catching butterflies Stein narrates how the father persuaded the son to stop his hobby of butterfly collecting because it was wrong to kill animals, and then the next morning perversely presented his son's collection with a butterfly he had caught himself

> The boy went to bed then and then the father when he got up in the early morning saw a wonderfully beautiful moth in the room and he caught him and he killed him and he pinned him and he woke up his son then and showed it to him and he said to him "see what a good father I am to have caught and killed this one " the boy was all mixed up inside him and then he said he would go on with his collecting and that was all there was then of discussing (MA, 489-490)

Again a figure of authority shows himself unaccountably hypocritical Again the whole story boils down to the power structure within conversation To assert his power, the patriarchal father must convince the boy that collecting butterflies is wrong He can then show his even greater power as an omniscient God/father by circumventing his own loudly pronounced edict The boy draws the only logical conclusion - that the matter was not about butterflies at all - and goes on collecting 'and that was all there was then of discussing' Like Richardson, Stein is acutely aware of the agonistic nature of conversation in which one interlocutor must necessarily have the upper hand Although Stein's more confident narrator can afford to treat the subject more lightly than Miriam Henderson we nevertheless are presented in both explicit autobiographies with scene after scene of the Stein persona involved in the battle of conversation She is seen telling stories to her immediate audience sparring with interlocutors being witty or 'winning' a discussion

5 Stein's Perverse Textuality

Stein's modernist texts disrupt easy reading forcing the reader to work hard perhaps even to put a finger on the text or to verbalize while reading Judy Grahn's perceptive essays, *Really Reading Gertrude Stein*, discuss the experiences of so many Stein readers

> Let's suppose you've heard so much of her, you think you ought to take her on, or perhaps you have tried in the past and now again you plow right into something long and tasty looking, something that looks like a regular novel, such as *The Making of Americans* trying to read it in a dutiful forthright sincere manner
> At first, while you are perhaps puzzled at the odd frames of reference, the elliptical sentences that swirl back upon themselves, you are also delighted with the psychological insights Then gradually the interest wanes as you feel annoyance with the enveloping loops of repetition, your readings become tedious, then you admit to a burrowing rage at the lack of resolution, the refusal of the stories to have orgasmic conclusion the endless tickling of the brain's senses with no fusion of progression (Grahn 1989, 4)

Marianne DeKoven agrees and finds comparing Stein with other modernists, that Stein is the most extreme in the disruptive effect of her text on the act of reading

> Woolf, Beckett, Barthelme, even Burroughs, and certainly Joyce, with the monumental exception of *Finnegans Wake*, do not generally obstruct normal reading as they do above Stein, throughout her long experimental period, almost always does (DeKoven 1983, 5)

Interestingly, initial readers' letters to Stein testify to this bewilderment, so that Stein's persistence is quite significant When the manuscript of *Three Lives* was to be published by the Grafton Press at Stein's expense, the now familiar anecdote about Stein's grammar surfaces in a letter by F H Hitchcock concerning this 'very peculiar book' 'My proof-readers report that there are some pretty bad slips in grammar, probably caused in the type-writing' (from letters by F H Hitchcock dated April 9, 1909 and January 16, 1909 respectively, Gallup 1979 44 42) Even Stein's tutor William James is seen cautiously backing out 'You know (?) how hard it is for me to read novels Well, I read 30 or 40 pages, and said "this is a fine new kind of realism - Gertrude Stein is great! I will go at it carefully when just the right mood comes "' (from a letter by William James, dated May 25, 1910, Gallup 1979, 50) Another friend, Alice Woods Ullman confesses to the need to read slowly 'at a snail's pace, reading & re-reading as I go' (from a letter by Alice Woods Ullman, dated November 30, 1910, Gallup 1979, 51) Ullman is in fact forced to read in a way of which Richardson would approve, the absence of punctuation furthering a real, slow contact with the text Stein's discussion of orality and literacy indeed involves this paradox much of her text is more accessible when read out loud than interpreted silently There is a strong oral presence, and Stein's work settles itself explicitly on the boundary between writing a text and speaking a 'text' [13] In *The Making of Americans* and the two 'straight' autobiographies Stein's style is definitely that of a speaker She is sloppy about punctuation and about indicating distinctions between direct and indirect speech She addresses the audience and makes jokes which only work on an oral level This is a narrator who regularly returns to the now-moment of the speaking situation before continuing with the story 'I will tell the story as I afterwards learnt it but now I must find Fernande and propose to her to take french lessons from her' (ABT, 24) or 'Just at present and that is now we have a Polish

13 Lloyd Lewis s book *Oscar Wilde Discovers America* was reviewed by Gertrude Stein in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* for August 8 1936 His thanking letter mentions 'Your review meant more to me than all the other reviews for it was like hearing you talk (from a letter by Lloyd Lewis dated June 26 1936 Gallup 1979 317)

servant' and 'Muriel Draper has just been here ' (EA 134-162) She addresses the audience 'And now I will tell you of how two americans happened to be in the heart of an art movement of which the outside world at that time knew nothing' (ABT, 33), and asks rhetorical questions 'Who was there We were there and Salmon ' (ABT, 117), with a generous assortment of 'Well anyway Well' (e g EA, 1) In fact both autobiographies are collections of anecdotes and conversations, strung together on a loose, leisurely structure 'Alice' tells the history of Mme Matisse's guitar (ABT, 45), or anecdotes about Roché (ABT, 50) Pages 106-107 are exemplary 'But to return to Uhde He, so the legend said, There were many stories about Manolo They told the story of how He once was hard up He once was left But Uhde Uhde one Saturday evening ' (ABT, 106-107) Long conversations between Stein and her friends are rendered almost without authorial intervention (e g the conversation that returns Picasso to his painting EA, 26) In fact, this is what interests Stein in *Everybody's Autobiography* 'One of the things that interested me most is all the conversations I had after I wrote The Autobiography' (EA 29) Carl Van Vechten's dislike of drunkards is 'talked out' in the following way 'O that's it said Carl, well I cant, and I said Oh Carl and he said yes I know but I cant' (EA, 52) The readers of this text receive the distinct impression of eavesdropping on a speech situation The narrator of *Americans* too is continuously announcing new beginnings to her text, and addressing us as listeners

> The father David Hersland we cannot count for us, He as you shall hear in the history of him, But now to make again a beginning It is hard on children when the father has queer ways in him Mr Hersland as I have been often saying And now to come back to the queer ways of him As I was saying And then as I was saying he was a big man Fanny Hissen who as I have often been saying (MA, 48-50)

In fact, the 'as I was saying's' and 'to begin again's' in the text are probably among the phrases Stein uses the most Equally, she conveys the emphasis of a speaker rather than of a writer 'and always always always, there are the same kinds of them and there are very very very many men and very very very many women always existing' (MA, 308) Stein's word order too is that of a speaker Often we find we cannot understand the grammar of her sentences until we read them out loud, e g 'This then is a personal ideal, that that that one has for daily living ' (MA, 645) Stein's neglect of punctuation, the convention used by print to represent pauses in speech and help understanding, means that readers are forced to supply their own voice in order to understand the sentence Like an exasperating speaker, the

narrator leads herself into diversions, such as the discussions on walking and getting tired during a walk (MA, 40), on 'eating' (MA, 120-122), or circuses (MA, 385) In *The Making of Americans* a 'talking' Stein is frequently vague, abstract, ambiguous or downright contradictory in her statements about characters She calls one of the four grandfathers a 'decent well-meaning faithful good-enough ordinary man' (MA, 6) Or, here is David Hersland being sad

> David Hersland was not sad enough and he was liking being a sad one and he was not liking being a sad one He was sad enough and he was certainly wanting then to be a sad one he was certainly then not wanting to be one being a sad one (MA, 840)

Stein simply piles on the contradictions, clearly flouting the ideal of clarity in a text Or take this for abstraction 'Ways of being living is something some are knowing are existing and some are not knowing are existing' (MA 842) Stein often sounds like one of the Greek sophists, a language twister, a setter of oral problems, involved in a contest with her audience, forcing them to try and make sense of it She reminds of the verbal competitions between poets, where the most outrageous, testing or paradoxical way of speaking would carry the prize As readers we are constantly stretched, constantly challenged to see if we are clever enough to make sense of Stein's riddles

Despite this oral style, however, Stein's experimentalism is only possible with written texts Moreover, pushing against the boundaries even of written text it demands highly sophisticated readers Memory is still a limitation, even though it has been extended by the written medium We in fact witness a strange situation Stein's experimental work would be impossible as an oral entity, while it neither follows the linguistic and generic rules of textuality The contention in this chapter is that Stein's difficult and obscure texts are subversive of textuality, because they introduce aspects pertaining to the oral sphere, thus seriously undermining what are the basic inherent tendencies of a text *The Making of Americans*, for instance, is paradoxically an 'oral' text, treating readers and their memory as if they are listeners Typically, certain incidents and characteristics return again and again, to cite examples from the first quarter of the text the Herslands' living among the poor people of Gossols for instance (MA, 35, 53, 55 85, 89, 90, 94-97, 112, 125, 131, 170, 180, 265), the relative unimportance of Mrs Hersland to her husband (MA, 45, 87, 114, 124, 130, 134, 159), the feelings of Mary Maxworthing for Mabel (MA, 205-

215), the ever crying grandmother Hissen (MA, 58, 61, 63, 68), David Hersland's choice of Fanny Hissen for a wife (MA, 43, 66 70, 72 74), and the 'nature' and 'queerness' of women (MA, 186, 182, 170-171, 172, 173, 176-177, 178-179, 194) These features and stock characteristics are repeated over a long period of time so that they become part of the listeners' memory, almost in the same way that oral lore becomes accepted and unchallenged by oral societies because it is in their communal memory With her sophisticated modernist reader audience, Stein is as it were recreating the passive epistemological conservatism of an oral audience For a traditional, written narrator, this would be impossible The efficiency rules of a written text require few repetitions Breaking this rule suggests that the presumed author is perversely intending the opposite effect The sheer copiousness or, alternatively, verboseness of Stein's narrator is completely alien to the written text, and suggests a leisurely oral narrator who keeps in mind her audience's memory limitations Faced with this onslaught on their memory, the audience must remain passive, trusting in the narrator, who is orally but not textually efficient

More importantly, she is also a narrator refusing to conclude, to finalize a thesis

> Each one in a family then and every family of them together then always lived on in their daily living there was a husband or a father to them or there was none, there was a mother or a wife to them or there was none, there were more sons or less of them, there were more daughters or less of them, no one ever asked any such question of them, (MA, 96)

Like Richardson, Stein situated herself in between written and spoken English Like Richardson, she was in persistent, close contact with other languages But Stein's situation, an English-speaking exiled American in the midst of a French-speaking culture, was more radical Here, the sentence 'I write for myself and strangers' from *The Making of Americans* takes on a new dimension (MA, 289) The notion of the public comes up in connection with Stein's great divide between the spoken French she lives in and the written English she deals in 'Alice' reports .

> When I first knew Gertrude Stein in Paris I was surprised never to see a french book on her table, although there were always plenty of english ones, there were even no french newspapers But do you never read french I as well as many other people asked her No, she replied, you see I feel with my eyes and it does not make any difference to me what language I hear, I don't hear language, I hear tones of voice and rhythms, but with my eyes I see words and sentences and there is for me only one language and that is english One of the things that I have liked all these years is to

> be surrounded by people who know no english It has left me more intensely alone with my eyes and my english I do not know if it would have been possible to have english be so all in all to me otherwise And they none of them could read a word I wrote most of them did not even know that I did write No, I like living with so very many people and being all alone with english and myself (ABT, 77-78)

The languages here intertwine with the orality-literacy poles On the one hand, the people around Stein cannot threaten her with attacks on her avant-garde style Moreover, the lack of a spoken English also gives Stein a clear demarcation between the oral-aural French pole and her literate English In the one language Stein is illiterate in the other she is cushioned from the influences of the oral world leaving her in the almost linguistically sterile laboratory which Mina Loy suggests In a strange way, Stein's talky style when writing means that she must effect a clear demarcation between her oral audience in everyday life those who can affect her as a speaker, and her writerly audience, to whom she wants to be present as a strong, powerful writer-speaker

Early on in *Everybody's Autobiography*, a meeting with a young Egyptian while out on a walk in Paris is the beginning of an extended discussion which repeats this clear-cut separation between the oral and the written poles

> He said now in Egypt there was a written language and a spoken one but that many people his mother and father for example knew French better than they knew either although they the family had from the beginning of time been Egyptian Gradually we made it all clear to ourselves and to each other
> The Egyptians in the old days only had one language, that is to say everybody used only a little of any language in the ordinary life but when they were in love or talked to their horses or were moved or told tales then they spoke in an exalted and fanciful language that has now become a written language because now-a-days in talking they are not exalted any more and they use just ordinary language all the time and so they have forgotten the language of exalatation (sic) and that is now only written but never spoken
> That is very interesting I said now the English language I said has gone just the other way, they always tried to write like anybody talked and it is only comparatively lately that it is true that the written language knows that that is of no interest and cannot be done that is to write as anybody talks because what anybody talks because everybody talks as the newspapers and movies and radios tell them to talk the spoken language is no longer interesting and so gradually the written language says something and says it differently than the spoken language I was very much interested in what I said when I gradually said these things, and it is very important all this is just now So soon we will come to have a written

> language that is a thing apart in English If you begin one place you always end at another Let me tell you about my brother (EA, 4-5)

The topic of written and spoken languages is to be an important one, and lie at the heart of other issues It concerns alienation from and by one's language The notion of registers is introduced, everybody using 'only a little of any language' A fairly common occurrence in linguistic development, the hieratic register at the basis of scripted languages like Latin, classical Arabic and Sanskrit, is by Stein turned on its head, when she remarks in a Derridean sounding argument, that written English has gone the opposite way, aiming to resemble spoken language For the future she projects a written language which must distinguish itself from the spoken in order to be truly creative Again, Stein stresses the need for this radical distinction between the written and the spoken, and claims her alliance with the creative, written pole Most interestingly however this whole theory is expressed during a conversation, and the talky aspects of the passage are flaunted as if the conversation is re-enacted to us by a slightly breathless, animated interlocutor Moreover, the theories about spoken and written language actually come into being *as* they are talking, inspired by the conversation Stein stresses the gradual arrival of insight during this conversation 'Gradually we made it all clear to ourselves and to each other I was very much interested in what I said when I gradually said these things, and it is very important all this is just now' (EA, 4-5)

This discussion is framed by another story concerning Stein's brother Michael, who, like Leo and Gertrude, emigrated to France but later decides to return to America Michael needs access to a popular language surrounding him, to the same extent that Stein rejects this for herself as a writer

> [O]h he said you dont (sic) understand, he said I want to say in English to the man who brings the letters and does the gardening I want to say things to them and have them say it to me in American But Mike, I said, yes yes I know he said but I cant (sic) help it I must go and hear them say these things in American (EA, 5)

The quick succession of all these topics concerning the sharp divisions between the oral and the scripted indicate that via these amusing anecdotes Stein is developing an argument concerning her writing She opposes the affective complex associated with writing to the emotional baggage of speech what makes people read rather than talk to each other, as the French do in times of political unrest (EA, 77) There is

Michael's need to speak his mother tongue, as opposed to Stein's need to be removed from spoken English so that she can write her worrying modernistic texts in a speech vacuum On the other hand, there is her refusal to read French To enable her to write, the two spheres must obviously remain firmly separate Combined with Stein's struggles with her audience, first to be read and later to cope with the pressures of success, this suggests that Stein was aware of the great frontier for women between formal print and informal speech In fact, the whole issue of speech and literacy takes on a huge importance in her autobiographical writings

> In France they always read everything aloud they read more with their ears than with their eyes but in reading English we read more with our eyes than with our ears I am often wondering what is going to happen now I think what is going to happen is that a written language is going to be existing like it did in old civilizations where it is read with the eyes and then another language which only says what everybody knows and therefore is not really interesting which is read with the ears (EA, 8)

Stein decisively posits the liberating, creative aspects of the written language, while the oral language 'only says what everybody knows', stressing the conservatism of oral language (Ong 1991, 41-42) The crux of Stein's discussion of writing and speaking however, re-emerges in her address to one of her American audiences, and combines it with the popular topic, in *Everybody's Autobiography*, of the author's 'inside' and 'outside'

> I was almost going to talk this lecture and not write and read it because all the lectures that I have written and read in America have been printed and although possibly for you they might even being read be as if they had not been printed still there is something about what has been written having been printed which makes it no longer the property of the one who wrote it and therefore there is no more reason why the writer should say it out loud than anybody else and therefore one does not (Stein 1990, 148)

The printing of a written text removes it from the author's property, who can no longer embody it, and consequently it can be read out by anybody, made to be owned by anybody Having the property over a speech then is intensely connected with 'saying it out loud', performing the text, which is patently different from reading out loud

Likewise, the huge success of *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* caused a writing block because the public life of publicity and commercialism intervened, upsetting

the polarity between 'inside' and 'outside' which for Stein was the basis of her identity Two metaphors are central to Stein's concept of the self On the one hand, she is a self because surrounded by a 'sack' of skin, isolating her from others Recognition by her little dog, on the other hand, draws a border of another kind separating Stein from the flux of reality

> The thing is like this, it is all the question of identity It is all a question of the outside being outside and the inside being inside As long as the outside does not put a value on you it remains outside but when it does put a value on you then it gets inside or rather if the outside puts a value on you then all your inside gets to be outside (EA, 34)

Stein's success consequently is presented as an aggressive incursion by the world outside She describes the unsettling effect of her lecturing in the following manner

> I talked with them almost every afternoon the things I would naturally have been writing There is a bother about that you get more familiar with a thing when you say it than when you write it when you say it you repeat it when you write it you never do because when you write it is in you and when you say it they hear you After two weeks I wondered if I heard what I said or if I only heard them hearing what I said When I write I write and when I talk I talk and the two are not one, no not for any one and when they come near to being one, then the inside is not inside and the outside is not outside and I like the inside to be inside and the outside to be outside it makes it more necessary to be one (EA, 229)

Contradictorily as ever, Stein here indicates her knowledge of the writerly rule that prohibits repetition The confrontation with a present audience makes her feel as if she is losing control The writing pole, on the other hand, is closely connected with Stein's sense of identity The inside and the outside are firmly separate in a very visualist wish of Stein's, and she feels very present to herself and her message In this way, the break-up with Leo over her career as a writer is discussed completely in terms of reading, arguing and talking, with Gertrude's ultimate silence suggesting the resentfully quiet, alienated woman 'speaker' At first, she reports on the supportive relationship with her brother both reading and arguing together, with the word 'arguing' receiving a very positive meaning, indicative of their closeness The next anecdote, however, shockingly shows a different state of affairs 'according to Stieglitz I was not saying anything and he went away with the greatest admiration and said he had never known any woman well perhaps anybody to sit still so long without talking ' Stein's feminine reticence however, turns out to cover a more serious issue

> At any rate by that time I was writing and arguing was no longer to me really interesting Nothing needed defending and if it did it was no use defending it Anyway that was the beginning of my writing and by that time my brother had got to be very hard of hearing (EA, 56-57)

A number of pages later, Stein is telling the story to the poet Seabrooke, with many interruptions and diversions Stein starts to write, and the writing is again described as coming out of her essence

> As I say I was writing and well why not I was writing the way I was writing and it came to be the writing of The Making of Americans
> I was writing the way I was writing I did not show what I was doing to my brother, he looked at it and he did not say anything Why not Well there was nothing to say about it and really I had nothing to say about it Gradually he had something to say about it I did not hear him say it Slowly we were not saying anything about it that is we never had said anything about it
> Slowly and in a way it was not astonishing but slowly I was knowing that I was a genius and it was happening and I did not say anything but I was almost ready to begin to say something My brother began saying something and this is what he said
> He said it was not it it was I If I was not there to be there with what I did then what I did would not be what it was In other words if no one knew me actually then the things I did would not be what they were (EA, 59-60)

When Leo finally does recognize her new activity she does not initially hear him! His criticism is devastating Gertrude's work is too much an innocent outpouring of her personality to stand up on its own It is not art, because too naively autobiographical Interestingly, however, Stein's own admission has indicated that being there during the performance of a text is important, so that she may here be using her brother's remarks both to damn him and to point to an important aspect of her writing Stein's writing then, seems to be unavoidably autobiographical Indeed, it allows her a sense of identity separate from patriarchal influence being a 'genius', Stein's ebullient, celebratory metaphor for her strong sense of being, is achieved via the act of writing itself In this way, Stein too indicates the association of the act of writing with a woman's search for presence

This association of writing with identity is consequently undermined when Picasso announces he will give up painting to focus on poetry instead Slightly shocked, the Stein narrator notes a 'funny feeling' a reaction only explained later

> Things belong to you and writing belonged to me, there is no doubt about it writing belonged to me I know writing belongs to me, I am quite certain

> and no matter how certain you are about anything about anything belonging to you if you hear that somebody says it belongs to them it gives you a funny feeling You are certain but it does give you a funny feeling (EA, 6-7)

Stein's own sense of herself as primarily a writer intensely influences her identity In fact, the sheer weight of repetition in this passage - she affirms her ownership of writing five times - indicates that more of her identity is here threatened than she would care to consider [14]

Concurrent with her strongly asserted identity as a writer, Stein's narrators also surprisingly set themselves up in a major way as talkers and listeners A page and a half of *The Making of Americans* is devoted to the narrator talking, to people listening to her, and the way she 'listens' to other people and tells them what they are like

> Some are listening to me and I tell them then the being they have in them I tell them what they have what they have not in them, how it comes together how it does not come together in them how the being they have in them is important to them, Some make of themselves a new one by my telling them about the being in them and to very many then they are quite a new one and to some then they are not at all a new one, they are quite an old one Some like listening and later then they have a frightened feeling that I will influence them to be another one, This will be now much history of talking and listening I talk one way and listen one way and talk other ways and listen other ways and so probably does every one This is to be now very much description of talking and listening, (MA, 727-728 - emphasis mine)

The original passage is long, devoted by Stein to asserting and re-asserting her narrator as a talking self, a person who talks outside of the narrative scope of the text, in 'real' life The quotation stresses the way talk can be revealing Stein tells people how they are, on the one hand, and her own talking and listening adjusts itself to her feelings and her being at one particular moment

Both the speaking and writing modes of language, consequently, are major Steinian topics, sustained from *The Making of Americans* to the autobiographies

> I am beginning to like conversation, I used not to like conversing at all, and social living, and so going on and on I am needing always I am needing something to give to me completely successful diversion to give me enough

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14 Equally when Picasso shows her his manuscripts the Stein narrator subverts his new writing career by remarking how pictorial his writing really is (EA 8)

> stimulation to keep me completely going on being one going on living That is a description of some being in me, this is then some history of me So then I am beginning now to like conversation (MA, 662)

Conversation is a major issue in *The Making of Americans*, since we are witnessing nothing else but a sustained monologue of the narrator's 'telling' the readers about the family and all their possible acquaintances Concluding on Stein's clear-cut separation between 'telling it' and writing it and her discussion of her experiencing of the two modes of being, we must be mindful of the dictum she repeated several times 'I write for myself and strangers' (MA, 189) The quote indicates a profound awareness of one vital aspect of writing 'Writing is written', to paraphrase Stein's own lecture title, in the absence of one's audience (Stein 1974, 151-161), and as such is liberating for the woman writer The talky, very 'oral' sounding style of most of her writing, however, indicates Stein's paradoxical wish to combine the absence of a dangerous audience with the determined 'presence' of the woman author

6 The Radical Presence of the Speaker/Writer

Talking about the plays and portraits in his pamphlet on Gertrude Stein Michael J Hoffman mentions that there are 'many suggestions of Miss Stein in all these works - of her at work, seated in her chair, of her dogs and her place the place intrudes upon the consciousness but it does not therefore make the work autobiographical' (Hoffman, 39) In terms of the female modernist autobiography discussed here however, his statement is simplistic

Although *The Making of Americans* and the autobiographies are written, typed and even printed texts, the narrators pretend that hearers and narrators share the same context, both present simultaneously as would happen in a conversation Stein thus plays games with the traditional perspective on time in the novel, trying to uphold a simultaneity which cannot possibly be there Stein's much-discussed use of the Gerund and the Present Continuous Tense focuses this contemporaneity for the 'readers' In a sense we can say that a new grammar evolves to adjust itself to Stein's view on reality as a continuous flow of now-moments, as something which has to be experienced as present if it is to be experienced at all As a result the Gerunds pile up and we frequently read sentences like the following 'He was one sometimes needing to be doing some other thing when some one was being one teaching him then something' (MA 769) 'Being one teaching' renders a different kind of reality to being a teacher Stein's use of the Gerund points to the extent to

which even grammar expresses world view and ideology and favours status and finite notions like the title 'teacher' over a continuous activity

But the author-narrator is more emphatically present We virtually get a minute by minute account of how she is feeling at certain periods of her writing She is behaving like a talker With 'speakers' and 'hearers' both present, the speaker can consequently change the nature of this fictive conversation in the presence of the hearer An ordinary writer would have to rewrite, deleting previous passages in order to present a unified picture to the readers, hiding the situation of writing, pretending the text came into existence in its perfect completely authoritative shape The readers expect a carefully re-read, expurgated and clear message Instead, a wavering, changeable narrator attempts to express all her doubts and mood changes as she is writing She changes her mind, picks up on previous stories, frequently has to remind herself and her readers which way she is heading Because of all this doubtfulness, this unclear picture, readers forget what was previously said in the book, find it hard to concentrate on a single line of thought Obviously this also happened to the luckless proofreader for the present edition of *The Making of Americans*, where an abnormally large number of misprints remain Stein's book thus flies in the face of all the intentions behind the development of the writing technology, which is to classify, organize and preserve information, and to impose clarity through stasis

At one stage Stein promises to tell about the kinds of people there are, but feels that she has to wait for inspiration While she is waiting she talks about other matters, in effect letting the reader wait with her until she feels she has genuinely connected with the feeling

> Every one is not a whole one, now I am waiting a little for an inspiration about this thing to explain completely my feeling I will now soon be telling my feeling about men and women, I am writing everything as I am learning anything I am writing everything as I am learning anything as I am feeling anything in any one as being, as I am having a realization of any one, I am saying everything then as I am full up then with a thing with anything of any one (MA, 540)

She goes on to elucidate what she is certain of concerning these matters A little bit further, she feels she can try again

> I am not yet quite full up with the being in him Again I am beginning waiting Again I am beginning a little to feel him I am still hoping to be more certain in my feeling I am waiting and waiting I have not in me now any impatient feeling Pieces in being, whole ones in being words saying what I am wanting, words having existence in them to my feeling, Alfred Hersland and the being in him and the kind he was of men and women all these things will come soon to be more completely in me, that is certain (MA 541)

A similar thing happens concerning another set of characters, Lena, Maria, Hetty, Hortense, Martha and their ways of loving 'I am thinking I am not yet certain' (MA 575) Again we get no joy from the narrator who is still (!) thinking Her hesitations and diversions can be infuriating but indicate a determination not to touch upon a subject until the writer feels completely at one with it As the performer of people and topics rather than a writer then, she must wait for the perfect and only moment Stein's readers are being forced to wait with her rather than view the perfect end result presented in traditional writing

However, Stein is not in the situation of the writer attacked by Jacques Derrida, the author denying and hiding the fact of writing, pretending to speech Stein regularly predicts what she will be writing about next '[b]eing good then is a thing about which there will now be very much writing' (MA, 494) What we get instead then is a situation whereby the context of the writing situation is extended to that of the reading situation There is a merger of these contexts, since the reader is almost made to wait as long as the writer before seeing conclusions reached However, disheartened because her characters no longer feel present to her, Stein also describes the writing situation as intensely lonely, as the author tries to put herself in the position of one absent

> It is very hard for any one who is ever doing writing to be really realizing that very many are not doing thinking remembering It is a very hard thing then knowing what any one ever is seeing, feeling thinking I am all alone now and I have then an unreal lonesome feeling, it is like a little boy who was howling and they all rushed out to help him, I am all alone, he said, and all of a sudden it had scared him (MA, 518-519)

Paradoxically, the frustrating loneliness of the writer, isolated from readers and their context, is here avoided, because Stein-as-speaker complains of her loneliness as a writer to a present-absent audience Or she testifies that her vision is collapsing 'Every one to me just now is in pieces to me' (MA 520), and when she is wrong she does 'a great deal of suffering' (MA, 573) [15] Stein combines a wish for both ways of communication at the same time, the liberating aspects of written English combined with the emotional and supportive co-presence of the talker and her audience

Frequently the long passages circling again and again around the same topics seem to lead to a conclusion, to a greater certainty 'I am now almost all through with waiting I am now beginning to be free with the being of him inside me in my feeling' (MA, 518) Undoubtedly, the same idea will again be questioned and withdrawn as the novel proceeds, but then Stein is here a speaker at her clearest She develops ideas in speech Talking actually inspires the talker as she asserts in *Everybody's Autobiography* Indeed, writers, but surely also talkers often feel that the actual process of writing and conversation dominates the content of their communication The act of talking can inspire an increasingly brilliant conversation Conversely, our speech can continuously slide away from what was initially intended or what we thought could be articulated Stein's style refuses to hide this phenomenon, and in this way again perverts the purpose of the written text, which is to present, with however much difficulty we have achieved it, the final, perfect representation of our thoughts Stein is a talker, and consequently, we feel, a messy thinker As readers, we suffer from the same impotent irritations as those listeners waiting for an errant storyteller to come back to the point In fact the main issue in much of Stein's writing is the question of textual, and conversational, significance Stein seems to be the absolute prototype of the undisciplined talker, the female babbler It is hard to

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15 Stein s portraits of people are intended to realize' them When she feels she is losing touch with her subjects has been surprised by their actions or behaviour and may have to review the characters she characterizes this as having them in pieces an expression Richard Bridgman used for his discussion of her work, *Gertrude Stein in Pieces* (Bridgman 1970)

decide the value of her many contradictory pronouncements on grammar, sentences and paragraphs in the autobiographies and the lectures Her contradictions force us to supplement our own 'readings', which we immediately doubt for lack of authoritative statement Likewise, in reading these texts for sustained argument we worry about having 'missed' vital clues through absentmindedness or having misread The Steinian readers experience to a very large extent the uncertainties of the oral audience although they are in the opposite position rather than having no mnemonic clues to hold on to, they have too many to cope with At the height of the modernist crisis in literacy Gertrude Stein has managed to reduce textuality to the ephemerality of the voice

In *The Making of Americans* Stein discusses people from the point of view of their 'inside' and 'outside', thus starting a topic which continues with more emphasis in *Everybody's Autobiography*

> [S]he was to him never a thing outside him excepting when she was a kind of joke to him she was always to him inside him, she never had for him any importance for him in her being outside of him (MA, 148)

Frequently, David Hersland is thus shown as incorporating his family and servants into his own being, drawing the line of his personality beyond them Thus, family and servants are 'inside', acquaintances are 'outside' his own personality Inside-outside refer to the lines drawn by the consciousness to distinguish self from others But for the reader the line can seem extremely delicate Stein's character categories in *The Making of Americans*, combined with her style, at times become so complex that they threaten to melt into each other, at least in the mind of the readers The only thing preventing this blurring of characters is Stein's assertion of the separate individuality of a person as a definite but flimsy entity

> This one then, this one that is a whole one, a mushy mass of independent dependent being with a skin holding it together from flowing away from this one, holding it together to make of this a whole one, this one then is a real one, and always there are many living just like this one in their being, though each one of them is a whole one, separate and yet very resembling the one to the other one, and each one is an individual one to themselves and each one is a whole one (MA, 384 - emphasis mine)

Stein's individual is thus fluid, could easily resemble the mixtures in other people and melt into them Yet on the other hand this 'individual one' has a very intense

awareness of self because of the separating line that is the skin, because of bodily individuality The only boundary between 'inside' and 'outside' is our skin, surrounding us like a sack, which separates us and our consciousness from others When Stein then claims in *Everybody's Autobiography* that she is herself because her dog recognizes her, this is where she draws her own self-line at this moment

> [S]uddenly it was all different, what I did had a value that made people ready to pay, up to that time everything I did had a value because nobody was ready to pay It is funny about money And it is funny about identity You are you because your little dog knows you, but when your public knows you and does not want to pay for you and when your public knows you and does want to pay for you, you are not the same you (EA, 32)
> It was then I began to think about am I I because my little dog knows me (EA, 68)

Even more disturbing, Stein's 'inside' and her 'outside', her text, inevitably affect each other when writing In *The Making of Americans* the writer presents herself in the process of 'bearing' portraits, a situation of some discomfort We get more feedback of this kind of autobiography of writing, concerning Stein's troubles in describing the musician Arragon a friend of Alfred Hersland

> I am not content, I have not had it come out without pressing the description of Mr Arragon the musician It should come out of me without pressing without any straining in me to be pressing, I can be doing thinking to be helping I should not be doing any pressing and any straining, I have been doing a little it has not come to be a complete thing simply coming, it is to be then to rebegin to come out from me Always each thing must come out completely from me leaving me inside me just then gently empty, so pleasantly and weakly gently empty, that is a happy way to have it come out of me each one that is making itself in me, that is the only way it can come to be content for me in me, it can come out fairly quickly very slowly with a burst or gently, any way it feels a need of coming out of me, but being out of me I must be very pleasantly most gently, often weakly empty, this one then Mr Arragon is not so happily then out of me, (MA, 586)

Autobiography here again takes on a different meaning, since it is the writer in the act of being a writer which is expressed on the page The 'aute' in this case is performing herself when writing Stein's creative struggle with Mr Arragon takes on vocabulary that sounds remarkably like that of childbirth, 'pressing', 'straining', the description 'naturally' coming 'out' of her We are almost to imagine Stein physically filling up and emptying out as she writes as she feels herself close to the topic of her writing Pages later, the unlucky Mr Arragon is still 'inside' her, an assertion which

fuses together the describer and the topic of description It is a far cry from the distancing visualist, objectifying descriptions of the relationships between writer and 'object' of writing, and again follows Stein's assertion that she describes not the persons themselves but her experiencing of them It is an experience tightly bound up with 'realizing' them, in both meanings of the word This description of writing stresses the performance aspect The writer 'embodies' the writing, which involves the 'inside' of the self pressing 'out' another being Such physical intimacy with the object under discussion completely flies in the face of the medium of writing Stein's writing essentially involves an interconnectedness between the 'inside' and the 'outside', which necessarily makes every reading a rewriting, a performance of the text Objective description with an impersonal describer is out of the question here To her feeling Stein is indeed objective, in the sense that she attempts honestly and truthfully to render the experience of somebody or something within her Essentially, the text can never be finished, since it can only survive in its embodiment by the author as if she was enacting another being in conversation [16] Because of this too, the narrator of this text must keep herself autobiographically present in her text the being describing is just as important as the topic of description Stein indicates an awareness of this in *Everybody's Autobiography*, where she mentions her worries that her work wouldn't stand up on its own, but needs the presence of her personality 'It always did bother me that the American public were more interested in me than in my work' (EA, 37) and 'He said he wanted to see if I was as interesting as my book was' (EA, 51) Likewise the quarrel with Leo already discussed uncovers the same basic issue (EA 60) And in *The Making of Americans*, another description of Alfred Hersland gets interrupted by a more confident writer

> This is a comforting thing in being a great author inside one that always even with much lonely feeling and much sighing in one and even with not pleasantness inside any one just then when it is a very sombre burden then that one is beginning having coming saying that pleasant living is a pleasant thing and to be explaining how some are liking pleasant living (MA, 593 - emphasis mine)

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16 This is connected with Stein's repeated statement in the two autobiographies that the public seem more interested in her person than in her writing surely a self-inditement for any popular writer The very fact that she repeats it so often however suggests that she felt an important and continuing link between herself and her printed text which could never be finished while the real Stein was still walking round performing and able to add to earlier published work

This happens, obviously just as we are reading it [17] Writing (masterpieces) is connected with identity, so that any anxiety concerning her writing for Stein equates an anxiety of 'being', of the connection between 'inside' and 'outside' The obsession with this anxiety for the modernist creator - Stein never addresses the creatrix - is at heart a problem of identity Stein confirms, agonizes over, hesitates over, flaunts a fervent belief in her own genius, only on the basis of her inside feelings, not because of general recognition Inevitably, when that popular recognition did arrive, due to the publication of the first 'autobiography' and the subsequent lecture tours, this basis for genius became undermined Stein found herself in a typically avant-gardist quandary, a modernist who built up the theory of her own genius based on general disapprobation, only to have this questioned when the pole of disapproval changed into acceptance, even popularity The identity of writing was jumbled up from its basis of writing in isolation, 'for myself and strangers' Writing as a self-affirming process now became writing as a product, as a solidified thing, for which money was paid and lecture tours organized

Stein's paradoxical attempts at textual performance lead to her central notion of being 'slow' and writing a 'slow' history

> I have it in me in being that I am resisting in being I am fairly slow in action and in feeling, if I am not slow in acting and in feeling and in listening I am not certain that I myself am doing that acting listening feeling I would be thinking something was happening it would be over and I would not be realizing that I myself was listening feeling, acting When I have not been right there must be something wrong (MA 573)

Obviously being slow is a fairly positive feature for Stein, in line with her personality which she defines as 'resisting in being' When she is 'slow' she is aware of what is going on, she 'realizes' her topics, she is even certain that she herself is really there, experiencing When she is 'fast' she feels she has lost conscious touch with events It must bode well then that she calls her text a 'slow history', i e a history where the author of the text is acutely conscious of herself, feeling minute by minute while writing She presents herself as completely aware of what is going on the result of all the waiting done by the narrator before she really feels somebody's essence 'Soon

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17 About *Everybody s Autobiography* Carl Van Vechten wrote It is not as amusing or as gossipy as the Alice B Toklas opus but it is much more of an integrated work of art and much more in line with the rest of your work Don't you agree with me? I think you give the effect of living it as you write it it all flows with your consciousness and the reader is exhausted* by YOUR vitality (Van Vechten adds the footnote *pleasantly! to his letter dated June 22 1937 Gallup 1979 324)

you will learn slowly the history of each one of them' (MA, 45) As opposed to a quick efficient history in line with the ideology of writing, this slow one is being told by a narrator at leisure The presence which Derrida defines as the misguided emotional need of writers is here pushed to the extreme We get this long text precisely because the author refuses to cut Everything considered must stay to be in keeping with the need for conscious presence Authorial shortcuts are not permitted Stein's long history combines in a strange way the ideology of the scientist with an element traditionally barred from any scientific paper, the presence of the author thinking, failing, correcting

7 Memory, Orality and Autobiography

After the publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*, Stein received some negative reactions to the book Matisse, Braque and others angrily responded to their portrayal in an appendix to *transition* (Braque et al 1935) Gertrude Stein remarks wryly upon this in *Everybody's Autobiography*

> Henry McBride wrote to me that he had seen Matisse in New York, he said all the painters should be delighted because I had revivified them at a moment when everybody was not thinking about painting Henry McBride wrote that as he said these words Matisse shuddered Later on they wrote in English it was written in English in transition it never was written in French, Matisse said that Picasso was not the great painter of the period that his wife did not look like a horse and that he was certain that the omelette had been an omelette or something Braque said that he had invented cubism, he did not say this but at any rate if what he said was so then that was so (EA, 21)

Other painters, unlike the writers are equally bitter about Stein's true/fictional treatment of them in the 'autobiography' Finally, Marie Laurencin explains that this is the result of the medium they work in and is connected with gender Painters, living in the present, in what they see, do not have a past As a result, no one should manipulate their past for them Writers on the other hand, can make everything, including elements from a past, present by writing about them (EA, 23-24) As a woman painter Laurencin can explain both positions to Stein

> She said of course no painter could be pleased the past of a painter was not a past because a painter lived in what he saw and he could not see his past and if his past was not his past then it was nobody's past and so nobody could say what that past was (EA, 23)

It seems a conflict between media The past belongs to writers, because they can re-create it, render it present, which seems to give Stein the (auto)biographer creative power over the past The same topic is gone into by Stein in her interview for the transatlantic review, where she relates the story of her meeting with 'three young newspapermen and a photographer' As rendered by Stein, the only one who 'understood' her was the photographer The cause for this once again leads to the detrimental effects of memory and the act of remembering on one's true 'presence' in a situation 'He said "I don't have to remember what you say I am not involved with the mechanics of remembering it, and so I can understand it They are too busy trying to remember what you say" (Stein 1971, 35 - repeated in EA, 188) The fact that Stein repeated this incident twice in different texts indicates she assigned great explanative value to the anecdote Memory is consequently rejected, as a faculty which stands in the way of true creation and true presentation More seriously, the act of memory prevents the self from being there in the now moment From a different perspective, and with a lighter touch, we see Gertrude Stein approaching the same topic of presence the experience of consciously being there for the woman speaker She squarely faces up to the topic in Everybody's Autobiography

> [I]dentity is funny being yourself is funny as you are never yourself to yourself except as you remember yourself and then of course you do not believe yourself That is really the trouble with an autobiography you do not of course you do not really believe yourself why should you You are of course never yourself (EA 34)

For a self-avowed autobiographer this is a highly significant and controversial remark Like the previous quotations, it indicates a questioning of the traditional concept of the autobiographical memory

A similar rejection of 'memory' is included in Stein's redefinition of the concept of 'genius', an important topic for Stein Her self-stylization as a 'genius' seems completely in line with her famed, (later) self-confidence, her positioning at the heart of the modernist movement While this is undoubtedly part of her official make-up we must remember that she redefines the concept 'And so I do know what a genius is a genius is some one who does not have to remember the two hundred years that everybody else has to remember' (EA, 103) A genius exists, but is not involved in a plot 'It takes a lot of time to be a genius you have to sit around so much doing nothing really doing nothing' (EA 55) The identity of a genius is even compared

with the unconscious and therefore secure identity of a dog 'and anyway a genius need not think, And when a dog gets older there is less of it and it does not worry him When a genius gets older is there less of it and does it then not worry him Not always' (EA, 68) Significantly, Alice B Toklas's intuition warns her of the presence of geniuses by the ringing of a bell inside her She does not recognize a genius when she sees one, but her body resounds like a musical instrument in an aural recognition par excellence In *Everybody's Autobiography*, moreover, Stein makes the connection between geniuses and another attractive personality, her notion of the 'saint' The 'saint' too is a redefined concept Again, her saint 'does' nothing avoiding the high-action plot of the theatre and silent film (EA 91) Grounded in their individuality, it suffices Steinian saints like Saint Theresa and Saint Anthony merely to exist But, significantly, they 'converse' inspiredly (EA, 93) Like Dorothy Richardson's pilgrim, Stein's ideal of the genius and the saint advances an esthetic of being rather than doing [18] While Miriam Henderson revels in successfully existing in a situation, Stein extols the virtues of radical being existence without activity but by virtue of sheer strength of presence

As a result Stein rejects 'remembering' and repetition as the basis of her character description

> We in this period have not lived in remembering, we have living in moving being necessarily so intense that existing is indeed something, is indeed that thing that we are doing And so what does it really matter what anybody does [T]he thing that is important is the intensity of anybody's existence (Stein 1988_b, 182)

This ties in with Stein's description in *The Making of Americans* of the imaginative hold over the past held by a listening audience Listening to past memories, the audience by the use of its imagination recreate the past of the story teller and thus wield creative power over it However, this double act of narration and imagination has major ramifications The narrator's past told to a listener becomes only truly alive in the telling of the story, becomes the interlocutor's possession, so that real,

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18 There is of course a connection between women and the kind of inactivity suggested for the Steinian saint in late Victorian ideology also maintained to a certain extent by 'feminists like Dorothy Richardson as suggested by her essay 'Women in the Arts She presents contemporary man as driven by an ambition which is a kind of despair 'And it is a form of despair to which men are notoriously more liable than are women A fact that ceases to surprise when one reflects that short of sainthood a man must do rather than be that he is potent not so much in person as in relation to the things he makes (Richardson 1990_b 421)

true access to any past lodged in memory can only occur via the involvement of listeners

The third governess in the Hersland household, Madeleine Wyman, seems to have been quite a catalyst Mrs Hersland has an almost epic battle with the Wyman family for control over the girl, and receives from her presence a lot of self-love, a feeling of importance in herself, as Stein would put it But her importance for the family grows when Madeleine turns out to be holding the key to their past As soon as she is introduced, the Stein narrator starts hinting darkly 'This is now a beginning of the history of her, Mrs Hersland talked a great deal to her Madeleine always listened to her This is now a history of their talking to each other This is now a history of how they owned each other' (MA 253) Madeleine is presented mainly as a good listener to both the Herslands But being involved in these conversations means that the interlocutors 'own' each other Madeleine thus is closer to Mr and Mrs Hersland than even their children

> Not that Madeleine Wyman had any influence over any of them, over the mother or the father or any one of the children It was nothing of such a thing that happened to them It was that she owned the mother of them by living in her feeling their mother's early living by being the reason of their mother having in her then when Madeleine Wyman was with them the being herself to herself more inside her in her being than at any other time in all her living So Madeleine Wyman owned Mrs Hersland, to her children She a little owned Mr Hersland for them but that was mostly in so much as he belonged to the mother of them It was that in owning their mother's early living, in her feeling, owning their mother's moment of being most herself to herself in her feeling, owning their father's early living and their mother's feeling for their father then in her important being and their father's feeling for their mother then, it was by such owning that they felt something cut off from them A part that should have been them Madeleine Wyman held in possession (MA, 254-255)

However, as a listener and narrator, Madeleine is also a catalyst when she tells the children about their mother's past, thus finally giving them possession of it As we have seen earlier, the narratees of a story involve their imagination, and as a result have greater access to the past than the narrator via his or her memory Madeleine consequently possesses the Herslands' past more than they do, and can pass this on to the children by making them into narratees It is almost a narrative version of the Freudian family, with the children acquiring knowledge via a telling session The same patriarchal narration awakens fear in the hearts of the children listening to old Henry Dehning's stories about the past

> Nay they love to remember, and to tell it over, and most often to their children, what they have been and what they have done and how they themselves have made it all to be so different and how well it is for these children
> Yes, they say it long and often and yet it is never real to them while they are thus talking No it is not as really present to their thinking as it is to the young ones who never really had the feeling These have it through their fear, which makes it for them a really present feeling The old ones have not such a fear and they have it all only like a dim beginning like the being as babies or as children or as grown old men and women [T]here is a burr in a man's voice that always makes for terror in his children and there is a sharp, narrow, outward, shut off glance from an old man that will always fill with dread young grown men and women (MA, 7-8)

This passage puts a different perspective on the writing of autobiography It explains why a Stein autobiography is to a large extent to be regarded as a spoken event The readers of an autobiography, by the very act of 'listening', own the past of the autobiographer, and can return this to her For the autobiographer, the act of telling is essential in order to make her memories come alive and present Stein the writer receives confidence and the strong delineation of her self, the inside-outside distinction, from the act of writing while by speaking and performing her text she can make her past self alive and present to her listeners and to herself In this communicative mode of autobiography then the writer Stein and her audience have a greater 'right', a greater possession of the past than painters and sculptors This communicative view of memory, as a story told to an audience who can imagine to much greater effect, justifiably brings oral or oral-style narration into autobiography It also explains why a recreation of the past is more important than the exact recording of the objective facts Stein's talkative autobiographies supply the readers with the possibilities of calling in their imagination by making them into listeners Obviously, Henry Dehning, the old man frightening children with his stories recounts a patriarchal tale intended to make the children grateful to their father [19] But the presence of the teller of the tale, and the imagination of the listeners is what makes the story have, for the children 'a really present feeling' So Stein needs listeners to realize for her the presence of the past, by the vivid faculties of creative memory In this way she can inspire the 'fear', the creative presence for her listener/readers and consequently for herself

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19 In his discussion of Plato s *Phaedrus* Derrida remarks on the patriarchal telling of stories to a disciple as opposed to the lack of origins suggested by the absence of the written text There may be something in the fear of stories told that has a distinct connection with the telling as a patriarchal function of ideology

8 Autobiography as Nutting

> Gertrude Stein was at that time writing The Making of Americans It had changed from being a history of a family to being the history of everybody the family knew and then it became the history of every kind and of every individual human being (ABT, 124)[20]

The reader who has read *Americans* is left wondering to what extent this resumé is exact Indeed, it seems as if Stein is in fact here changing her version of *Americans* in the light of her later work Other texts too, like *An Acquaintance With Description. A Novel, Phenomena of Nature, How To Write, Stanzas of Meditation,*and *Listen To Me* are quickly rehearsed towards the end of the first autobiography (ABT, 240-243 - EA, 96), with brief characterizations and even quotes (EA, 202) Stein seems to be using this method to keep her underpublished oeuvre in public memory In fact, this is typical of her autobiographical texts, continuously returning to older topics which are never 'finished' with Stein recycles writing many anecdotes, stories and remarks reappearing again and again from *The Making of Americans* through the autobiographies and even to the 'Transatlantic Interview' she gave to Robert Haas In the latter interview she brings up the conversation with three reporters and a photographer, also mentioned in *Everybody's Autobiography* (Stein 1971, 35 EA 1985, 188) Stein's shock at the discovery that her and Leo's birth only occurred because two elder siblings died and her parents wanted five children is mentioned in *The Making of Americans*, and returns in the second autobiography 'until you hear accidentally that there were to be five children and if two little ones had not died there would be no Gertrude Stein, of course not' (EA, 97, MA, 743, paraphrased in EA, 114) Similar deja-vu experiences abound Marie Laurencin always resembles a Clouet (ABT, 32, 68) Stein's own curiosity described in *The Making of Americans* as her wish to know what someone is carrying is repeatedly mentioned (EA 145, 175, MA, 556-557), as are the reproaches by Stein's Latin teacher for non-payment (MA, 717, EA, 123-124) The same goes for Stein's discovery of American and French camouflage (ABT, 99, 204 - EA, 146) The 'ugliness' of avant-gardist art crops up in *The Making of Americans*, and also returns (MA, 463, ABT, 22, 28, 37), the comparison with a Bach fugue repeats itself (ABT, 57, 228, 269) More drastically, the orchard anecdote from *The Making of Americans* too is repeated in this text, with

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20 As already mentioned Stein s impression of what she wrote in earlier texts does not always tally with the casual reader s Thus she says about her family in Baltimore 'I do describe them well in The Making of Americans all of them and the grandfather who was an old man The Making of Americans tells all about them (EA, 200)

Stein quoting the first two paragraphs (MA, 3, ABT, 63), but as 'Alice' remarks, the anecdote seems already to be with Stein since her Radcliffe days as 'an old daily theme that she had written when at Radcliffe' Another quote which seems to follow Stein around is discussed in *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* 'One of her chapters in The Making of Americans begins I write for myself and strangers' (ABT, 78), and is further referred to in *Everybody's Autobiography* (EA, 82) The depressing nature of fathers emerges several times in this text (EA, 112, 113, 119, 121), as does the opposition inside-outside in connection with identity (ABT, 130, 170 - EA, , 34, 49-50, 108, 139, 229), and the nature of 'saints' (EA, 91, 93 246 - ABT 247), obviously topics of major importance This is how Stein treats her major topics, keeping them alive by reintroducing them in each new work Moreover the two autobiographies share the continuous rehearsal of what was written in previous text The fateful text, *The Making of Americans* which took such a long time to get published, is kept in the public's memory by the constant referrals to it in the autobiographies Like the Stein oeuvre, her favourite topics are kept alive in our memory with the method so typical of the oral narrator, by continuous rehearsal This results in slippage for some of her vocabulary but Stein is driving home the major themes and texts of her work, by a constant return to them [21] Stein seems to have lived with her topics Even people who never effectively write an autobiography establish during their lives a certain autobiographical story, an assertion of what is important to them, what they feel has created them in their everyday lives

Stein's method of copying and re-using old material also throws a different light on writing and autobiography She explicitly stresses that this method keeps her far removed from the traditional picture of the writer, inspired or not striving to achieve the perfect text

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21 Interesting in connection with this are the last statements of Stein just before she died Toklas reports in *What Is Remembered* on their feelings before the fateful operation 'I sat next to her and she said to me early in the afternoon What is the answer? I was silent. In that case she said what is the question?' (Toklas 1989, 186) If this indeed happened Stein is in fact repeating an issue briefly discussed in *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* when she related questions and answers to the notion of time 'listening to an answer makes you know that time is existing but asking a question makes you think that perhaps it does not (EA, 211)

> She always then and for many years later wrote on scraps of paper in pencil, copied it into french school notebooks in ink and then often copied it over again in ink It was in connexion (sic) with these various series of scraps of paper that her elder brother once remarked, I do not know whether Gertrude has more genius than the rest of you all that I know nothing about, but one thing I have always noticed, the rest of you paint and write and are not satisfied and throw it away or tear it up, she does not say whether she is satisfied or not, she copies it very often but she never throws away any piece of paper upon which she has written (ABT, 58-59)

The question is thus highlighted and is basic to Stein's writing what is the status of a text which is not poised towards the future as a static, stable, eternal textual entity, but which, perversely, aims to be true to the present now-moment of the writer? With Stein perpetually filling up and emptying out of impressions and experiences, the texts which come out of her must be of equal status None are literary jewels and none scraps of paper to be thrown away But Stein is more than the collector of her own work and ideas Re-using old material, reworking it according to newer views and opinions, is even more alien to the purpose of literacy In a text a topic is worked out, and is then closed, even hostile to re-workings Stein however, never says the last word on a topic and critics must be cautious about her ultimate position This has happened to the Fernhurst-passage, originally narrated in *Q E D* and picked up in *Americans* Significantly for Martha proof of her husband's adultery comes in the shape of a letter she finds Once she has her evidence, the narrator returns with an observation

> Categories that once to some one had real meaning can later to that same one be all empty Sometimes one reads a letter that they have been keeping with other letters, and it is all full of hot feeling and the one, reading the letter then has not in them any memory of the person who once wrote that letter to them This is different, very different from the changing of the feeling and the thinking in many who have in them real realization of the meaning of words some one once alive to some one is then completely a stranger to that one, the meaning in a word to that one these then come to be all lost to that one sometime later in the living of that one (MA 440-441 - emphasis mine)

The whole passage is connected explicitly with Stein as the copyist of her own earlier writing and with the alienating effects of re-reading any text at a later date Both Ong and Derrida remark on this time difference as an aspect of the absence and alienation embedded in the text Stein clearly indicates her awareness of this scriptive dilemma Her copying and collecting of highly autobiographical material

then is not the result of an epistemological illusion, but it does indicate a refusal to accept the absence of the text Repeating, copying, reintroducing past topics and anecdotes, Stein is keeping them alive and ever-changing in an autobiographical project that denies the closure at the heart of this genre Frequently, in *The Making of Americans*, she remarks how the past is a lost country, which cannot be remembered except via the fear and the imagination of the hearers Stein the autobiographer then keeps her self and her world alive by retelling the tale to an audience Her talky writing ultimately shares this characteristic with actual performance it is never perfect several equal versions are maintained which are always open to new interpretations Ultimately, this is what makes it so essential to address one's autobiography to an audience, as orally as possible

> [T]his is very true then that to many of them having in them strongly a sense of realizing the meaning of the words they are using that some words they once were using, later have not any meaning and some then have a little shame in them when they are copying an old piece of writing where they were using words that sometime had real meaning for them and now have not any real meaning in them to the feeling and the thinking and the imagining of such a one Often this is in me in my feeling, often then I have to lose words I have once been using now I commence again with words that have meaning, a little perhaps I had forgotten when it came to copying the meaning in some of the words I have just been writing and always now I will be using words having in my feeling thinking imagining very real meaning (MA 441)

A long passage concerning mistakes in copying and whether the copyist notices is started off and finished by the following sentence 'Perhaps no one ever will know the complete history of every one This is a sad thing' (MA 454) Stein remembering seems to be closely connected to Stein the copyist Copying allows Stein access to memories, as she sees the difference of the present with the past context But it also allows her to update those memories, and place them, by the very act of copying, in the present context Continuously copying and re-copying in her notebooks she is altering the faculty of writing for Stein the definitive, authoritative text cut off from the present context is anathema Instead as in a conversation, nothing that is enunciated is ever withdrawn Conversely we could interpret Stein's writing habits from the point of view of a largely oral society, where anything written at all is respected Whichever interpretation, Stein is not following the demands of literature in the highly literate society in which she lived, which demanded that she construct, however painfully, a 'master' text, an 'authoritative' text in order to publish and be

damned By several methods, copying and 'talking' to her audience Stein is dragging presence into her writing

The clearest and strongest moment of presence by the narrator occurs in the beginning where she clears the stage as it were to set matters straight between herself and the reader-listeners, offering a poetics for her redefined genre of 'family history'

> Bear it in your mind my reader, but truly I never feel it that there ever can be for me any such a creature no it is this scribbled and dirty and lined paper that is really to be to me always my receiver, - but anyhow reader, bear it in your mind - will there be for me ever any such a creature, - what I have said always before to you, that this that I write down a little each day here on my scraps of paper for you is not just an ordinary kind of novel with a plot and conversations to amuse you, but a record of a decent family progress respectably lived by us and our fathers and our mothers and our grand-fathers, and grand-mothers, and this is by me carefully a little each day to be written down here, and so my reader arm yourself in every kind of way to be patient and to be eager, for you must always have it now before you to hear much more of these many kinds of decent ordinary people, And so listen while I tell you all about us, and wait while I hasten slowly forwards, and love, please, this history of this decent family's progress (MA, 33-34 - emphasis mine)

Here Stein actually and explicitly addresses the reader and it is interesting that she immediately concedes that to her as writer there is no such 'creature' Nor is her receptacle the Great, Eternal Book but instead she writes a 'little' on 'scraps of paper' a small, insignificant piece of writing is kept going in daily instalments Even though she quite rightly claims that she cannot imagine her readers, she is simultaneously addressing them with a very strong order concerning the text She writes carefully and slowly, in order to record correctly Soon Stein slips back into the metaphor of speech in order to describe the communication between writer and reader Moreover, the contact with the reader must be intense They must 'love' The piece, coming early in the text, reminds of the traditional exhortations by the narrators of early texts like the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, begging the goodwill of the audience to hear him out On the one hand, writing served Stein she did not become a professional performer, and frequently hinted that it was liberating On the other hand, the plot, conventional conversations and conventional attitude of writer versus audience, hiding behind a narrator, obstructed the intensity with which the description of things needs to be brought across, the 'love' and fear needed from the listeners

According to her own admission, then, Stein's method of writing was a scrappy, 'unbookish' way of composing Not constructing some great fictional or autobiographical structure but stringing along short, daily pieces, she fell foul of most of the typical qualities of textuality definition clarity, succinctness, significance One of Stein's acquaintances, Henri-Pierre Roche wrote to complain mildly about Stein's writing style and quotes an interesting event, a story-telling session by Stein

> Dear Miss Stein
> The other day you told me about this girl at Vendôme's Tea Room -Was she an actress? - No Not even that - It was a good story I had a good laugh Then, suddenly, you say it again, shorter, but the same - You spoil my laugh I ask myself "Why does she say it again? Is it for me as evident in her writings as in her sayings that repetition is bad?"
> I get angry with you to spoil it for me by those d- - - repetitions, by so many words duplicate
> Quantity! Quantity! Is thy name woman?
> Of course it is very enjoyable to let oneself go & write heaps - but - - - Why don't you finish, correct, re-write ten times the same chaotic material till it has its very shape worthy of its fullness? A condensation of 60 to 90% would often do?
> I thought your style would concentrate, it has enormously expanded
> Are not you after all very lazy? (from a letter by Henri-Pierre Roché, dated February 6, 1912 Gallup 1979 55-56) [22]

Stein's 'repetitiveness' is consequently intimately connected with her speaking performance, and is not alien to her consecutive, unambitious, 'scrappy' writing method Moreover, in 'How Writing is Written' Stein denied the existence of 'repetition', and connected the 'repeating' of her text with the attempt to express presence, and the perception of others

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22 We have further testimony from Bryher that Stein to a certain extent talked as she wrote There was a table piled with books and beyond this a high chair where Gertrude sat surrounded by a group of young men At first there was a little general conversation then she would pick up a phrase and develop it, ranging through a process of continuous association until we seemed to have ascended through the seven Persian heavens and in the process to have turned our personalities inside out Make no mistake however it was not an ego selfishly seizing the stage it was rhetoric spare and uncoloured by emotion She offered us the world took it away again in the following sentence only to demonstrate in a third that it was something that we could not want because it had never existed How bitterly I regret that there were no tape recorders then available to preserve her disputations (Bryher 1963 214)

> The question of repetition is very important It is important because there is no such thing as repetition Everybody tells every story in about the same way You know perfectly well that when you and your roommates tell something, you are telling the same story in about the same way But the point about it is this Everybody is telling the story in the same way But if you listen carefully, you will see that not all the story is the same There is always a slight variation Somebody comes in and you tell the story over again Every time you tell the story it is told slightly differently All my early work was a careful listening to all the people telling their story, and I conceived the idea which is, funnily enough, the same as the idea of the cinema The cinema goes on the same principle each picture is just infinitesimally different from the one before If I had repeated nobody would listen There has to be a very slight change I changed it just a little bit until I got a whole portrait What I was after was this immediacy A single photograph doesn't give it I was trying for this thing and so to my mind there is no repetition The only thing that is repetition is when somebody tells you what he has learned (1974 158-159 - emphasis mine)

Epistemological closure or static knowledge, then, is associated with 'memory' and rejected 'remembering is repetition' (Stein 1988_b, 178) Stein's continuous performance, the repetitiveness complained about by Roché, is once again connected with the slow differences within the cinematic process, reminding us how great the impact of the silent movie must have been However, Stein's repetitive style does not stand on its own It is mirrored in the content by the individual's way of expressing the self

> This and many many other ways there are of feeling it as the bottom being in different ones of them, different men and women have resisting being as their natural way of being always I am looking hard at each one, feeling, seeing, hearing the repeating coming out of each one and so slowly I know of each one the way the bottom in them is existing and so then that is the foundation of the history of each one of them and always it is coming out of each one of them (MA, 349)

According to Stein, people are constantly 'repeating' their nature 'The whole of every one is always coming out in repeating' (MA, 186) Obviously, repeating here seems to suggest more 'performing', a continuous emanation of character, rather than repetitive movements The repetition she regards in *The Making of Americans* is the continuous existing and the continuous performance of people's very basic and original being This character repetition never stops and requires constant attention and updating from the spectator 'so they go on and on and on and on repeating and always to some one listening, repeating is a very wonderful thing Repeating is

what I am loving' (MA, 455) Both self-revelation and observation happen in the acute presence of speaker and hearer

Describing Philip Redfern the narrator further discusses the self-awareness of her characters as follows 'As I was saying men and women have many of them in them their individual feeling - their way of feeling it in them about themselves to themselves inside them about the ways of being they have in them Some have almost nothing of such a feeling in them, some have it a little in them' (MA 156-157) A highly tautological description includes all the conscious and unconscious, somatic and psychic feelings about the self The passage does not merely discuss the 'being' of Philip Redfern, but rather the 'feeling of the being in him', the ideology he has during his life created about himself to himself Every individual has a very different unwritten self-perception and life story 'how much they have in them of remembering and how much they have in them of forgetting ' This indicates Stein's awareness that individuals develop a **changeable** story explaining their selves Thus, she gives the example of a 'mean spirited and tyrannical man in living' who nevertheless believes in his own virtue 'very often in his talking it comes out again and again that he is a good man, and a noble man, and then there would be no answer that could touch him' (MA, 500) Other examples too show how people construct their own stories and versions of themselves in their 'talking', as it were an autobiography created in speech, in conversation As a result Stein's style mimics what according to her is a very basic feature of human being She attempts to bring this across in the same 'repetitive' way, i e a constant performance of people, rather than the conventional novelistic way which would aim merely to categorize, and would regard repetition as merely the senseless rehearsal of the same event Consequently, the so-called repetitive style of many Stein texts confronts the reader with Stein performing her presence and the 'repetitive' being of people 'Repetition' thus connects these oral-sounding texts with an investigation into the performance of the (autobiographical) individual The narrator of any story cannot help but narrate herself, as Stein does in this 'history' of her family '[T]he repeating that is in all real being' thus connects the topic of autobiography with Stein's repetitive, talky style (MA, 178) Stein correctly asserts in 'Portraits and Repetition' that actual repetitiveness is impossible, since any repeated statement is always in its

performance a new and original one [23] Repetition is impossible on the level of performance, and this is the level continuously stressed by Stein

As a result, orality and autobiography do have a certain affinity for the individual life Since every individual is constantly building and adjusting his or her own life story via the 'repeating' which is experienced in the presence of others, the alternative 'conversational' autobiography of presence is the only form which, if constantly adjusted, would take into account this multi-facetedness, the many different selves in performance Speech is determined by the length of our memory Consequently, our memory also constantly makes and remakes our own stories about ourselves Only the writing subject is able to determine, define and stabilize its life story For the illiterate, 'autobiography' consists of imperceptibly changing versions of the life history In her autobiographies and autobiographical writings Stein tried to conjoin oral and written autobiography Writing for herself and strangers in a safe isolation, she also tries to perform the 'repeating' of the individual and to keep her autobiographical story updated and alive to herself

With her sweeping statement, '[a]nything is an autobiography', Stein clearly indicated a feature of the twentieth century, the interinfluencing of artists' lives and their work the intrusion from the outside onto the inside (EA, xxiii) As testified many times, she felt her personality supported her writing, an attitude undoubtedly suggested by alleged remarks of Leo's and suggestions in letters by friends like Roché After a long period of genre experiments with the autobiographical attitude already present, she finally moved onto her 'straight' autobiographies quite late in her literary career One might say this was a normal state of affairs for any celebrity or even any genius But *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* and *Everybody's Autobiography* were not written by a celebrity offering explanation and apology at the end of a well-filled life [24] For one thing, the first autobiography was not written after her major popular success, but actually *was* the major success

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23 In *The Making of Americans* 'repeating is still a word with neutral connotations In order to respond to attacks on the boring repetitiveness of her style however she stressed negative connotations in *Portraits and Repetition* to distinguish a conscious present, performative or cinematic repeating from the mechanical static definitive repetition in the traditional sense of the word Thus Stein s famous dictum 'Repetition is boring must as is usual with her statements be regarded in context

24 Later autobiographical texts indicated by Steiner and Bridgman are *Wars I Have Seen* (1945) *Brewsie and Willie* (1946) and *The Autobiography of Rose* (written in 1936) (Bridgman 299)

In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein compares autobiography as a genre with novels She pronounces the death of the novel, and her argumentation further elaborates on the relationship between fiction and 'reality' The novel is defunct, claims Stein, because reality, in the shape of publicity, breaks in on fiction Authors depend on memory to furnish fictional characters and memory is affected by the publicity of the outside world As a result 'real', fictive novels can no longer be written 'And so autobiography is written which is in a way a way to say that publicity is right, they are as the public sees them Well yes' (EA, 53) The clear boundary between fiction and 'reality' seems to have disappeared In a typically modernist suggestion Stein complains that our knowledge of ourselves is affected by insignificant literacy, by the highly intrusive print-based world of newspapers, journals and 'funny stories' The consequence of this is that autobiography intrudes on all fiction and fiction of a kind intrudes on our autobiography Stein need not tell the facts in her autobiographies, since the tales she tells become fact when they are recreated before an audience To a large extent she was right our view of the modernist era has already extensively been influenced by the Steinian text The Stein persona in the two autobiographies have indeed become the standard representations of the historical Gertrude Stein, in fictional works about the period [25] This Stein persona is an inquisitive talker, talking to anybody and everybody, finding all equally interesting and enlightening, always rehearsing anecdotes told by others

Towards the end of *Everybody's Autobiography*, a new metaphor for autobiography, crops up, which seems remarkably apt for *The Making of Americans*

> And so I do not have to talk to myself about them [El Greco paintings] but I do It is like nutting You go over the same ground ten or a dozen times and each time you see nuts that you had not taken The pleasure is in the eye seeing them but if you did not take them there would be no pleasure in the eye seeing them (EA, 111)

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25 Stein s well-documented love of crime fiction has spawned a curious fictional afterlife featuring Stein and Toklas as a pair of alternative detectives In 1985 Samuel M Steward advertised as a real-life friend of Stein and Toklas published a detective story with the obvious title *Murder is Murder is Murder* Three years later the pseudonymous Ellen Dearmore published a detective story 'The Adventure of the Perpetual Husbands' with Toklas sleuthing the Landru murders via her knowledge of astrology and Stein s 'method consisting of typical Steinian association The latter story especially subscribes to the eccentric 'cute' presentation of the couple as suggested by the autobiographies This 'Stein has further appeared in films like *The Moderns* and a television film *Waiting for the Moon*. Gilbert and Gubar also mention the film *When This You See Remember Me* directed by Perry Miller Adato for Contemporary/McGraw-Hill Films (1971) which interviews Samuel M Steward (Gilbert and Gubar 1989 420)

In fact, the comparison seems to work for her autobiographical writing in general, going over the same ground, 'the eye seeing them', discovering new structures, new aspects of the same events, and taking the nuts, putting the facts to creative use Rejecting simplistic notions of 'memory', and the limitations of plotted narrative, Stein once again reformulates the definition of a literary genre Now she presents us with autobiography as conversation, but, most importantly, autobiography as 'nutting' In the 'Preface' of *Everybody's Autobiography* she announces with confidence concerning the meeting with Hammett ' Anything is an autobiography but this was a conversation' (EA, xxiii) Stein thus opposes conversation to autobiography, which seems to encompass everything else 'Anything', any piece of writing, is an autobiography, barring what is spoken, conversation With the same assurance, the narrator then concludes 'Anyway autobiography is easy like it or not autobiography is easy for any one and so this is to be Everybody's Autobiography' (EA, xxiii) Since autobiographical writing is unavoidable, it is easy As an activity, Stein's writing too is intensely connected with autobiography In writing, she explores some of the properties of orality, i e the presence of speaker and audience, the performance of reality and its sensory flux rather than the plotting of reality To a certain extent, Stein experiments with rejecting the finished text Like 'nutting', her method of writing may cause anxiety concerning her relationship to the literary canon, but in fact follows an oral pattern of discussion, with the constant need to go over the same topics simply in order to retain them An oral narrative cannot remain stable Likewise because she goes over the same ground the contradictions and new interpretations cause the instability of Steinian writing, as she attempts to draw some of the properties of orality into writing Significantly, at the collapse of nineteenth century philosophical and scientific systems Stein came to these experiments largely due to the autobiographical perspective Autobiography becomes the performance of the female writing self, attempting to front the existence of things rather than developing a story of causality It is important that, in view of identity as repeating, the Steinian text can never be allowed to finish Engaged in this autobiographical 'nutting', she constantly returns to events and conversations to keep them present in the text, as indeed, ending the written text is like death for the speaker

Chapter V H D 'A Book to Myself'

1 Introduction

Hilda Doolittle was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania on 10 September 1886 The symbolic significance of her place of birth will not have been lost on her H D 's mother belonged to the Moravian religious sect, who in the eighteenth century left persecution in Moravia for Saxony and later Pennsylvania Her father's great career in astronomy had made him Professor of Astronomy and Mathematics at Lehigh University in 1874 and from 1896, Flower Professor of Astronomy at the University of Pennsylvania With her maternal grandfather a botanist and the principal of the Young Ladies' Seminary and her brothers following their father's footsteps, there was a clear gender split in H D 's close family between the artistic strain of the Wolle family, via her painter mother and her musical uncle J Fred Wolle, and an intensely masculine scientific affiliation on the part of the male Doolittles [1]

In several ways H D was at the heart of the modernist movement Although she spent relatively little time in the modernist heartland Paris, she took an active and exemplary part in the London-based Imagist movement, as 'H D Imagiste' Between 1905 and 1907 she was briefly engaged to Ezra Pound, and also knew William Carlos Williams in her youth, while her short spell at Bryn Mawr made classmate Marianne Moore a friend with whom she was to stay in touch throughout her life Via her 1913 marriage to Richard Aldington, her relationship with Bryher, and friendships with Bryher's husbands Robert McAlmon and Kenneth Macpherson H D further situated herself at the centre of a modernist network.[2] In 1917, she became assistant-editor of *The Egoist* with Richard Aldington, who soon left for France and the Great War They replaced Dora Marsden after Pound's literary take-over, and Harriet Weaver, the sponsor of the journal, became a lifelong friend Both Aldington

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1 This family division into the artistic and the scientific has been amply documented in Barbara Guest s biography of H D *Herself Defined*, (Guest 1985)

2 In their autobiographical reminiscences both H D and Bryher present their initial relationship as one of protectiveness and adoration from Bryher s side Bryher's *The Heart to Artemis* shows her playing the part of a respectful fan who discovered her literary idol in extreme distress suffering from pneumonia before the birth of her child The wealthy Bryher took her away to convalesce She was to continue this supporting role in both meanings of the word as main educator to H D 's daughter Perdita The relationship was definitely complex with Bryher s second marriage to H D s lover Kenneth Macpherson an attempt at a menage a trois (Guest 1985 184-185) intended to protect H D 's mental stability Barbara Guest also allows for brief periods of lesbian affairs as with Frances Gregg and Silvia Dobson (Guest 1985 22-23 227)

and H D acted as secretaries to Ford Madox Ford while he was writing and revising *The Good Soldier* (Moser 1990, xxviii) Moreover, she was a close friend and correspondent of Dorothy Richardson Her involvement with the early film journal *Close-Up*, with a few early silent films like *Borderline*, in which H D acted, and with the film company set up by Bryher and Macpherson, POOL Productions, indicate that in the history of the early cinema too H D belonged to the avant-garde Like many modernists, she even temporarily worked with a do-it-yourself publishing house Pool Editions, which published the magazine *Close-Up* and later *Gaunt Island* by Macpherson (1927)

Modernists turn up disguised in H D 's autobiographical novel *Her* As fictional stand-in for Ezra Pound, George Lowndes is defined as Renaissance man, the international artist with a passion for Italian art travelling between Europe and America Less well-educated, Her has to conclude 'George was made' (H, 69) In her uncertain, associative mental state, she immediately finds this utterance problematic, but the figure of George as the artist grounded in European literary and cultural traditions reminds inexorably of Ezra Pound In *Bid Me to Live*, 'Rafe', 'Rico', 'Elsa', 'Vane', and 'Bella' are clearly Richard Aldington, D H Lawrence, Frieda Lawrence, Cecil Gray and Dorothy Yorke respectively [3]

On the other hand, H D 's long-time if intermittent companion Bryher, was an educationalist and a confirmed feminist, although Barbara Guest suggests that neither Bryher or H D were interested in feminist activism (Guest 1985, 116) Susan Stanford Friedman stresses H D 's incongruous situation as a woman in a male poetic tradition like Imagism or her later epic poetry (Friedman 1981, 10) In fact, H D 's autobiographical prose regularly puts the question of the female artist among men at the centre of her argumentation While a student and analysand of Freud's, H D kept a journal, much to his professional disapproval The entry for March 10, 1933, shows up several interesting ambiguities to start the discussion of H D 's interests as a woman writer in a man's world [4]

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3 Diana Collecott presents H D as writing autobiography 'persistently both before and after her analysis with Freud' She points out that the three main memoirs *Bid Me to Live Tribute to Freud* and *End to Torment*, 'enabled H D to be defined in terms of her relationships with men Richard Aldington D H Lawrence Sigmund Freud Ezra Pound (Collecott 1984 ix)

4 The quotation was first brought to attention by Susan Friedman before publication of these diary entries as 'Advent' by Norman Holmes Pearson in *Tribute to Freud* (1985)

> I was rather annoyed with the Professor in one of his volumes He said (as I remember) that women did not creatively amount to anything or amount to much, unless they had a male counterpart or a male companion from whom they drew their inspiration Perhaps he is right and my dream of 'salting' my typewriter with the tell-tale transference symbol is further proof of his infallibility (A, 149)

First of all, although H D directs her anger at Freud because of his dismissal of genuine creativity for women, she does interestingly, in much of her prose writing, address a male interlocutor, D H Lawrence and Richard Aldington in *Bid Me to Live*, Ezra Pound in *Her* and *End to Torment*, Freud himself in *Tribute to Freud* DuPlessis (1986) and Guest (1985) have documented what DuPlessis calls H D 's 'romantic thralldom', the need throughout her life for a male hero, with a highly idealized and ultimately disillusioning admiration for men like Lord Dowding, Freud, or the Haitian writer Lionel Durand But this is strangely combined with an awareness that women were more mutually supportive, more fluid, less dangerous to deal with There is no (published) work idealizing Bryher, and H D 's treatment of Fayne Rabb (Frances Gregg) in *Her* is of a different nature from the portrait of George Lowndes H D seems to have used her male interlocutors as the target for admiration and ultimate opposition We see this in her treatment of Freud in *Tribute to Freud*, where an extreme devotion to and mythologizing of Freud is combined with pointed statements of difference 'the professor was not always right' (TF, 103) The same happens to 'Rico' (D H Lawrence) in *Bid Me to Live*, whose letters form her lifeline, but to whom Julia in the end responds with animosity Via the cosy ambiguity of a (not really) 'fictionalized autobiography' she manages to complain about their treatment of her as a writer When Julia writes a poem about Orpheus and Eurydice she is told by 'Rico' to '[s]tick to the woman speaking', a remark she both accepts and subverts at the same time (BMTL, 51) H D 's novels frequently involve this appearance of a male literary figure, discussing and criticizing the female text, a literary father called up almost to license the female protagonist's writing George Lowndes, Rafe and Frederico are all mentors to the emerging writer, as well as teachers to be resisted and subverted

H D seems to have needed men and male heroes but needed them as a sign of her own difference Consequently, although she grudgingly agrees with the Freud quote, the greater part of her work suggests that her co-existence as a woman and an artist was not that problematic If anything, she thrived on emphasizing her own 'difference' from these male writers, a difference which she saw as basic because she

was a 'woman seer' Her agreement with 'Rico' and Freud's remarks concerning women writers is thus double-edged, while 'Rafe' and 'George Lowndes' function as fall guys from whom she bounces off in her self-definition as a woman writer, as we shall see later H D vacillates between the need of support from male interlocutors and the rejection of this support, since by its very presence it meant a denial of her force as a woman artist

In H D 's autobiographical prose there is an interest in the opposites of the oral world and scripted literature similar to the paradox already investigated concerning Dorothy Richardson and Gertrude Stein What specifically characterizes H D , however, is her mysticism, her work in the cabalistic tradition and astrology, her belief in her powers as a visionary This leads to a fascination with the magical aspects of the word, both the weighty spoken word and the early scripted word of a still largely oral society H D chooses to focus not just on speaking but on Speaking not on writing as a technology but on Writing as a magical tool of presence Like the other women authors she testifies to alienation as an everyday speaker, obsessed with her own female reactions as a woman forced into silence by the bodily presence of a man Frequently, she puts herself in the position of the dumb, unspeaking girl child, who cannot yet speak the foreign language Both *Tribute to Freud* and *The Gift* are in a sense a search for the secret of this successful powerful Speech Moreover, H D 's autobiographical novels use dialogue and an oral style to suggest the fluidity of her woman characters, to allow these written autobiographies to embody suggestions of non-definition non-stagnation But most importantly, incorporating the presence and power of oral speech into the printed text allows H D access to the magical powerful Word, empowering her as a writer and as a woman visionary

2 Rejection of Plot

In *Psyche Reborn*, Friedman has extensively documented H D 's force as a subversive mythmaker, as opposed to the 'mythical method' present in the works of Yeats, Pound, and Eliot Their use of myth whether Yeats and Joyce's use of Irish myth or the classical Greek tradition, testifies and strengthens the patriarchal bias already present To this H D 's revisionist myths or the myths she derived from apocryphal versions, formed a counterbalance, showing her conversant with the patriarchal angles to mythical plots The most radical of these 'revisionist' plots is of course *Helen in Egypt* (1961), where the femme fatale of the Trojan war, the unreliable beauty Helen, is turned into the positive image of a woman reading her own

memories in order to construct a different identity H D 's twist is that the Helen in Troy is but a mere shadow, literally, created by Zeus, while the 'real' Helen was transported to Egypt, where she even meets Achilles Equally, the plot of the Bible is not safe from H D 's manipulations, based on her extensive mystical and apocryphal reading In 'The Flowering of the Rod', the third part of *Trilogy*, Kaspar, one of the magi, actually meets Magdalen, another fallen woman turned into a positive figure In an early work, *Hippolytus Temporizes* (1927), Artemis and Hippolytus have both loved Hippolyta, introducing homosexual love into the plot H D thus undertakes a radical transformation of the master plots of Western culture, completely undermining the ideological functions at the heart of these stories, and which Freud, for one, would use as explanatory grids for human relations and stages of consciousness [5] The subversiveness of such actions only really hits home when one considers the literary 'nerve' in denuding a patriarchal epic like that of the Trojan war of its original plot to replace it by the search of a woman for her own identity

In her autobiographical writings too, H D was to re-vise a master plot, this time the agreed history of modernism which was to have been the autobiographical 'truth' Instead, she again favoured the story of the search for the woman writer-speaker, the seer H D All the prose texts under discussion are heavily characterized by an associative method, which frequently, as in *Her* or *Tribute to Freud* becomes the main structure undermining any causally, temporally based plot In *Tribute to Freud* for instance, Section 9 starts off by association through contrast a friendly address in a letter by Freud reminds her of the scene when he became suddenly angry, 'enraged', and it is obvious that the two versions of Freud are connected in the narrator's mind She rejects 'the strictly historical sequence'

> I wish to recall the impressions, or rather I wish the impressions to recall me Let the impressions come in their own way, make their own sequence (TF, 21)

Thus the narration of her dreams almost threatens the main narrative, the plot of the 'tribute' to Freud, building up instead a self-contained, almost solipsistic world of reference The Mercury passage, for instance, has a tenuous link with the main

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5 While describing how H D in *Trilogy* touches on the authority of the Bible in her mystic revisions DuPlessis puts the matter succinctly if somewhat understatedly 'The replacement of a dominant Gospel narrative with two unrelated mentions of myrrh and with an occult and muted narrative 'not on record' is a move of critical reassessment (DuPlessis 1986 95)

narrative, involving the careful encoding of a young man's name 'Brooks' appears in a dream as a river god, as part of a statue reminiscent of the god Mercury (TF, 14), and is associated with the analysand preceding her, the Dutchman Van der Leeuw One similar long associative link-up, Sections 66-68, starts from 'my serpent-and-thistle motive', H D 's personal symbol, derived from one of her dreams and found as a rare ancient symbol in a signet ring at the Louvre The word 'signet' next leads her to an etymological consideration of Sigmund or Siegmund, the 'victorious mouth' of a man whose voice she has already admired This leads to Victory, the Niké figure of her vision in Corfu and the Athené-without-spear on Freud's desk, his favourite statue and consequently an important symbol for H D too [6] From there to Athens, city on a mountain, while Freud's address is Berggasse The link between Greek antiquity and a victorious Freud is substantiated even more when H D sees that the stucco designs on his house are 'patterns, decorative hieroglyphs of acanthus leaves' (TF, 94) Next she connects acanthus with the Greek word 'acantha', a thorn or prickle Acanthus leaves crown a Greek pillar, connecting Freud and Greek mythology with the crown of thorns worn by Jesus 'and there was a crown, we have been told, in the end, of thorns' (TF, 94) When the 'causal' relations of her associations are highlighted, the passage seems almost a pastiche of H D 's writing practice In the light of Joyce and Eliot's works, her easy and confident connections between mythology and present-day signs and associations are acceptable enough, but here we have the almost arrogant connection of the Hercules figure from Greek mythology, with Jesus Christ and the founder of psychoanalysis (TF, 108-109) There are similar associations of names or numbers - both H D and Freud's ages end in the number 7 he is 77, she 47, a highly significant coincidence for H D , as is the strange connection with the number two in her family (TF, 12, 38) Another link between Freud and H D equally depends on association and verbal confusion H D and Freud are both Moravians, Freud by birth, H D by religion The link may be tenuous but H D suggests that this too is important in the light of explaining the material of her autobiography Associations of symbols, names, numbers establish in this text a network of connections superseding the plot structure The network seems closed, a set of circles connecting everything It is almost as if H D presents us here with a language based on association rather than on Saussurian difference [7]

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6 H D consistently spells these Greek names with e even though the Greek spelling would suggest 'Nike' and 'Athene

7 Further associations are multiple the association of the taller brother with H D 's own length and the tallness of Van der Leeuw connects the end of Section 13 with the beginning of the next section with the story of the uncovered slugs (TF 26-27) It also leads to another memory of Hilda's taller brother who set

The same undermining of 'plot' by means of association also affects *The Gift*. In fact, the text should be read in conjunction with *Tribute to Freud*, because it partially stems from notebooks H D kept during her sessions with Freud [8] Stories are mentioned, dropped and then associatively revived several times, as happens with the narrative of the grandfather clock, and the story of the children crying for a dead sibling The opening paragraphs jump from the death of a girl by burning to a discussion of the children's grandfathers, and back to a further description of how the girl died (G, 1)

As we have seen, the associative method frequently hinges on linguistic puns H D hereby betrays an attitude to words which could be termed pre- or newly literate Words for H D are almost magical and the punning is an indicator of their deeper realities The fact that Freud's first name has suggestions of victory or even victorious speech, while the 'S' of Sigmund suggests the reversed question mark from her vision, the existence of the signet ring in the Louvre and the Asklepian snake proves to the narrator that there is a hidden but very deep relation between them, a truth on a deeper level of reality H D 's interest in a revised female mythology leads her to a totally different more primitive perception of language, stemming from a more oral society She stresses the magical, life-giving qualities of both spoken words and the mystic sacred texts which she refers to Words are played with for their creative power, for the presence of the chanted, enchanted word, like the sentence from eastern mysticism repeatedly intoned by Her 'I am the word AUM' (H, 68)

The result is that, like the psychoanalytic dream, these associative autobiographical texts suppress the plot of autobiographical truth by becoming overdetermined They resist exhaustive interpretation by an excess of signifieds and meaningfulness It is impossible to narrate linearly what is expressed in the density of the metaphorical

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the newspaper on fire by means of a looking glass a memory itself connected with biblical scenes of punishment (TF 28) The father s study leads to a description of Freud s study their working tables a return to the looking glass memory and so on

8 Moreover 'Advent later published by Norman Holmes Pearson is made up of these diary entries during her analysis so that there is a very strong content connection between the three texts two of which were based on memories of the 'Advent notes There is an added problem with the authority of the text of *The Gift*. This chapter uses the Virago text based on an American edition by Griselda Ohanessian which cut about one third of the original text all of H D 's notes an entire chapter and many smaller sections' (Collecott 1984 x)

symbol The clay figures made by the father are compared to the biscuits made from dough by Ida (G, 29) Their own town is called Bethlehem, the biblical name causing another overdetermination of the child's life (G, 31) H D 's astronomer father is linked with God (TF, 28) The historical Freud becomes Moses or Jesus Christ and is associated with mythical figures of age and authority like 'the Old Man of the Sea', 'the hermit living at the edge of the wood', or the 'guardian at the gate' (TF, 20, 102, 108)

> He has his family, the tradition of an unbroken family, reaching back through this old heart of the Roman Empire, further into the Holy Land
>
> Ah Psyche from the regions which
> Are Holy Land!
>
> He is the infinitely old symbol, weighing the soul Psyche, in the Balance Does the Soul, passing the portals of life, entering the House of Eternity, greet the Keeper of the Door? It seems so I should have thought the Door-Keeper, at home beyond the threshold might have greeted the shivering soul Not so the Professor (TF, 102-103)

H D herself is Goethe's Mignon (TF, 106, 111) the biblical Miriam (TF, 113), or the mythical younger sister Elektra defying the mother figure with her brother (TF, 35) The overdetermination ensures that readers cannot be allowed to misunderstand the meaning she assigns to events in her past The messianic message of *The Gift* and *Tribute to Freud* is rubbed in insistently and repetitively, very much as would happen with an oral narrator For critics and reviewers, there is in fact little to be 'discovered' hidden in the text, since everything is explicit and overdefined, except the historical 'truth'

3 Performance

Once again the performance aspect is brought forward in these autobiographical texts, and the narrator seems present to us The readers are explicitly addressed, as if taking part in a conversation In *The Gift*, the narrator thus explains the Christmas ritual in the family by a persistent questioning of the present-absent dichotomy involved in reporting in print

> You may wonder what mysterious occult ceremony requires cotton wool from Mamalie's medicine cupboard, You, yourself may wonder at the mystery in this house, the hush in this room, you may glance at the row of children on the horsehair sofa , the children can not tell you (sic) Castor and Pollux are, you may know, You may wonder what a lump of clay and matchsticks has to do with Christmas, but if you are a stranger in

> our town, you will be told If you belong to the town, you will know all
> about Christmas, If you are a stranger, you will say, (G, 26-27)

Tribute to Freud, on the other hand, is a memoir from a period when the presence of Freud was a daily occurrence, when parts of H D 's biography were elucidated by way of oral talk It is a written autobiographical reflection on a series of previous oral autobiographical performances, and as such also discusses the transfer of the material from the spoken to the written medium Thus, H D remarks in her own text on the euphemism she finds herself writing 'I had originally written *had gone*, but I crossed it out deliberately Yes, he was dead I was not emotionally involved' (TF, 19) H D 's correction of her text is made explicit, as if a speaker is retracting what was said earlier Similarly, associations strike the narrator while writing 'And as I write that last word, there flashes into my mind the associated *in hoc signum* or rather it must be *in hoc signo* and *vinces*' (TF, 72) She corrects herself in front of our eyes 'My serpent-and-thistle motive for instance, or *Leitmotiv*, I had almost written' (TF, 93) Very much like the Stein persona H D tries to undermine the absence connected with the text by pretending to perform the writing situation before our very eyes

Repeatedly in 'Advent', there is a conflict between Freud and H D , Freud insisting that H D does not undertake written preparation for the psychoanalytical performance (A, 165 185), while she persists in doing it [9] Moreover, H D 's psychoanalytic performance was to a certain extent continued in *Tribute to Freud*, since she was forced to write it without access to the notes she took during the period in Vienna, counting instead on the selections made by her memory Interestingly, 'Advent' is more obsessed with the way she correctly and incorrectly remembers perhaps because of the daily confrontation between oral performance and her written diary version Thus she enters the following correction to a 'memory' told during analysis

> I was wrong about the butterfly I did not break off a heavy cocoon, but I gathered the enormous green caterpillar with the tobacco-flower stalk and placed the stalk and worm in a cardboard box Did I cut holes in the box? (A 127)

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9 As was mentioned in Chapter 1 Freud thought it most beneficial if the patient abstained from writing up their psychoanalytic experiences leaving this task to the analyst

There are references to what she must remember to tell Freud, 'I must remember to tell Sigmund Freud of Norman Douglas' epigram on Havelock Ellis' (A, 133) and uncertainties, 'What had I told him? I had not told him of the caterpillar, that is certain' (A, 133) For H D the actual facts are not so important The issue here is that she remembered them wrongly during her performance in Freud's office As with a Gertrude Stein text, H D could have opted to erase and correct her story In the extended 'psychoanalytic session' that is 'Advent', however, the importance resides in the making of mistakes in performance In the patient's errors, repetitions and puns lie the clues to the unconscious, which ideal writing would have to paper over As repetitions of the psychoanalytic performance via the textual medium, *Tribute to Freud* and 'Advent' in fact need, somehow, to keep this performance aspect alive in the text Concerning a dream of H D , Freud refers to the 'atmosphere' of analysis (A, 147), and it is this 'atmosphere' of discovery and insight which H D needs to repeat. She is not presenting the result of analysis since the strength of the psychoanalytic session lies in its repeated performance of taboo subjects and her text is one such performance

In a different way, *Bid Me to Live* also seeks to stress performance namely the performance aspects of the conversations in which the protagonist is involved The novel is mainly the interior monologue of the woman narrator including many swift associations that muddy its conceptual line Long, drawn-out scenes similar to scenes from Richardson's *Pilgrimage* result, where the character's interior monologue muses on the signs she picks up in the conversational performance The scene where she sees Bella sitting on 'the chintz-covered couch' which originally belonged to Miss Ames, leads Julia to a paragraph-long and fairly irrelevant story about the couch and about Miss Ames' past (BMTL, 9) Events too are constantly repeated, sometimes between different texts,·in a move very reminiscent of Gertrude Stein The embrace between Bella and Rafe after the 'wangling' of some drink, the books falling on the floor during a bombardment, these are shocking events repeated almost literally by a distressed speaker whose talk runs in associative circles Presenting an even more distressed narrator in the throngs of an identity crisis after academic failure, *Her* works with a lot of repetitive sentences following close together

> "You said he was in Venice " "You said he was in Venice" brought that odd tone into Eugenia's voice

> "You said he was in Venice" brought back odd things, things that had all along been half-accepted and so the more difficult to reject openly (H, 43-44)

All H D texts involve similar long drawn-out scenes in which the woman protagonist muses associatively, or reacts to stimuli from her interlocutors However both *Her* and *Bid Me To Live* are dominated by dialogue Their autobiographical characters cannot find solitude but are constantly presented as the passive receivers of conversations and their own reactions In *Bid Me to Live*, there is the opening scene of Rafe's leaving, long and associative, or the interrupted scene with Bella constantly returning to her accusation that Julia holds Rafe's soul With all these similar autobiographic personae, the emphasis is on what they say in response to their male interlocutors and what they merely think Significantly, their unverbalized reactions to men's statements finally come about in printed text, solid and unerasable

The analysand H D is equally obsessed with her own reactions to the great man Freud A central event is Freud's anger outburst, repeated several times, whereby H D compares her reactions with how she feels she is expected to react She reports how she 'simply felt nothing at all' except amazement (TF, 23), despite an awareness that she should feel awe or fear She suspects that he is attempting to bring her analysis to a crisis Instead, it turns out to concern the mental anxieties of the analyst rather than the analysand This scene is a focal point, where in fact H D describes the clash of two autobiographies It concerns her discovery that she is a person on the sidelines of *his* life story, that she sees only one version of Freud, the version experienced by one autobiographer H D 's reaction to this discovery is basically a non-reaction She says nothing but sneaks back onto the couch, offering us yet another scene with a woman author who hasn't uttered a word (TF, 24) The focus of *Tribute to Freud* is not on narrative but circles around this one particular session vividly remembered, to which the text returns again and again, as in Section 13 in the present tense (TF, 25) What H D really is describing is not a memoir of Freud as he was then, but a dialogic memoir of her own reactions to the man, of the situations in which she was put by the analysis and her own ways of dealing with this very particular speech situation The scene of Freud's outburst significantly ends with the remark that 'the Professor was not always right' (TF, 24) Equally interesting, the next section opens with another indication of H D 's reaction to this dramatic aspect of the analysis

> I did not argue with the Professor In fact, as I say, I did not have the answer If he expected to rouse me to some protestation of affection, he did not then succeed in doing so - the root or the current ran too deep (TF, 25)

The real topic of this memoir is not a tribute to Freud As a memoir of the great man, it is undermined by the sheer weight of attention focused on the narrator rather than on the topic of the memoir It is the story of one person's reactions to this God-man Freud, of the chemistry between them in their performance of a psychoanalytic session Like Stein and Richardson, H D composes relational autobiographies

Another aspect of oral performance, very much specific to this author, concerns the importance H D attaches to the ritual connected with her Moravian background In *The Gift*, there is the performance of a play, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' Despite its shoddy presentation in a country theatre the play has a certain mystical, magical effect, changing reality To the minds of the children 'the street would never be the same again, it would always be different, really everything would always be different Everything came true' (G, 17) Moreover, the play is explicitly connected with other ritualistic performances and processions across the world and history We get a clear picture of an older, mainly oral world, where the performance of a play, a mass or even a procession was magical creative, changing the existing reality, and the minds of the watcher-listeners

> Oh well, I know it was only Little Eva in a jerry-built, gold chariot, and yet it was the very dawn of art, it was the sun, the drama, the theater, it was poetry - why, it was music, it was folklore and folksong, it was history It was all these things and in our small town, on the curb of the pavement, the three children - and maybe Tootie - who stood watching were all the children of all the world, in Rome, in Athens in Palestine, in Egypt they had watched golden chariots, they had seen black men chained together and cruel overseers brandishing whips It was Alexandria, it was a Roman Triumph, it was a Medieval miracle-play procession with a devil, who was Simon Legree, and the poor dark shades of purgatory, who were the negroes chained together, and it was Pallas Athenè, in her chariot with the Winged Victory poised with the olive crown, who was coming to save us all (G 18)

Performance changes reality To the watching children, Papalie's statement at Christmas 'Papalie says *I am the light of the world*', seems to change him into Jesus Christ (G, 59) Important to any ritual is its transfer of knowledge by *performance*

before an audience Thus, Christmas ritual demands that Papa put aside his scientific instruments to make clay animal figures with the children watching silently, in a row on the sofa

4 The Topic of Orality

Orality and the issues of the female speaker seem as central to the autobiographical prose of H D as was the case for Richardson and Stein In *Her*, conversation is compared to a tree, of which every part suggests the nature of the whole 'One conversation can give clue to the whole insistencies of a forest, analyse it and you will find whether the tract of oak wood may or may not, at some specific later date, be blighted' (H, 57) Submerged in her psychological crisis, 'her yet unformulated consciousness' conversation for Her naturally takes place in 'a sodden jungle' (H, 57) The myth upheld by H D in all her autobiographical texts is that of an inefficient 'absent' female speaker but one with the intuitive gift as a Seer and a Speaker, as a woman prophet The examples of linguistic inability or impotence are scattered throughout the novels, almost hinting at an obsession

The girl child in *Tribute to Freud* suffers from linguistic confusion when faced with the contradictions of grown-up speech, in what is really a story of language acquisition and the repressions this entails If the distraught Her 'ran words along like a child reading out of a first primer, like a Hindu learning to speak English' (H, 93), then in *Tribute to Freud*, there is an equally incompetent child-speaker, who also feels a 'foreigner', 'whispering with other inarticulate but none the less intuitively gifted fellow-whisperers of one's own age' (TF, 32, 33) Nor does 'Hilda' in *The Gift* yet possess the vocabulary necessary to function as a speaker Specifically she is as yet incapable of recognizing the basic metaphorical function of naming, of language The schoolteacher paradoxically talks of an oasis as 'an island in the desert' or of Egyptians who 'built little houses to live in when they were dead' (G, 5) And they tell her a story about Bluebeard, whose name confusingly indicates that 'he had a very black beard', another metaphor taken at face value by the children and consequently misunderstood (G, 7) Mr Evans, the new assistant, adds another linguistic problem when he mentions 'stars were suns, didn't we know that?' (G, 42) Equally, the phrases 'shooting star', 'goose flesh' are cause for confusion (G, 75) Orally incompetent, Hilda empathizes with Harold's loneliness at school but 'could not translate it into words', and as for the new atmosphere at school 'There were no words for it' (G, 34) In *Tribute to Freud*, there is the confusion for the young child

between the homonyms '(Pears? Pairs?)', which the five-year old, illiterate H D cannot distinguish (TF, 27) Unable to work out what words mean on the basis of spelling, she has no control over the language, and she consequently discovers almost magical new relationships between unconnected words The children tell a visitor about their grandfather clock and are put down conversationally by the visitor's joke it is a grandfather clock and was made by a great-grandfather back in Europe (G, 2) The example is quoted of 'Tootie's etymological explanation of the German word 'putz' still used by the family in America for the Christmas stable which sets them apart from main American culture 'I think *putz* is what you *put* on the moss' The joky comparison of Papalie to a goat because of his beard is not funny but worrying (G, 28) Her's problems too are clearly linguistic when even her depression or psychological crisis has no name 'Her Gart had no word for her dementia' (H 3) [10] It is even suggested that Her's problem in part stems from not having this scientific vocabulary, to attempt defining her condition The lack of explanatory psychoanalytic terminology is portrayed as crucial

> Her's energy must go groping forward in a world where there was no sign to show you "Oedipus complex " no chart to warn you "mother complex," shoals threatening "Guilt complex" and "compensation reflex" had not then been posted, showing your way on in the morass (H, 47)

Opposed to the linguistic incompetence stressed by this 'foreign' autobiographer the male characters are capable efficient speakers operating in their full presence The different capabilities of male and female talkers, discussed in various ways by both Richardson and Stein, also appear in H D 's novels Halfway through the novel, Her still cannot communicate her confused feelings to George She 'wanted to say but didn't say' George, on the other hand, is very much in control of his own voice His voice is 'sursurring', by his own terms 'His voice when he wasn't being too funny, wasn't showing off, was simple accompaniment to trees above her head, to herself revitalized, born into trees' (H, 64-65) He shows off his knowledge of plays intoning 'dramatically', persistently and loudly from Shakespeare and Longfellow (H, 65), and also attempts to keep Her silent which she resists (H, 68) Or he mocks the illogicalities in Her's speech performance

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10 Although Her has no definition for her illness others do ' failure complex' "compensation reflex and 'that conniving phrase "arrested development (H 3)

> "I met a girl at that tiresome Nellie Thorpe's I told you I was going to see on the telephone?" "Did you?" "Did I what?" "See her on the telephone?" (H, 69)

Instead of recognizing the function of context in the oral situation he chooses to misread, to take her statements literally, as if they were perfect 'written' text Likewise, *Tribute to Freud* and *The Gift* present successful, even significant male speech, like the Christmas ritual where Papa can embody Christ by speaking his words Reminiscent of a biblical prophet, he forbids the children to play with fire Even Hilda's brother already makes inroads into successful speech Two naughty children setting fire to a newspaper by way of their father's magnifying glass, Hilda and her brother are berated by their scientist-god-father for playing with his matches Hilda's brother almost possesses the same control over speech and offers the clever retort of Prometheus, the mythological trickster of the gods "'But we aren't playing with matches"'(TF, 31) Unlike Prometheus these children are still linguistically relatively helpless in the presence of the threatening father figure 'He can not answer father Zeus in elegant iambics and explain how he, Prometheus, by his wit and daring has drawn down fire from the sky' (TF, 32) They lack the language to dissemble the magic as science, as their father does But there is hope, as 'Papa' recognizes that his son may nevertheless have exploited a mistake in his own linguistic performance

> "Perhaps," he may have said (for our father is a just man), "I did not actually *forbid* you taking the magnifying glass," "It was understood, I thought, that you did not disturb *anything* on my table " (TF, 33)

H D 's own italics indicate that she thought this linguistic aspect of the scene important The girl child Hilda, however, responds with oral impotence

> But the ordinary words of the common speech are sometimes above my head I do not always even understand the words my brother uses He is a big boy and known to be quaint and clever for his age I am a small girl and small for my age and not very advanced I am in a sense, still a foreigner (TF, 32)

Significantly, as a girl she is a person only learning to speak the language, alienated from her own family and from a natural language Another scene combining a dumb Hilda and a brother flexing his linguistic muscles is the scene on 'Main street', with her brother repeating 'solemnly' he is not going home The mother's answer is

laughter, and '[s]he obtains supporters, strangers and near-strangers repeat her words like a Greek chorus, following the prompting of their leader' (TF, 34) Situated on the curb, this seems a small Oedipal playlet Even though the defiance of the mother is not as serious as the defiance of the patriarch - she needs to get supporters - it is all stolen language in this part of *Tribute to Freud.*

Aided by psychoanalysis, H D 's later texts are about the discourse to be achieved by the young girl Language and its symbols are to be wrested both from 'father Zeus' and father Freud, who is, however, a much more benevolent and enabling god As a result of Freud showing her the Pallas Athene statue without the spear, the narrator discusses his voice, his speech Freud's talk is all-powerful, crossing the boundaries of several languages and sounding equally alive and powerful in all of them His speech enters another dimension of presence, newer than common speech, more vibrant, more in control

> She has lost her spear He might have been talking Greek The beautiful tone of his voice had a way of taking an English phrase or sentence out of its context (out of the associated context, you might say, of the whole language) so that, although he was speaking English without a perceptible trace of accent, yet he was speaking in a foreign language The tone of his voice, the singing quality that so subtly permeated the texture of the spoken word made that spoken word live in another dimension or take on another colour, as if he had dipped the grey web of conventionally woven thought and with it conventionally *spoken* thought into a vat of his own brewing - or held a strip of that thought ripped from the monotonous faded and outworn texture of the language itself into the bubbling cauldron of his own mind in order to draw it forth dyed blue or scarlet, a new colour to the old grey mesh, a scrap of thought, even a cast-off rag that would become hereafter a pennant, a standard, a *sign* again, to indicate a direction or fluttering aloft on a pole to lead an army (TF, 75)

This unbelievable last sentence indicates a Freud pouring forth colourful, warlike spoken words powerfully embodying thought, words drawn significantly from the alchemist's process His pronunciation of the word 'time' is 'surcharged, an explosive that might, at any minute, go off (Many of his words did, in a sense, explode, blasting down prisons, useless dykes and dams, bringing down landslides, it is true, but opening up mines of hidden treasure)' (TF, 80) Interestingly in this respect, H D has also associated Freud's name with success in the oral sphere Connected to the 's' of signet ring, Sigmund is also called 'Sigmund the singing voice, no, it is Siegmund really, the victorious mouth or voice or utterance' (TF, 93) On first meeting Freud, the future analysand significantly does not speak but issues a

'wordless challenge' When Freud expects her to look at him, H D perversely first looks at the historical statues in his office When Freud expects her to be bitten by his little dog, Yofi, she is not From the point of view of H D , the whole section shows a struggle not to behave as expected in dealing with the presence of the great man (TF, 104)

However in her discussion of the absent woman speaker H D has made the connection with the language she is using The grammar of a sentence and the 'grammar' around which stories and myths are constructed are similar in that they reject the woman speaker, refusing women visibility and presence *Her* contains a very understated plot, and readers have to work hard to understand what 'happens' the academic failure, the engagement with George, the affair with Fayne, the broken engagement, illness and the return of Fayne Hermione's crisis of course fits in with H D 's own academic failure at Bryn Mawr and the pressure she was under from an astronomer father with great expectations for his clever daughter But H D adds a grammatical complication which fronts the linguistic difficulties for women in becoming speakers in a language which offers no 'significant' place for them in its grammar Her Gart's identity problem is best recognized when she attempts to 'speech' herself, to say in conversation who she is Grammar denies her as a speaker 'I am Her' is a logical quandary (H 3) Grammar is biased against women to try to speak as a woman, to say 'I', results in a contradiction H D formulates a proto-Lacanian awareness of alienation and absence in speech with reference to the practical experiences of the woman speaker By saying who she is Her is merely saying she is not 'I am Her', meaning 'I am someone else' Self-identification is here utterly impossible, and this is particularly poignant in the speaking situation with the absence of capital letters Hermione's final name Gart, is equally ludicrous and, since it is used for a version of the past Hilda Doolittle, this indicates the extent to which H D saw herself as a stranger, an outsider 'She said, "I am Hermione Gart," but Her Gart was not that' (H, 3) The family name has been made famous by her father and the 'Gart theorum of mathematical biological intention' (H, 4) [11] With her father the inventor of a theorum which seems to deal with biological determination, Her also suffers from the scientific attribution of an 'empty' identity tying her to

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11 The word 'theorum' is not actually in the dictionary, which suggests that H D was perhaps using an americanism for the word theorem' meaning '(maths) statement for which a reasoned proof is required' (Brown 1993)

biological type Her Gart's academic failure seems directly connected with her biological determination as a woman (H, 4)

Not unexpectedly with this naming paradox, Hermione suffers from a lack of definition Her identity crisis is also described in images of fluidity, as 'drowned' Her self-definition is too 'slippery ' and her fingers 'slipped' off her sense of identity (H, 4) Her's slippery self receives almost over-determination in the text, since her first name too is constantly in danger of slippage, of disappearing into the grammar of a sentence It can be mistaken for an object pronoun or a possessive pronoun, the individuality of Her's person disappearing under the generalizing female pronoun She is a speaking subject constantly threatened by a take-over by her own speech, another female speaker who is absent as she attempts to speak her presence The simple sentence 'Her Gart stood' could contain a noun phrase and verb as in 'Her mind still trod its round' rather than a personal name and verb (H, 4) Trying to express identity, Her is compulsively repeating her own name, and it makes little sense

> I am Her Gart, my name is Her Gart I am Hermione Gart I am going round and round in circles Her Gart went on Her feet went on Her Gart I am Her Gart Nothing held her, she was nothing holding to this thing I am Hermione Gart, a failure (H, 4)

The only identification which she manages is that of a 'failure', a void, a nothing Because she cannot define herself grammatically, cannot define a separate space with a clear-cut edge for herself Her has not really accessed language and therefore the reality she lives in She cannot distinguish clear boundaries, the difference between herself and what surrounds her Almost a Kristevan 'babbler' H D 's autobiographical persona 'flows' into reality, can no longer make distinctions Significantly in this situation her vision is blurred

> Her eyes peered up into the branches The tulip tree made thick pad separate leaves were outstanding, separate bright leaf-discs, in shadow Her Gart peered far, adjusting, so to speak, some psychic lens, to follow that bird She lost the bird, tried to focus one leaf to hold her on to all leaves, she tried to concentrate on one frayed disc of green, pool or mirror that would refract image She was nothing She must have an image no matter how fluid, how inchoate (H, 4-5)

In fact, Her here resembles the confused and vacant-minded women in nineteenth century painting (see Chapter 1), women who can hardly distinguish between themselves and the rest of nature The worries of disappearance and blurring entertained by Miriam and her friends seem here to have become reality Even her memories are deficient in providing Her with a clearly defined self, as she tries to 'drag in personal infantile reflection', the Freudian method per se of attempting to strengthen the ego against the workings of the unconscious (H, 5) Her grammatical problems are indicative in her contradictory simple sentences 'I'm too pretty I'm not pretty enough ', or 'People don't want to marry me People want to marry me I don't want to marry people' (H, 5) Even her place in the marriage plot is inchoate and confused Consequently, what Her wants from her lover George is definition As the three-dimensional world whirls around her, she cannot distinguish, cannot return to the visual two-dimensional perspective which would help her The outcome is the notion of 'to paint green on green', again beyond the distinction of the clear ego armed with language (H, 6) Once more we have a woman speaker who feels she is not really there, because she is not clearly defined 'blurred at the edges' to put it in Richardson's style

> She wanted George as a little girl wants to put her hair up or to wear long skirts She wanted George with some uncorrelated sector of Her Gart, she wanted George to correlate for her, life here, there She wanted George to define and to make definable a mirage, a reflection of some lost incarnation, a wood maniac, a tree demon, a neuropathic dendrophil (H, 63)

In a situation very reminiscent of *Pilgrimage*, Her's verbal-sexual encounter with the intoning and quoting George Lowndes threatens to obliterate her identity, by smudging her out

> Kisses forced her into soft moss Her head lay marble weight in cushion of forest moss Kisses obliterated trees smudged out circles and concentric circle and the half-circle that was the arch (she had seen) of a beech branch sweeping downward The kisses of George smudged out her clear geometric thought but his words had given her something *the brown bright nightingale amorous is half assuaged for for* her name is *Itylus* (H, 73)

Chapter Three significantly follows this with 'Smudged out I am smudged out' (H, 73) However, it is important to remember, in view of H D 's interest in mysticism and prophetism, that this fluidity which in a sense so plagues her (or Her) will also be regarded rather more positively, as a 'gift', a state of mind which enables Her and woman in general to be in close touch with a deeper reality Moreover, this narrator knows the future 'But Her Gart was then no prophet She could not predict later common usage of uncommon syllogisms' thus implying that the later Her Gart will be a prophet, and will be cognizant with Freudian psychoanalysis (H 3) Thus, the text makes sure that we as readers realize that this is a limited period in Her's life, the narrator pointing to the future prophet the future analysand [12]

Defending George during a quarrel with her mother, 'Hermione heard Hermione speaking saying something out of a play, words had been written for her she was repeating words that had been written' (H 94-95) Even though she rejects being a 'foul parrot' to her mother's accusations Her is not present while speaking, not in charge of her own words In fact, women's social function prevents them from speaking their own words, as they have to feed a polite, sociable conversation In *Her*, social small talk is bewildering to the reeling mind of Hermione Part of Chapter IV and the greater part of Chapter V are devoted to the tactful conversation at Nellie Thorpe's and the meeting with Fayne The formal conversation is experienced as limiting by Hermione and by the silent Fayne Rabb (H, 50-51) With her academic failure to account for in this atmosphere, Her finds it hard to 'be there' in conversation She does not perform knowingly as a speaker, and a few pages later nearly falters under their questions which are like a 'Tibetan prayer wheel' (H, 54)

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12 The novel rejects the plot of a Bildungsroman however offering only a slice of Her s life without making the causal connection to a later Her or potentially even a later H D

> She did not actually hear the words she uttered She went on talking, not knowing what she said, she seemed to explain herself not knowing why she did it (I didn't know I had said anything)
> Words went round, had odd ways of tacking off, billowing out, full sail (H, 54)

> It was Her Gart saying "*Richard Feverel*." Something as unrelated to a giant moth-wing as a saltcellar is to a petunia took up that strand, she contributed her counters to the play of conversation with as good a grace as any Yet all the time something non-related caused a queer sort of blurring-out of image She couldn't think and talk and see and be, all at the same instant Hardly knowing that she WAS, she let go more than one half of Her (H, 56)

She feels that she cannot connect immediately with other people, that '[s]omething crept, always crept between her and everybody everybody?' (H, 69) Chapter VIII starts with the extensive discussion of a conversation, as experienced by Her 'like something forgotten, like echo in delirium' (H, 71) Her's almost hallucinatory experience of hearing conversation in the room is combined with an equally disconcerting experience of space and 'illimitable distance' while Her feels herself an octopus with 'a thousand eyes' floating in this world of space and talk (H, 71) In her confused state, she has no control over spoken language, neither its reception nor its enunciation Associations and repetitiveness lead her into chaos but it is also a state which will prove enlightening

But at times Hermione does perform better as a speaker Faced with Nellie, she finds she is now in control of the conversation by the sheer power attached to her status as a fiancée

> Conversation went on like that, Hermione holding the rod, Hermione really working the thing the stick that made the jumping-jack (Nellie) jump, jumping-jack ball on a bright elastic cord ball on the end of a rod, drop it, let it bounce automatically back. Hermione held the rod by right of courtesy of her announced engagement (who had announced it? it was in all the papers) Nellie said, "I saw it in the papers," this jumping-jack sort of wand, of stick with ball on an elastic that held Nellie at the end of an elastic string, bouncing, bouncing (H, 129)

After the first meeting with Fayne Rabb, for Her significantly performing the function of a mirror Her increasingly discovers moments of successful speech talking to George, when she feels something 'takes shape' as she talks (H, 137) A long flirty conversation with Fayne shows H D 's self-conscious connection of Her's mirror stage with the successful speaking self But the solidarity between these women is more

osmotic and fluid than the visual difference indicated by the Freudian and Lacanian mirror phase Fayne in a sense helps Her to speak by putting 'a hard dynamic forceful vibrant hand' on Her's throat She thus 'dragged words out of the throat of Her Gart' (H 145) And Her starts to fight back towards George, inventing a new name for him, 'Georg' (H, 168) Significantly, Hermione is a woman speaker who is forever clearing her throat 'She said Em, Hem, Um, clearing her throat and her breath made a runnel in her throat like an icicle on a hot stove' (H, 193) And during Her's convalescence, she is frantically talking "'No I'm tired of not talking It seems I have never talked I want to talk and talk forever "' (H, 200)

Subject to mental pressure of a totally different kind - marital infidelity and a World War - H D 's persona in *Bid Me to Live* Julia, nevertheless shares characteristics with Hermione Gart, most typically her uncertain position as a speaking subject She literally cannot hold her own vis à vis the constant intrusions into her living space Julia feels relieved when her husband Rafe leaves for the trenches because of the emotional drain of his ambiguous presence (BMTL, 32) But equally she is yearning for isolation when she is in the company of friends like Bella, Rico and Elsa The whole first part of the novel has her marooned in her room, but continuously taken over by the intervention of others whose entrances and exits remind her of a play, reducing her room to a stage and preventing her feelings of reality She has the same feeling of non-presence in reality in Corfe 'It was raining, rain beat against the high window, rain in a stage-set It was a stage-set Corfe could not be true' (BMTL, 34) Fallen books seem 'like books in a play depicting a scene in an earthquake' (BMTL, 48) Under intense pressure Julia, like Her, is not even sure whether she is speaking herself, or whether she is enunciating dialogue written by a playwright 'and speaking as if from outside, like someone in a play, Julia heard Julia speaking' (BMTL, 48) [13] This feeling of being controlled by outside events returns again and again (BMTL, 50, 63) Bella even acts badly, 'as if she were bent on speaking her lines, this particular set of words she flung out, tonelessly', 'as if she were speaking lines, not very well stressed, lines she had learned knew perfectly' She is compared to a 'foreign exotic, bright parrot' uttering toneless words put into its head, once again the epitome of the absent woman speaker, not voicing her own lines (BMTL, 98, 101)

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13 In her psychological breakdown Hermione has the same theatrical awareness 'Words said over and over over and over They were a stock company playing in a road show words over and over All very well cast for the parts can t get out of this show it s too fu-uunny' (H 40)

The result of Her's inability to define herself into a speaking subject is that she can no longer name things properly, that names even seem slightly dangerous to her She skims over language, only connecting with the superficial layer, the signifiers, leading her from association to association until the connections become utterly meaningless

> The woods parted to show a space of lawn, running level with branches that, in early summer, were white with flower Dogwood blossom Pennsylvania Names are in people, people are in names Sylvania I was born here People ought to think before they call a place Sylvania Pennsylvania I am part of Sylvania Trees Trees Trees Dogwood, linodendron with its green-yellow tulip blossoms Trees are in people People are in trees Pennsylvania (H, 5)

Her skating over associations prevents her from accessing the content the referents of words, as well as from using words and names to affect her environment The matter of naming itself is questioned because people called the state Pennsylvania the name is now threatening to take over Such a state can only contain trees, colonizing the people so that 'Trees are in people People are in trees ' As Her experiences it, naming is dangerous, because the name takes over its referent

As for Hermione Gart, the naming of girls in *The Gift* is a function of in-built destruction, as is only too obvious from the bodies of dead girls littering the text The child Hilda has several confusing names, calling up different personalities and attitudes, when she finds herself in the conversational situation adjusting the 'content' of her personality to the demands of the name giver Thus, she is the Moravian 'Sister', which unites her with the other women in the community, but also distinguishes her sharply from the 'normal', as well as from the boys who have their own names It leads to confusing family relationships, making all women equal, undifferentiated 'She calls me Sister, but I am not her sister' (G, 59) Her father calls her 'Töcterlein', which settles her under an even stronger patriarchy, with the full thrust of the German culture and history behind it (G, 40) The dialectical German word for 'little daughter' diminishes Hilda even more while referring her back to Papa, the patriarchal meaning-giver Significantly, this patriarchal scene is repeated three times The last time,the narrator describes the reaction of the child Hilda to being thus placed in a patriarchal structure 'He called me *Tocterlein* and I couldn't help it It made a deep cave, it made a long tunnel inside me with things rushing

through' (G, 50) She responds to the patriarchal calling with a set of female Freudian metaphors, the 'deep cave' and the 'tunnel' with things rushing through Rather self-consciously, Doolittle is here expressing the inescapable subconscious reaction of a young girl to patriarchal authority, positioning her in the conversational function of 'woman' It shows an awareness that while the conscious is dealing with the sentence and the situation, the subconscious is uncontrollably causing a division within the performing, situated self, who becomes a woman in conversation with a man The girl Mercy, a little sister of Papa, is seen behaving as if determined by her name In a caricature of her name she feeds a saucer of milk to a kitten before it is drowned Characteristically, this perfect child dies when she is young (G, 42)

Julia is called 'poor Judy' by Rafe, referring to the ever-battling puppet couple (BMTL, 12) Julia too changes personality 'content' as Rafe is in a different mood positing her in a different role 'He called her Anthea It was Julie Judy, Judy-bird or Julie-bird' (BMTL 21) More ambiguously, she is called 'Person' by Vane which in its initial use seems positive (BMTL 109) since it also coincides with her first escape from the oppressive stage-room At last she seems to have acquired a certain presence, if only in name But soon it becomes clear that the word refers back to the French 'Personne', a word of the feminine gender 'He calls me Person, *Personne* Nobody' (BMTL, 172) Indeed Julia is still trying to perform her own presence 'She must be like Rico "You are *there* " she should say constantly to herself, "yes there, there "' (BMTL, 120)

With all these heroines undermined by their own names, it is essential to remember that H D herself was on similar uncertain ground as regards her own name [14] Reducing the slightly comical Doolittle to the genderless H D Ezra Pound added a literary epithet 'H D Imagiste', a title in between English and French She was in effect 'named' by two men, one of whom was a poet [15] DuPlessis points out correctly

14 Barbara Guest mentions H D s dislike of her embarrassing but quite ancient last name Of course the same name giving habit existed among her female friends and lovers (Guest 1985 13)

15 'I didn't like his insistence that the poems should be signed H D Imagist because it sounded a little ridiculous And I think H D disliked it too But Ezra was a bit of a czar in a small but irritating way and he had the bulge on us because it was only through him that we could get our poems into Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* and nobody else at that time would look at them So we had to give in /////If I am not mistaken these poems of H D s were the first to appear with the Imagist label Three of mine (which launched me on my Italian trip) had appeared a month or two before without the label though Ezra afterwards included them in the first Imagist anthology I think this fact (which can be established from the early files of *Poetry*) lends considerable support to those who say the Imagist movement was H D , and H D the Imagist movement (Aldington 1941 123-124)

that the start of H D 's career was 'a crisis of naming and appropriation' (DuPlessis 1986 6) Significantly, H D 'hid' behind other pseudonyms occasionally because she felt the content of the work did not fit the term 'H D ' A D Hill, Delia Alton, Rhoda Peter, John Helforth (DuPlessis 1986, 7) [16]

Conversation plays yet another role in H D 's writing In *The Gift*, it is in the oral sphere that all the ambiguities concerning this complicated family emerge in order to be painstakingly worked out or talked out 'but Florence said Melinda had said that Nettie had said there was a Sister in the dead-house' (G, 6) Concerning the taboo subject of death amongst the whispering children, the act of saying is repeated and magnified In a psychoanalytical interpretation, the oral situation is the singular theatre in which repression traumatism, and the creation of taboos occur In the conversations between family members a number of vague statements and unexplained blanks cover those areas where the unity and cohesiveness of the patriarchal family cracks There is the taboo subject concerning babies the 'little foreigners' the children hear about without understanding The children have to fill in these performative blanks with the help of the few clues 'overheard hiding under the kitchen table, or gathered, or inferred, whispering with her other inarticulate but none the less intuitively gifted fellow-whisperers of one's own age' H D considers orality and literacy in the light of the Doolittle family romance taking her cue from Freudian psychoanalysis Important, from an analyst's point of view are for instance the misunderstandings of the children about their own family

> For a long time we were under the impression that we had two fathers, Papa and Papalie, but the children across the street said Papalie was our grandfather (G 1)

H D puts this misunderstanding in the beginning of the text, thus stressing its hidden significance The two fathers with similar names 'Papa' and 'Papalie' effect a doubling of the patriarchal presence in the house But with the children unsure over who exactly is their father, the family romance seems ruptured Greatly stressed is the children's apparent ignorance of the structure of their family In secretive

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16 Diana Collecott further indicates the connection between H D s use of names and pseudonymns and an older poetic goal 'To name thus is to affirm to identify to give presence By making names chime in her writing H D was not merely uttering incantations but invoking hidden connections committing to memory This is an ancient purpose of poetry, and the process is similar to that by which women traditionally recount genealogies and establish relationships In naming H D is remembering un-forgetting' (Collecott 1984 xv)

conversations with other children and their nurse they have to root out their status towards half-brothers, step-brothers, the dead wives and children of their father and grandparents H D here focuses on the force of oral talk in which these topics of secrecy and taboo are conveyed She thus presents a very Oedipal picture of the disillusion and loss of innocence involved in discovering the family power structure via conversation Further cracks in the Victorian family are unearthed for instance, when the existence of two generations of siblings confuses 'Hilda' as to who is the mother or sister The problem is Mamalie, who married twice, and produced two generations of children As a result a much older Aunt Agnes has children of her own who are older than the Doolittle children, 'young men, almost like uncles', a further muddying of the relations (G, 1) Papa is godlike, taking his children on an outing to a hut by a lake, via an almost mythological 'tunnel through the woods' But his status also involves an acute and worrying mystery for the children concerning his previous family, his first wife called Martha and her living and dead children Alfred, Eric and Alice (G, 68) A taboo rests on this first family they must not be discussed in the presence of Hilda's mother

> Papa talked to the man who drove the horse, Papa had been here before, with whom? Not Mama Had he brought those other children Alfred and Eric and Alice (who was dead), here, before he married Mama? There was a world a life of mystery beyond him,
> There was another mother she was a mystery, she was dead, her name was Martha we must not ask about her (G 67)

There is something sinister and homicidal about a man who can replace a dead wife and a grown-up family so easily with a new wife and family, about a god who has so little loyalty to his subjects The taboo on the previous wife and the dead daughters indicates a sinister repression at the heart of the family romance More inexplicable family intrigue for the children, when they discover, again via talk from Ida, that they are not allowed to divide flowers evenly over the graves of all the dead girls but must give it all to Edith's grave Putting flowers on the grave of a dead step-sister by a previous wife amounts to treason towards their mother

> Mamalie did not seem to think of Fanny, Mama did not speak often of little Edith, and the other little girl was not mentioned Ida said it was better for us not to share Edith's flowers on her April birthday with the other graves, with the Lady, and with Alice We felt somehow that this was not right, but there were things we did not understand (G, 3)

This scene is the stuff that neuroses are made of It clearly indicates how repressions are constructed in conversation, in this case via Ida's prohibition Repeatedly H D refers to the children's bemused reactions to the silences they hear in the adults' conversations, the moments when the conversation flows with some difficulty because talk has to be censored Visiting Mama, '[t]he university ladies would say, "But aren't you afraid, cut off like this, miles from a doctor?"' The whispering that follows is not understood by the child nor is her being sent away 'possibly to ask Ida to bring in tea' (G, 36) The slightly better-informed adult reader can perhaps conjecture that there is potentially something wrong with the baby, or a new pregnancy or similar taboo matters of life and death

There seems an almost callous loss of life in this family, and the narrator refuses any comment but instead piles child's death onto child's death other dead 'sisters' like Elizabeth Caroline 'Aunt Agnes' and Uncle Will's first baby' (G, 3), and a sister and a half-sister of 'Hilda' As occurs in conversations, the narrator both mentions the deaths and represses their causality, refusing to assign guilt or to absolve In the family mythology this too becomes the standard way to deal with the event [17] Interpreting her family history from the women's point of view, the suggestion is that Papalie simply had too many female children die on him for it to be accidental The guilty death of sisters and wives is connected by the older narrator with the story of Bluebeard

> I can not say that a story called *Bluebeard* that Ida read us from one of the fairy tales, actually linked up in thought - how could it? - with our kind father There was a man called *Bluebeard*, and he murdered his wives How was it that Edith and Alice and the Lady (the mother of Alfred and Eric) all belonged to Papa and were there in the graveyard? No, of course I did not actually put this two-and-two together (G, 7)

Linking her own father with an infamous misogynist and wife-killer seems too terrible to state outright but is nevertheless suggested through its very denial, typically the strategy of the cautious oral speaker expecting rebuke H D is here interpreting her family history in the light of Freudian analysis, and also of her own feminism Concerning this dark female history, she replaces the child's fear of

17 In fact H D Stein and Freud all suffered anxieties concerning their own potential non-existence The relatively quick turn-over of wives during the Victorian era with wives dying in childbirth to be replaced by a new wife and mother combined with a strong belief in romantic love disturbed children who growing up realized how quickly they could lose their place in this family or could never have been born (see Chapter IV and Gay 1989)

castration characteristic of later Freudian analysis by a girl-child worried about her very existence and survival as a woman

Similarly, as Freud's analysand H D is subjected to a very ambiguous speaking situation in which again the covering and uncovering of taboo subjects become central to the speaking practice On the one hand, she is now ultimately made significant as a speaker (as she mentions, the psychoanalytic couch she is lying on reminds her of her father's) On the other hand, her speech is subjected to aggressive Freudian interpretation, based on his written notes, as discussed in Chapter 1 'Advent' mentions Freud's disapproval of her own note-taking and his wishes for the psychoanalytic performance to be unprepared Using a very visual metaphor H D describes herself as ultimately unhappy with Freudian analysis

> Upon the elaborate build-up of past memories, across the intricate network made by the hair-lines that divided one irregular bit of the picture-puzzle from another, there fell inevitably a shadow, a writing-on-the-wall, a curve like a reversed, unfinished S and a dot beneath it, a question-mark, the shadow of a question - *is this it?* (TF, 36)

As she says, the professor's answers were 'too illuminating' Interestingly, they are compared to intense light 'my bat-like thought-wings would beat painfully in that sudden search-light' Significantly, however, she does not blame Freud, but chooses instead to stress her own incompetence as a narrator 'I over-stressed or over-compensated' (TF, 36) She gives the example of a long story, which Freud waves aside '*Those two didn't count* But you felt you wanted to tell your mother' (TF, 36-37) H D agrees with this, as the section completes with a discussion of her relationship with her mother The ambiguity of the Freudian situation offers a clash between the oral and literate media in order to uncover taboos and repressions H D uses her autobiographical texts in a similar way, confronting the written medium with repressions and fissures from the oral sphere For H D the psychoanalytic method is the favoured style for her autobiographical prose It allows her to highlight the absence of women speakers in everyday life, as well as the birth of the woman Speaker and her acquisition of language and presence Thus when Her meets Fayne, the previously absent speaker not in control of her self notices a change in the nature of conversation Instead of a sodden jungle, this conversation opens the door to a new kind of reality

> There was a zone she had not explored She could use the same counter the same sort of password that she used with all these people but she had passed out in a twinkling of an eye into another forest This forest was reality There, the very speaking of the words, conjured up proper answering sigil, house and barn and terrace and castle and river and little plum tree A whole world was open She looked in through a wide doorway (H, 62)

Frequently, then, H D posits her persona as alienated from ordinary speech, not a good or true speaker in charge of her own words nor a steady identity with a stable name However, this unhappy everyday situation leads to the notion of the 'intuitive', gifted female speaker, and the H D personae do at one stage learn to really 'be there' in speech It is Speech, however connected with the 'gift', based on a more oral culture where a women's speech is that of the prophet who Speaks with power H D 's emphasis on oral performance then is intensely connected with the search for and acquisition of a potent, present language Persistently, her autobiographical fiction investigates the fissures in the oral world as lived under patriarchy, and follows these fault lines to their logical conclusion in the suppression and re-emergence of the strong female Speaker/prophet

5 The gift

Central to the autobiographical search for presence by this woman author is the story of *The Gift*. The gift in question seems to be twofold On the one hand there is the literary or musical talent possessed by Hilda's mother, her uncle Francis, and the older Hilda On the other hand, it seems to be a prophetic gift, a faculty handed down to the child Hilda by her grandmother Mamalie, stemming from a paradisaic past when Moravians communed with Indians The gift itself is the subject of patriarchal repression, and is only handed on to the child as the result of an almost mythical feat of riddle solving

A standing joke between 'Helen' and 'Mamalie' originally points to what seems yet another sinister repression

> "Why so sad, Helen?" Mamalie might say Then Mama would answer, perhaps too suddenly, too swiftly, forcing the expected "Mimmie, of course, you know why I'm crying because Fanny died " And they would both laugh (G, 3-4)

The story told to the children concerns an incident in mama's girlhood, when she and her brother were found crying for a sister who had died long before they were born The narrator again delivers no comment, but we sense the presence of listening children who feel instinctively that there is something hidden in this repeated reference to another female death Its significance is greater, however, when the narrator adds new significance to this childish affectation

> I seemed to have inherited that I was the inheritor I cared about Fanny And she died I inherited Fanny from Mama from Mamalie, if you will, but I inherited Fanny (G, 4)

She thus establishes a female link (of guilt?) in the family if the narrator Hilda is 'Frances come back', then she is her mother's sister or even 'in a sense, I would be Mama I would have important sisters, and brothers only as seemly ballast' (G 4) Suddenly, the maternal, female line turns out to be highly important, not only inheriting empathy (they all cry for Fanny) but also a 'gift' which ignores the male line The female inheritance is here subverting the Freudian family romance of patriarchy This also explains why so many girls had to die The 'gift' is indeed the greatest taboo topic in conversation

> There were the others before these, who went back to the beginning of America and before America, but we were none of us "gifted " they would say
> "How do you mean - what?"
> "Oh - I don't mean - I don't mean anything "
> But they did mean something They didn't think any of us were marked with that strange thing they called a gift the thing Uncle Fred had had from the beginning,
> But where did he get the gift, just like that? Why didn't Mama wait and teach us music like she did Uncle Fred when he was a little boy? Mama gave all her music to Uncle Fred, that is what she did That is why we hadn't the gift, because it was Mama who started being the musician, and then she said she taught Uncle Fred, she gave it away, she gave the gift to Uncle Fred, she should have waited and given the gift to us But there were other gifts, it seemed (G, 11-12)

Again repressed in conversation, the 'gift' seems both an artistic, perhaps musical giftedness, and a magical or mystical talent, part of the ritual of the female, Moravian line Via this ambiguity in fact H D indicates her perception of artists in the light of this more mystical tradition as seers and prophets, putting the concept of the gift in the oral sphere H D also distinguishes between the gift in potential, and its true existence in performance 'The gift was there, but the expression of the gift was

somewhere else ' Here also figures the complaint about Mama's neglect to pass on her own musical 'gift' through the female line This scene is immediately connected with Papalie's patriarchal suppression of her mother's gift, when he mocks her singing

> Mama told me how she heard a voice outside one of the empty classroom doors
> "What voice, Mama?"
> "Oh, it was only Papa it was only Papa he said, 'who is making this dreadful noise in here?'" (G, 21)

The humiliation is told to the child in a conversation, as another story of patriarchal power is handed down, orally installing ideology in the mind of the child The gift, then, is part of a positive female and oral culture Women's absence as effective speakers is by H D clearly put at the door of male repression She is aware of the paradoxical affective complex this has caused her feelings of inadequacy as a speaker are connected with male presence (the conversations with Fayne Rabb are fluid and mutually supportive), and the autobiographical character is hankering after the affective oral sphere surrounding the Gift

Significantly, grandmother Mamalie, who eventually tells Hilda about the gift, is a knitter Moreover, she possesses a quilt which performs a veritable alternative women's history, made up of wedding dresses and 'everybody's best dresses' In the oral world of Mamalie, the quilt functions very much like the knotted string of the Aztec Indians, a device to help memory and keep the stories, the history of the tribe, in order and in the speaker's mind Conversation and narration centre around this quilt, which creates a comforting, enabling atmosphere for female talk

> Mamalie can tell me about the dresses, I will want to ask her again about this black one with the tiny pink rosebuds, that was one of Aunt Aggie's to go to Philadelphia in, when she married Uncle Will I can pull up the quilt and I can sit here and I am not afraid now to think about the shooting star (G, 78)

The quilt is not just a centre for history or narration, but also a charm against danger and the complexities, the frightening aspects of the writing-based language of grown-ups 'I think she is going to talk about the shooting star in a different way that isn't gravitation' (G, 78)

But in order to acquire the gift, Hilda has to achieve no mean feat of successful speech herself Mamalie confuses the names of her granddaughters calling Hilda 'Aggie' Hilda is aware of a difference in her sense of reality, when she is called 'Aggie' 'I stand in my nightdress and see the room, and it is a different room and I am Aggie' (G, 77) The early part of the scene has Hilda keeping her grandmother in the room by her talk 'I don't quite know what I mean by goose-flesh but I just say something to keep her standing in the dark' (G, 75) Still called Aggie, this female Ulysses now has to pretend to be someone else, in order to get information or knowledge

> I say, "Yes, Mimmie " because Mama and Aunt Aggie call her "Mimmie " I am afraid she will remember that I am only Hilda so I crouch down under the cover so she will only half see me, so that she won't remember that I am only Hilda (G 79)

The secret is connected with family lineage, as well as the German language of their Moravian past

> I do not even want her to tell me, but I want her to go on talking because if she stops, the word will stop The word is like a beehive, but there are no bees in it now I am the last bee in the beehive, this is the game I play (G, 83)

The important element in the whole scene is that Hilda must use all her talking skills to keep Mamalie from falling asleep, or lapsing altogether into incomprehensible German 'Mamalie is talking like something in a book and I do not very much understand what she is saying' (G 83) Hilda next mentions a list of questions, which she did not at the time see written down, with their question marks The older Hilda, however, is literate and writes down the list for the readers This distinction between the younger Hilda and the older, literate one is at the heart of the whole novel, a literate artist looking back on the magical time when she achieved the gift from an oral world The questions all stem from the conversations Hilda has overheard The child makes no distinction between events from her own life, or from the Moravian history, or the great trauma in the life of her grandmother, the fire This in fact is a typically oral perception of self and history But the final question is the most important, as Hilda recognizes, because it concerns the new magical mode, writing The scene is almost a demonstration of the slowness and fluidity with which

the oral person must work something out, since in the oral world everything is fighting for the aural attention of the listener

> There were all these questions in a row, each with its particular question mark I did not think them out nor see them in writing, but some of them were
> Did you play the spinet, Mamalie? Did you play *Four Marys*?
> Who were the four Marys, and why were there four?
> Who has our Grimm, and did they lose the picture of the Princess and the Frog, that was loose and partly torn across?
> Why are they all called Christian or does it just mean that they are Christian?
> Why do they make it a secret, because anybody can read what it says in the Bible *lo, I am with you alway*?
> Did great-grandfather Weiss like Christian Henry more than he liked Francis who is Mama's own father?
> Why do you always think there might be a fire or didn't you, was it me or Mama thought it?
> Why are you frightened and put your hand to your hair? (I want long hair but if an Indian came to scalp you, perhaps it would be worse)
> What were the papers?
> "What were the papers, Mamalie?" I said (G, 84)

And the story Mamalie proceeds to tell is 'like the quilt' a story she can only piece together later (G, 85) The papers are 'the papers or the scroll of flexible deerskin which told the story of the meeting of the chief medicine men of the friendly tribes and the devotees of the Ritual of the Wounds', and they are themselves again a palimpsest of earlier texts written over but still bearing their imprint (G, 86)

> Christian, who was no mean scholar, glimpsed here a hint in Hebrew or followed a Greek text to its original, and so pieced out the story of the meeting, deciphered actually the words of strange pledges passed strange words spoken, strange rhythms sung which were prompted, all alike said, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost of the Christian ritualists and the Great Spirit of the Indians poured their grace alike their gifts came in turn to Anna von Pahlen, to John Christopher Frederick Cammerhof, to John Christopher Pyrlaeus, who was not only a scholar and authority on the Indian languages, but a musician as well (G, 86)

The texts which Hilda thus reaches with her careful questioning are no ordinary texts Underneath the 'papers' lie words spoken, significant words spoken in ritual Moreover, as she and her husband tried to repeat the 'indicated rhythms' of this magical, ritualistic text, Mamalie actually started to speak in tongues (G, 86) Consequently, these age-old papers do not contain a text of absence They overcome the emptiness of the written word engendering instead a new performance She

'herself spoke with tongues - hymns of the spirits in the air - of spirits at sunrise and sunsetting, of the deer and the wild squirrel, the beaver the otter, the kingfisher, and the hawk and eagle' (G, 87) Their contact with the words is so close that to Hilda it seems as if Mamalie 'had been there at that meeting' (G, 87) These texts of presence evoke a significant moment of unity between the Moravians and the Indians The initial peace turned sour and traumatic events followed, presumably when the Indians burned down the Moravian houses and scalped their inhabitants, all memories buried in Mamalie's past and unvoiceable But the 'gift' stems from the prelapsarian moment of almost paradisaic unity Hilda thus acquires the gift by going through this traumatic history with her grandmother, by talking her through it, one more time repeating the performance of what happened together It is essential that these texts repeat and generate an event of oral performance The 'papers' are highly significant texts from a mainly oral society They are the very present Writing which reflects Speaking and allow later generations to partake of an earlier event

6 Writing and the Need for Solitude, Isolation

In her autobiographies, H D makes a complex statement concerning both the oral and written modes of language As we have seen, she intensely investigates the precarious position of the woman speaker Occasionally, this is offset by the woman Speaker, a woman in a state of crisis which gives her access to significant, prophetic speech For the writing mode she constructs a similar opposition H D discusses writing as it is performed by her scientist-father, but there is also the function of writing for the woman writer, and there is Writing In its most dramatic form, this Writing is the Writing-on-the-Wall Here we will see how the ideal for H D is really the supernatural combination of, on the one hand, the recognition of self and egocentrism involved in writing with, on the other, the strength and presence of performance

In *Bid Me to Live*, Julia is attracted by Rico, because his letters allow her to respond in writing, and so to escape the continuous intrusion which makes her room into a public stage In her written replies she can attempt really to exist and focus on herself She writes when Rafe is asleep, in the dark, excluding her surroundings completely

> Really, I'm writing in the dark for if I open my mind's eye, I shall see things as - impossible You know I mean, this eye is that inward eye (God help us all) which is the bliss of solitude (BMTL, 43)

While Rafe's presence prevents her from accessing herself, it is the absence of Rico which inspires her

> *Bid me to live* and *I will live* It was something in the distance (Rico was in Cornwall) that empowered her, so that in the middle of the night she could strike a match and crouched over her bed-clothes, run her pencil down a page, or rather let it run for her She had sent copies of the poems to Rico, she had not to Rafe It was something secret, something hidden, you might say, even from herself (BMTL, 59)

The alternation present-absent is at its most extreme in connection with writing the true presence to herself of the woman writer requiring the absence connected with writing In the same room with Rico, Julia nevertheless feels absent in his presence, while simultaneously she feels radically present in her hidden manuscripts themselves curiously both present and absent

> Here I am, but really I am tied up in the rough copy of the poems hidden behind the *Mercure de France* volumes I sent you most of them But that is me This isn't (BMTL, 77)

Moreover, in the same scene Rico starts to write, effectively locking her out (BMTL, 79) She feels 'she might have been alone then Yet thinking of the Dodona poem, she had been nearer to the Rico that had projected it in her, or out of her, the Rico absent was nearer than the Rico present' (BMTL, 81) Earlier in the text, Rico has basically refused to acknowledge her as a full writer when he advises 'Stick to the woman speaking How can you know what Orpheus feels? It's your part to be woman, the woman vibration, Eurydice should be enough' (BMTL, 51) Showing Rico's letter to Rafe, she invokes yet more criticism, to which she can only reply with the fatalism of the female amateur writer 'It's that sort of automatic writing Out of that if I go on at that, something (on the back of an envelope) may come"' (BMTL, 53) She even claims only to have saved the paper for the blank side Unlike her male colleagues, she feels 'no Muse' and has no wish to protect her work (BMTL, 54) Strategically, H D employs for her autobiographical writing persona the benevolence and the hindrance of the male presences, in a complex emotional process that creates - through suffering - the female artist, mystic and true

'Being there' is every inch as important for H D 's personae as it was for Miriam Henderson There is a similar spatial awareness, a similar aural sensing of space The rooms and houses surrounding the female individual are as sensed as they were for a Miriam cozily encased in Mrs Bailey's boarding house At the Christmas tree decoration ritual, performed for the first time in the new house, Hilda indicates a felt interiority Hilda actively feels the house around her, before she can believe her eyes and properly take in the visually aggressive, shiny Christmas decorations

> Hilda seemed to be running this over ritualistically in her head, as if it were necessary to remember the shape of the house, each room, the hen on the dresser, the dishes shut away in the sideboard, before she dared turn her eyes actually to the table, to the tangled heap of tarnished tinsel, and angels sprinkled with glistening snow that was beginning to peel off (G, 37)

The same imagining of the house is repeated by Hilda on the next page, concerning Annie and the baby somewhere upstairs In *Tribute to Freud*, Freud's study is compared with her father's in an explicit association of her two father figures Both scientists, their rooms contain all the features of the male study, lined with books smelling of leather, with similar stoves and couches with folded rugs The association and opposition of Freud and the paternal figure of her youth is explicit and self-conscious H D 's father has a picture of Rembrandt's *Dissection*, a skull and 'a white owl under a bell-jar' typically the images of a positivist (TF, 26) Contrasting to this are Freud's statuettes his 'gods' and his favourite pictures, stemming from Greek, Roman and Egyptian history and mythology A second contrast lies in H D 's own attitude As a child, playing with her dolls in her father's study, she 'must not speak to him when he was writing at his table' (TF, 26) In Freud's study, however, H D repeats explicitly 'But now it is I who am lying on the couch in the room lined with books' (TF, 26) Not only is she, like Miriam, positioned at the centre of the room, but she is also now eagerly listened to

In the combined body of her autobiographical texts, however, H D explicitly uses rooms to symbolize individual consciousness to an extent that Richardson does not The description of Freud's rooms continues, with the correction that it is the second more unknown room which contains most of the books The second room is in darkness, and seems symbolic of H D 's relationship to Freud and her own unconscious, the inner sanctum lying just out of reach but of which room H D has almost tactile awareness Freud's study with its four walls itself becomes symbolic

The narrator reads it like a kind of super-text, its structure seen as a guide to the transcendental

> Length, breadth, thickness, the shape, the scent, the feel of things The actuality of the present, its bearing on the past, their bearing on the future Past, present, future, these three - but there is another time-element, popularly called the fourth-dimensional The room has 4 sides There are 4 seasons to a year (TF, 29)

Unsurprisingly, the fourth wall is in darkness, a non-existent wall formed by the two open doors leading to the second study The text suggests that the second room achieves this fourth dimension, a new time-dimension of presence combining the present time with the past and future, making them all alive and interacting in the atmosphere of speech, the missing sensual pole The fourth dimension is obviously the room of the subconscious and of the psychoanalytic performance of this subconscious

> The room beyond may appear very dark or there may be broken light and shadow Or even bodily, one may walk into that room, as the Professor invited me to do one day, to <u>look</u> at the things on his table (TF, 30 - emphasis mine)

When she is allowed into this inner sanctum, the lay-out and decoration will be lovingly detailed, the statues on the table will be used almost as hieroglyphs, to suggest to the analysand further memories and interpretations Throughout the text, H D will regard the address and the lay-out of the house in which she has her sessions as vital When she visits Freud in exile in London, she presents the room there as a copy of the consulting room in Berggasse, the statues forming an environment for Freud which is carefully recreated wherever he goes 'It was difficult, seeing the familiar desk, the familiar new-old images on the desk there, to realize that this was London' (TF, 17) Here too, the past lives in the present, the atmosphere is exactly the same, except that a return to Vienna is now impossible

Julia in *Bid Me to Live* at first seems almost cloistered in her room, since she does not leave it until she meets Vane in the second part of the book For her too, the room is the focus of self-identification, at first an unhappy focus, since she finds it very hard to prevent the continuous invasion by Rafe, Rico and Elsa, Bella and the war itself

> Then there was the room Chief in importance the room itself, the frame to the picture, the curtains that might at any moment part on carnage in Queen's Square
> But she wasn't to be saved that way She was in the middle of something Three long French windows, three double sets of curtains that she had hemmed herself, were three symbolical sets of curtains about to part on carnage in Queen's Square She could not know that she was in the middle of a trilogy, she could not phrase it that way *J'y suis*
> I myself, I myself, I myself This is my room (BMTL, 9-10)

With the others present, Julia feels control over her room and consequently over her identity slipping away The psychological conflict of the text is expressed in terms of control over the space she lives in

> The room was no longer her home, her own, strange cross-currents had been at work upon it Why make an effort any more? Either this was or was not her room, evidently it's a public highway She was sitting alone in the midst of this confusion (BMTL 85)

More seriously, the room becomes the stage of a play, completely alienating Julia from herself, since even now the words she says are no longer her own, the space is equally open to viewers, the gestures are pre-written, again pulling oral and scripted poles into the autobiographical sphere Julia at one point manages to be on her own, but the isolation does not last long

> Bella stood there in her green frock with the buttons down the front, looking as if she were making a stage entrance Surely this room was open on one side, everything that went on here, it seemed to Julia, was public property, no privacy, yet with a sort of inner sanctity that public works of art have They seemed to be acting in a play, yet un-selfconsciously trained actors who had their exits, their entrances (BMTL, 90)

Typically, Julia starts to write seriously only once she has removed herself to a room of her own in Cornwall It is a small attic room, with a small fireplace and a small window, an almost womb-like room allowing Julia to be alone and forbidding the presence of others which is so detrimental to writing (BMTL, 161)

Hermione Gart is faced with the same social dilemma While she rejects her previous stories - they are not *writing* - she hankers to go to the family cottage at Mount Pleasant, alone Part of her problem with language is that she is barred from this, and has to stay within the social sphere It is consequently not surprising that H D writes down the following outburst concerning a dream in *Advent*

> A friend of my school-days comes She is looking for rooms *Rooms* again there is the old predicament! Will she interfere with my *room* or *rooms*? Is this a birth-anxiety? (A, 169)

Birth anxiety or not H D associates her identity with the isolation of a room empty of interlocutors It is a feeling Julia recognizes in that other autobiographical artist, Vincent van Gogh, whose picture, *Vincent's Room*, she once again interprets as a sign of his identity

> Do you remember that picture, *Vincent's room*?
> It isn't unlike this room, only this room is wider and has the couch instead of a proper bed, and this room doesn't really look like a bedroom, in the daytime
> I can't remember details of the picture, only the feel of it clothes hung on a peg those famous shoes (or the homely feel of them) somewhere (BMTL, 178)

Other similar metaphors of identity defined as interiority rather than as difference are the analysand's 'narrow birchbark canoe' sheltering from coming war in *Tribute to Freud* (TF, 20), and Julia hugging her coat in Cornwall 'hugging herself tight, rejoicing in herself, butterfly in cocoon' (BMTL, 151) Even her 'visionary' experiences have this feeling of cosiness and interiorization, like the bell-jar experience of being in 'a sort of balloon, or diving-bell, as I have explained it, that seemed to hover over me' described in 'Advent' (A, 130) The room, canoe and cocoon as symbols of identity can be supplemented with H D 's other major metaphor of the female self, the feeling of being enclosed by concentric circles This is the self-sense of H D 's personae in their visionary state of heightened consciousness Like the many pictorial maidens in the woods of nineteenth-century paintings, Hermione's breakdown gives her the dizzy feeling of being at the centre of concentric circles Again she is skimming along the language, unable to stop the flow of her thoughts 'Pennsylvania whirled round her in cones of concentric colour, cones concentric conic sections was the final test she failed in' (H, 5) For Julia too 'being there' often means being at the centre of a circle she has created for herself imaginatively, as she does when sketching in Paris with Rafe

> She blocked round it, it gave her a sense of continuity, it gave her her own proportion, placed her in the centre of a circle, which she measured, mock-professionally, with a pencil held before her When she squinted at the pencil, she was not so much seeing the thing she was about to block in roughly, as making a circle, with a compass, for herself to stay in There was so much around them (BMTL, 34)

What better way of avoiding one's erasure by the force of surrounding reality than by placing oneself at the radical centre, in a circle It is interesting to note in this respect that H D 's vision in Corfu, the description of which is the centrepiece of *Tribute to Freud*, ends with a circle-like disc and a male God pulling in a female 'angel' 'She said, it was a circle like the sun-disc and a figure within the disc, a man, she thought, was reaching out to draw the image of a woman (my Nikê) into the sun beside him' (TF, 62) These circles of visionary insight return with a doubled effect during Hermione's intense conversations with Fayne

> Seated in cold steel light drawn back again away from that blue-white face, face too-white (eyes too-blue, eyes set in marble, black-glass eyes like eyes set in pre-pyramid Egyptian effigy) Her Gart saw rings and circles, the rings and circles that were the eyes of Fayne Rabb Rings and circles made concentric curve toward a ceiling that was, as it were, the bottom of a deep pool Her and Fayne Rabb were flung into a concentric intimacy, rings on rings that made a geometric circle toward a ceiling that curved over them like ripples on a pond surface (H, 164)

As in this quote, H D uses the metaphor of mirrors in connection with Her's fluid other female self, but they are convex mirrors not the clear visualist mirrors of separation as in the Freudian mirror stage 'The two convex mirrors placed back to back became one mirror as Fayne Rabb entered' (H, 138) The fluidity is even more radical with the appearance of the amoeba metaphor for women's selves Describing a woman, Her has the strange physical awareness that the back of her head 'separated from the front of her head like amoeba giving birth by separation to amoeba' (H, 118) And Fayne calls Her a projection of herself 'You are not myself but you are some projection of myself Myself, *my*self projected you like water' (H 146) This fluid merging with another female consciousness within the oral sphere is associated with H D 's so-called mystical experiences In her fluid, inchoate state of crisis, Her is connected with trees, and water Her's situating between drowning and not drowning (H, 63), between madness and sanity, would in H D 's positive view on ultra-rational states be a situation of vision H D is offering us a redefinition of the Seer-Artist, by a revision not only of myth and tradition, but also of visualism and the visualist metaphors like the mirror projection, or difference

7 Magical Writing

As a woman not in control of her speech, Her is also explicitly connected with Itylus the mythical swallow According to the myth Itylus was raped by her brother-in-law, who cut out her tongue to silence her Instead she wove her accusation into cloth, to be read by her sister Itylus thus is another problematic mythical woman speaker Turned into a swallow by a typically Greek version of double-edged godly interference, she continues to sound the rapist's name (H, 124) As a swallow then sounding her accusation of male dominance, Her too speaks with a handicap, overcoming with difficulty the disempowering presence of George Mythically, it is the identification between the sisters which sets Itylus free, together with the woven message which is a kind of magical writing-not-writing Thus the mutual identification of Her and Fayne liberates H D 's autobiographical persona Moreover, relating Her's future as a writer to this weaving, a highly significant but perverse form of script, H D is also approaching an alternative interpretation of writing text and textuality

Naturally, as a writer, H D was heavily influenced by literacy and visualism In a sense we can register a more explicit polarization between the two linguistic modes with H D than concerning Richardson or Stein As a poet, and initially the perfect 'imagiste', paring down her text to the most poignant and sparse detail, she took part in a literary movement drastically influenced by the internorization of literacy Many of H D 's metaphors for the unconscious, for dream thinking and style stem from her experiences of the early, silent film A totally new art, it proved highly suggestive and inspirational, as can be seen from *The Borderline Pamphlet* (H D 1990) She acted in or collaborated with Macpherson on three films by their POOL production company *Wing Beat* (1927), *Foothills* (1928-1930), and *Borderline* (1930) *Borderline* is about racial sex and violence, featuring Paul and Eslanda Robeson, as well as H D as the female lead and even Bryher as an extremely sultry inn-keeper, according to her own admission Bryher's financial resources managed to fund the project as well as their magazine *Close-Up*, for which H D wrote After the magazine folded, significantly due to the arrival of the 'talkies', Bryher seldom went to see a movie, but she testifies 'H D was much more interested, she often went to the cinema' (Bryher 1963 203)

Moreover, the importance attached by the later H D to the concept of her visionary art further posits her in the world of literacy and visualism H D 's many references

to her visions like the famous one in Corfu, her description of her memories as 'pictures' and 'colourless transfers or 'calcomanias' (sic - TF 50) or as 'transparencies set before candles in a dark room' even the traditional psychoanalytic designation of the unconscious as pictorial are all clear indications that she was very much aware of visualism Actually, the strength of the mystical tradition in classical and medieval periods resided in the sudden favouring of the dominant all-exclusive function of sight over other senses The writing-on-the-wall vision in Corfu is a moment of intense visual concentration, so strong that it gives the seer a headache The Tarot cards favoured by H D to give her access to a deeper reality are also strong visual images With Tarot cards, ordinary script is rejected, however, to allow for greater interpretability

> One of H D 's books on the Tarot, for example, claimed that the Tarot is a universal book but a "mute" one because it is a collection of images These images cannot be translated by reading a book filled with verbal formulas, for words lie, never being an accurate intermediary for spirit (Friedman 1981 189)

Another version of writing of great symbolic value is the palimpsest, literally the shadow on parchment or the groove on a wax tablet reminding of previous texts which have been incompletely erased Because of its marginality the palimpsest is not the simple representative of an earlier writing technology It is a textuality under erasure to use de Man's metaphor literally As another type of perverse textuality some of the slipperiness and resistance to definition from the oral mode has entered, as with the Tarot cards H D 's own metaphor, from her novel *Palimpsest*, shows it to offer access to a reality more alive and organic, than that evoked by ordinary script

> Face upon face, impression upon impression and all of modernity (as she viewed it) was as the jellified and sickly substance of a collection of old colourless photographic negatives through which gleamed the reality, the truth of the blue temples of Thebes, of the white colonnades of Samos (P, 158)

Whichever quality one assigns to H D 's consistent use of and references to the 'hermetic tradition' discussed by Friedman, it is an interest which again posits her strangely in between oral and written material [18] Similarly H D 's decoding of a

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18 According to Friedman H D started her serious study of esoteria in the late twenties experimenting with Tarot astrology and numerology but she was introduced to it earlier by the same person who introduced her to psychoanalysis Frances Gregg (Friedman 1981 159) H D was able to work out

hieroglyph is a highly literate activity requiring extensive research But simultaneously the hieroglyph is another instance of perverse writing hiding and showing at the same time It is a secret form of writing for the initiated and - contrary to the usual quality of writing - strongly connected with oral tradition and the oral training of pupils In fact, the importance of formulae in hermetic traditions indicates a strong oral background treating words for their magical properties (Friedman 1981, 223) Its ritual formulae have to be executed exactly, like the rituals of ancient Rome which had to be completely started all over again if a priest so much as mispronounced

Again, H D connects her identity with this 'other' writing, with this non-Western, exotic, marginalized writing from a more indefinite oral world At the end of *Tribute to Freud*, H D 's own identity becomes visible through a hieroglyph, the signet ring combining the serpent and the thistle of which she first dreamed when she was 18 or 19 The serpent is attributed to Asklepios, the 'blameless physician' who will be associated with Freud himself and the regeneration coming out of his analysis The signet ring in the Louvre proves H D 's identity 'through the years as I stopped off in Paris, on cross-continental journeys, I went back to assure myself that I had not, at any rate, "dreamt" the signet-ring' (Tf, 71) Again it is a visual image, but with a strange confusing relationship to visibility and absence

The Gift actually abounds with all kinds of 'writing' In fact two main types of writing are presented, the scientific writing which belongs to her father and a more benign magical Writing There is a fascination with writing clearly stemming from a world only just emerging from orality The names of the many dead daughters and wives in *The Gift* have been carved into their grave stones This piece of significant, permanent 'writing' is connected with the dictionary of 'Papa', the book of words he uses in order to decide on the name for a new daughter Thus, the names of the female children are transferred from the static printed names in the dictionary to the static carved names on their gravestones But the name giving itself is a cause for anxiety for the young girl since it suggests a complete fortuitousness

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number charts for herself and acquaintances learned to "read the symbols of the Tarot cards' and 'felt a personal imperative for astrology because of her father's astronomy' (Friedman 1981, 160-161)

> The name Martha was written on a stone and Alice was written and Edith My name was Hilda, Papa found the name in the dictionary he said He said he ran his finger down the names in the back of the dictionary, and his finger stopped at Huldah and then went back up the line to Hilda What would I have been, who would I have been, if my initial had come at the beginning and he had put his finger on Alice? Had he put his finger on Alice? (G 7-8)

The potential alternative spelt death of course, since 'Alice' is already one of the names inscribed on the tombstones Children are generally fascinated as much by their naming as by their conception regarding their name as the real constitution of their personality Hilda's naming was a coincidence of literacy In his almost godlike power, the father assigns names to his living children by referring to a book, by absenting them from the naming process, and, on top of that being so fortuitous as to almost let chance decide The written word not only determines and circumscribes the living woman, but can also spell death [19] As Professor Doolittle puts a book in between himself and the presence of the baby girl, the name 'Hilda' really means absence in a true Derridean and Lacanian movement Since the child Hilda cannot spell, she confuses two names, and as a result two genders, since the name Jack reminds her of 'Jack and Jill' which she then confuses with the male name Gil, as in the book *Gil Blas* Both names sound the same, the difference is in the spelling, and thus the distinction between male and female gender is in the writing Hilda follows this up by associating her brother's name, Gilbert, with 'Gil', an association by sound which enables her to become her brother's twin, his double, to become almost one and the same 'if I were Jill, I would be Gil, we would be "twins"' (G, 39) Orality, the lack of the definition and distinction which is the faculty of writing, is in this way enabling to Hilda's wish to be one with her brother to be a boy

However, with the scientist-father gone to his observation dome, the children play games that seem almost magical to Hilda One of them, the anagram game, is perceived as a different kind of writing, using 'yellow squares' to *make* words The anagram game is a game intended for the boy of the family There is a certain amount of jealousy from his younger sister when any brotherly effort with the squares is lauded by Mama

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19 Hermione Gart s name is another textual allusion to Shakespeare s *The Winter's Tale* Like Hilda she has been assigned a name on the basis of textuality so that her actual presence her content in a sense has been undermined by this textuality

> "Mummie, he's spelt a word," says Mama very proudly to Mamalie, our grandmother, or if it's Aunt Jennie, "Jean, look he's spelt dog," but Jean will push it back and say "d-a-g doesn't spell anything that I know of, Sister would know an *a* from an *o* if you don't, Gibbie," and it might even be perceived that miraculously, a round shape in black on the yellow square of cardboard, was somehow alone and staring at me, by Aunt Jennie's elbow (G, 10)

Faced with a brother who misspells, Hilda too young to be able to read is presented as miraculously selecting a letter, because it stares at her H D here attributes an almost magical presence to words and letters, a pre-literate attitude to writing The narrator plays her own word games with the etymology of the word 'spell' 'It was a game, it was a way of making words out of words, but what it was was a way of spelling words, in fact it was a *spell*' (G, 10) Making new words is creative, life-giving, magical, creating new realities In fact, this whole scene becomes magical The clock doesn't strike and they are in a situation of ultimate presence 'a drop of living and eternal life, perfected there, it was living complete, not to be dried up in memory like pressed moss' (G, 10-11) It is the girl-child, however, who has this magical relationship of presence and completeness with letters and words Ironically, Hilda is the one chosen to cut open her father's books 'She knows how to run the paper-knife carefully along under the surface of the double page' (TF, 40) As a girl, she has been assigned the menial function associated with writing [20] She further interprets the objects on her father's writing desk as connected with magical writing They are forbidden objects, hardly hiding a ritualistic or mythical background, the paper-knife which simultaneously is a tree, both deadly and regenerative the 'over-size pair of desk-shears' a magnifying glass which is 'a sacred symbol', a flower and the life symbol of Egypt, the 'sacred *ankh*' (TF, 30-31) Interpreted by young, unreading Hilda the writing associated with it, then, must also be magical, while sharing in the power function of the desk Writing then is like magic, very much in line with the early scriptive societies' view on this new technique For the older narrator, writing to survive the psychological onslaught of another war this means that she is involved in a quite powerful magical technique

The power of Hilda's writing father, however, is subverted, since he doesn't even realize, or else ignores, its magical background

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20 Hermione Gart has to categorize her father s received papers (H 73)

> I do not know if our father knows that the *ankh* is the symbol of life and that the sign he often uses at the head of one of his columns of numbers is the same sign He writes columns and columns of numbers, yet at the top of one column he will sketch in a hieroglyph, (TF, 31)

Only the older H D understands this, implying that the father's science is an illusion, nothing more than the covering over of an earlier magic Thus, as he writes, he subverts his own powers of science As he sits at his desk the items on his desk are deconstructed by his daughter, re-read as the magical items they always were These two contrasting types of writing are combined with the opposition of male science and the female gift of creativity and magic in the novel Hilda's is a world which has just entered the scriptive stage, where a few manuscripts are painstakingly produced

When her fairy tale book by Grimm is given away by Mama, what Hilda remembers foremost are the pictures accompanying the stories She regards the book as if it were a living presence that has left

> That was the book, it had gone anyway now, Grimm was the children's Bible, Mama used to say It was fairy tales, but so was the Greek myth *Tanglewood Tales* that Miss Helen read in school It was the same kind of thing, it was real It went on happening it did not stop (G, 48)

Something that happens, the book is a living presence The plot thickens where books are concerned with the arrival of a children's science book, *Simple Science*, again a book with pictures for children who cannot yet read The fact that the books connected with Hilda's 'gift' do not stem from the literary tradition, but rather seem to be pre-writing picture books, presents us with a different relationship to books It is the metaphorical relationship between words, pictures in books and reality which becomes problematic

> The picture was a girl lying on her back, she was asleep, she might be dead but no, Ida said she was asleep She had a white dress on like the dress the baby wore in the photograph Aunt Rosa sent Mama, that Mama tried to hide from us, of Aunt Rosa's baby in a long white dress in a box, lying on a pillow The baby looked as if it were asleep, the girl in the picture looked as if she were dead, but the baby was dead and the girl was asleep and the picture was called *Nightmare* (G, 50)

The visual confusion of sleep with death is important as is the fact that both pictures are subject to Mama's censorship She tries to hide the dead baby, and she

cuts out the Nightmare picture from the book Not only is the word 'nightmare' confused with 'a mare in the night', the picture itself poses problems because it is used by the authors to metaphorically describe what a nightmare could be like 'the old witch was riding straight at the girl who was asleep'(G 51) The crux of the matter seems to lie with the status of the picture as part of a science book 'a witch in a book called *Simple Science* that someone gave us must be real because Ida said that was what science was', which counters their impression that witches were part of fairy tales (G, 51) With this double use of confusing metaphor, we get a gender division too Women tell stories, talk fiction, men write science, real things (G, 51)

The Prometheus scene forges a similar connection with a picture over and above the text Hilda's brother stole a magnifying glass from his father's desk, and 'told me to look' at a newspaper text which again Hilda cannot read To her surprise the glass not only magnifies the print pointlessly for her, but sets the newspaper on fire Once again there is the connection of text with age-old myth and magic, as the narrator considers the parental prohibition

> This picture could be found in an old collection of Bible illustrations or thumbed-over discarded reproductions of say, the early nineteenth-century French painter, David It is a period piece, certainly Yet its prototype can be found engraved on Graeco-Roman medallions or outlined against the red or black background of jars or amphorae of the classic Greek period (TF, 28)

The central image of *Tribute to Freud*, however, is H D 's vision of the Writing on the Wall, which she firmly posits outside the realm of psychoanalysis and in that of the occult (TF, 45-62) It is an experience resistant to both ordinary writing and speech

> I could not get rid of the experience by writing about it I had tried that There was no use telling the story, into the air, as it were, repeatedly, like the Ancient Mariner who plucked at the garments of the wedding guest with that skinny hand (TF, 46)

Nevertheless, she does tell the story in the different oral situation of Freudian analysis, as well as write it in her memoir Freud himself interpreted it as potentially dangerous, a 'series of shadow- or of light-pictures' 'projected' on the wall of Bryher and H D 's hotel room in Corfu, partially seen by both of them in 1920 (TF, 47) This central image or 'super-memory' is significantly a kind of magic or cinematographic writing, reminiscent of the biblical writing on the wall in the palace of

Nebuchadnezzar The pictures are 'like colourless transfers or 'calcomanias', as if light was throwing a shadow 'dim light on shadow, not shadow on light It was a silhouette cut of light, not shadow' (TF, 50) It is highly significant textuality, but, paradoxically, it is also writing-in-action, writing in performance with the audience actually present First there are static pictures of a bust goblet or cup, a 'spirit-lamp', followed by a dynamic writing 'drawn or written by the same hand' (TF, 51-52) The narrator is unsure whether the writing is projected by herself or comes from outside herself While she turns to Bryher, the moving picture even acquires an aural aspect, 'a sort of pictorial buzzing', like ants or small people (TF, 53) In H D 's description, this is light which throws a shadow, and a visualism of which the presence is so strong that it almost becomes aural The vision requires an intense stare from an audience which potentially may even be the creatrix It is in fact writing which combines all these paradoxes, a perverse, magical signing (TF, 54-55) Later on, she connects this vision with other cases of 'writing-on-walls' in biblical and classical literature, as well as with the very oral world of the Delphic oracle The tripod she sees is 'the symbol of prophecy prophetic utterance or occult or hidden knowledge, the Priestess or Pythoness of Delphi sat on the tripod while she pronounced her verse couplets, the famous Delphic utterances which it was said could be read two ways' (TF, 56) Both the mythical magic writing and the magic speech of an oracle characteristically concern warnings The narrator regards her vision too as a warning, interpreting the Niké figure as 'my own especial sign or part of my hieroglyph', a sign that war will come and that only when the new war is over she would be 'free' (TF, 61) Interestingly H D repeats the suggestion that she somehow projected the writing from her unconscious into the world of the senses

> Or this writing-on-the-wall is merely an extension of the artist's mind, a *picture* or an illustrated poem, taken out of the actual dream or day-dream content and projected from within (though apparently from outside), really a high-powered *idea*, simply over-stressed, *over-thought*, you might say, an echo of an idea a reflection of a reflection, a "freak" thought that had got out of hand gone too far, a "dangerous symptom " (TF, 57)

This picture-writing as H D describes it, 'continues to write itself or be written' (TF, 57) This is writing with none of the drawbacks of writing, writing as living presence, magical writing in performance As cryptic a message as the Delphic oracle the hieroglyphs depend primarily on the interpretative power of the medium, of the spectator As with the early picture writing one shape can indicate many contents, and is as ambiguous and alive to a changing context as was the unwritten oracle

H D is aware of the rules of picture writing, since she calls the final picture which only Bryher sees 'perhaps' the "determinative", the final hieroglyph which helps clarify or explain the whole series This final picture seems to suggest balance and peace, a circle with in it the figure of a man drawing the Nikê figure into the sun

Despite their relative powerlessness and absence as speakers in the presence of men, all H D 's autobiographical personae are situated in an oral world But they are on the brink of emerging into the scripted world Julia works through her crisis by starting to write, while Hermione is poised to start writing From both *The Gift* and the oracle-writing of *Tribute to Freud* we can see, however, that the writing concerned is magical, dangerous, prophetic, a writing of radical presence, specifically not the technology of writing performed by scientist-fathers Of the three women modernists under discussion, H D offers the clearest and most self-conscious representation of the oblique relationship of women with spoken and written language There is the danger embedded in the technology of writing a technology which occasionally manages to kill women Like Richardson and Stein she discusses the desire for presence of the frustrated female speaker, an illusionary, impossible wish for complete, actual existence through self-performance However H D 's visionary and mythological interests lead her to a recognition both of a mystical Speaking and a mystical Writing H D 's mysticism colours her interpretation, but she too situates in this Writing a combination of the presence and performance of orality - the strength of 'being there' - with the self-centredness and permanence of writing

8 Autobiographies and the Facts

Like the work of Gertrude Stein and Dorothy Richardson, H D 's prose and poetry is to a very large extent autobiographical It defeats critical readings in complete isolation The author is so 'present' in the text, that sections become incomprehensible, or lose content value without biographical knowledge of the mythical positions about her life favoured by H D at the time The person of H D is aggressively 'present' in all her texts Like an oral personality, she refuses the absence of a written, objective text She encodes her own name into titles, characters, making the work subservient to the author and not the other way round H D 's last poem draws attention to this wish for actual presence *Hermetic Definition* combined the solipsism the mysterious unfathomable presence of a woman, with the initials of her name

> The playful, deadly, persistent use of her own initials is difficult to decode except as they flaunt the autobiographical, the admission of personal necessities into the heart of the work It is clear that the 'H' and the 'D' represented different, difficulty reconciled needs say, for intensity and for nurturance (DuPlessis 1986, 44)

Much of H D 's work is so hermetic, because she obsessively reinterpreted her life along psychoanalytical and mythical lines Readers may find it hard to empathize with a narrator who combined occultism, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and theosophy into a highly eclectic world view Like Dorothy Richardson, and even Gertrude Stein, she builds up the life throughout the work, builds up herself through an ongoing text which consequently becomes almost solipsistic But the importance of the autobiographical project for H D , and the fact that it should be an **ongoing** project can also be seen from remarks on her work in a letter

> "Like working on a sampler," she confided, years later "So many stitches and just so many rows, day after day If I miss even one day, I drop a stitch and lose the pattern and I feel I'm never going to find it again " (Schaffner 1980, 145)

The crisis moments in H D 's life stand out to receive a lot of attention, as for instance her Corfu vision and its discussion during her analysis by Freud 'The years between seemed a period of waiting, of marking time' (TF, 62) Freud himself becomes an autobiographical victim to H D 's interpretation of her own life Whereas Gay and others stress that he saw himself as a scientist almost a positivist, H D consistently presents him as a seer a protector, a guardian In 1960 H D met the Haitian Lionel Durand, a journalist for the Paris bureau of *Newsweek* who later published a negative review of *Bid Me to Live* in the May issue of his journal Her passionate belief in him was hugely disappointed, but she associated him with other male heroes in the poem 'Red Rose and a Beggar,' part of *Hermetic Definition*. Everything and everybody is assigned a place in her personal story, empowered via Freudian mythmaking Van der Leeuw, the perfect pupil to Freud, is turned into a symbolic contrast for the narrator, who will succeed where he could not Mythically, he almost becomes an Icarus figure, the man with too much success, who must in the line of the Greek hubris-concept be sacrificed so that the less perfect, humble hero can be successful The character of Van der Leeuw is rationalized and reinterpreted to fit H D 's reading of her own autobiography at that particular time of writing Like her brother Gilbert, with whom he is associated through the idea of premature death, Van der Leeuw opened the route through pain for the writer H D

Rafe, about to leave for France, is connected with Saint Anthony, and briefly with Aladdin as he rinses the tea pot (BMTL, 18) In fact, it is an almost oral regard for history that enables the narrator to reinterpret other lives so aggressively from her own perspective H D is hereby breaking the rules of written autobiography, rules demanding facts which can be checked

Such a mythical structure is set up by H D around her own life that it is almost impossible to interpret creatively in any other way than by reading the text obliquely, against the grain Regarding these texts from the perspective of written autobiographies one feels almost obliged to point out the 'nonsense' of H D 's metaphors for her own life H D has indeed set up and brought into place an ideology of her own making sense of her own life like Gertrude Stein very aggressively reinterpreting what others would recognize as 'the facts' In an oral appreciation of history, which incorporates historical figures into an almost mythological framework Freud becomes Siegmund becomes Christ, becomes Hercules (TF, 108)

To a certain extent H D was involved in a similar 'battle' of autobiographies as already suggested for Gertrude Stein, a similar textual reshuffling of the cards, a struggle concerning whose version of a commonly shared past would prove to be the dominant one Many modernists were aware of the value of advertisement for their period, and the remembrance of their own names Not so much the past as the future was at stake Himself 'Rico' in *Bid Me to Live*, D H Lawrence had already encoded H D as Julia Cunningham in *Aaron's Rod* (1922) and according to Stephen Guest as priestess of Isis in *The Man Who Died* (1929 1931) (reported by Barbara Guest 1985 204) A vitriolic Cecil Gray (the musician Vane in *Bid Me to Live*) also wrote his version of events Naturally, she also appeared in Aldington's *Life for Life's Sake* (1941) and *Death of a Hero* (1929 abridged 1930 Paris publication) He pictured her as a woman of singular sensitivity whose life equalled the rarified air of her poetry

> To look at beautiful things with H D is a remarkable experience She has a genius for appreciation, a severe but wholly positive taste She lives on the heights, and never wastes time on what is inferior or in finding fault with masterpieces She responds so swiftly understands so perfectly, re-lives the artist's mood so intensely that the work of art seems transformed You too respond, understand, and re-live it in a degree which would be impossible without her inspiration (Aldington 1968, 101)

In *Bid Me to Live*, H D is clearly aware of the fact that she may be used as material in the autobiography of her male fellow artists She has her autobiographical character Julia warn off Rico (read D H Lawrence) from employing her as a character, as a puppet in his show

> But I am aware of your spider-feelers, I am not walking into your net I am not answering your questions, "What room have you? What room has Vanio?" Not quite so obvious as "Do you sleep together?" I am not telling you of my reactions, or if there were or were not reactions on his part A nice novel, eh Rico?
> So Rico, your puppets do not always dance to your pipe (BMTL, 164)

Julia feels Rico is already mentally turning her personality into the one that serves the plot of his future novel Becoming Rico's puppet is textually encoded death for Julia/H D Among the battling narratives and plots, it is consequently significant that H D 's book was only first published in 1960, as if she was keeping her options open and her retorting effect as late as possible Equally interesting, H D explicitly refers to Freud's interdiction, 'Thou Shalt Not Commit (Auto)biography' as it could be paraphrased, in the middle of the scene describing his angry outburst (TF, 90-91) The prohibition, however, is mentioned in the very memoir which transgresses it most flagrantly by representing Freud as a prophet not the positivist scientist he wanted to be remembered as Worse, she writes her memoir in a very oral situation, favouring performance, traditionally a more antagonistic situation, when what Freud was above all attempting to avoid with his request was this kind of popular antagonism to psychoanalysis

There is definitely a certain amount of autobiographical 'talking back' in all of H D 's autobiographical texts In encoded autobiographies - readers need to be in the know to recognize the pseudonyms - H D includes a certain amount of devious gossip and attacks on historical persons like the Lawrences or Aldington There is for instance an unmistakable dislike of Elsa (Frieda Lawrence) While her energy seems to be admired she is compared to 'a booted Uhlan' and in her relationship with her writer-husband as having 'the justifiable pride of a barn-yard hen who has hatched a Phoenix' (BMTL, 83) Even though Pound wrote essays on music, as well as collaborated on an opera, George is presented as not having 'a scrap of real music in him' (H, 109) By the end of *Bid Me to Live* she criticizes 'Rico's' work without any hesitation, admitting there is genius in the 'bulky novel' he has sent, but she doesn't have the energy 'to dredge the ore out of the manuscript', and he should 'write as

Vincent van Gogh painted' (BMTL, 182-183) In her 'Afterword' to the Virago edition of Bid Me to Live Perdita Schaffner claims an untroubled autobiographical connection between 'reality' and this text Only names have been changed 'Otherwise, it is straight autobiography, a word-for-word transcript Julia is, of course, H D ' (Schaffner 1984, 186) However H D 's textuality muddies the water Because of their status as autobiographical novels, her texts both state and hide the identity of the characters she has encoded Moreover, together with many of her personae, frustrated women speakers, H D is here having the final word, and stating this final word with all the permanence of print

Several texts deal with separate episodes in H D 's life *Her* zooms in on one small but important period, a time of crisis when she was redefining herself after her failed exams at Bryn Mawr, with her brief engagement and then rupture with Pound, and the important meeting and identification with Frances Gregg *Bid Me to Live* centers on another short period, H D 's marriage breakup with Aldington, which she presents as another period of redefinition towards a renewed concentration on her writing *Tribute to Freud* concerns several months of her second series of sessions with Freud, a time when she was again breaking through a well-recorded writing block, when she was beginning to see her role as that of a prophet finding proof for this in what emerged during analysis Another version of the same discoveries in analysis *The Gift*, explicitly stated what *Tribute to Freud* had already been hinting at a re-reading of her own childhood in which H D read her barely disguised persona Hilda, as a gifted child, the last in a female line of creativity and magic ritual Again the story is centred on a brief period during the Blitz, showing the narrator writing and remembering under the stress of her renewed war-phobia, but surviving with her gift intact All these autobiographies are strongly explanatory and interpretative, and come down to a discussion of crucial moments which H D presents as times when she redirected her life towards writing Unlike authors like Hemingway, Joyce or even Stein she talks relatively little about her actual work, but focuses instead on the crises during which she worked her way back to what she defined for herself in her childhood memoirs as her giftedness, her fate H D presents herself as a woman who recreates herself as a writer, constantly [21]

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21 Talking about H D working out her phobias by writing DuPlessis talks in this connection of 'nurturant autobiography' which helped her to overcome the 'crystalline writing style of the earlier poetry for the more prophetic epic and mystic writing that came with *Trilogy* (DuPlessis 1986 73)

Because H D treated limited periods of her life, there is not really a unified autobiographical Persona The bitter betrayed wife 'Julia' is not the same person as 'Her', barely conscious of what is happening to her, nor does she resemble the Freud analysand, or the poetic, inspired older 'Hilda', even though the events they live through all refer to the same referent, the writer H D The self-images she develops clash with our wishes for a permanent, unified self, situated in a clear, progressing plot But they are all women on the brink of starting to write again women developing into women writers

A strange effect of these autobiographies especially *Her* and *Bid Me to Live*, can consequently be explained The facts described are really shatteringly tragic or melodramatic, but, emotionally these crises are recounted in a very undercooled undramatic tone, not even assigning the correct attention and time span to the melodramatic events For instance readers can easily 'miss' the information that Lowndes actually kisses Fayne (H, 203), as well as the earlier conversation in which he admits to his involvement with Fayne to Her and tells of the protests of Mrs Rabb to his mother (H 190-191) But H D is really interested only in how these events lead her character to her break-down, to that state of intense being and realization of being Julia, despite all her theatrical protestations does not really play the role of the injured wife The passion of the novel is centered on her search for isolation for escape out of this emotional quagmire Authorial neutrality seems pushed to an extreme for instance, when Julia finally considers that she and Bella 'were simply abstractions, were women of the period, were WOMAN of the period the same one' (BMTL, 103) It seems hard to remember that this is autobiographical material, that H D is in fact reducing her own persona to type to the mirror image of so unartistic a woman as Bella In the beginning of *Bid Me to Live*, she watches Rafe in a state of almost visionary awareness caused by the tension of his imminent departure to France

> There was something of that in this, but really her intuitions were submerged so deeply submerged that when they flowed over her (tide-wave) as now, the moment, the mood, they were of a depth of subconscious being for which there were no words Bliss Stepping on the blue square of carpet, before the low double-couch, their bed, she had pulled away from the endangering emotional paralysis Sheets, a bed, a tomb But walking for the first time, taking the first steps in her life, upright on her feet for the first time alone, or for the first time standing after death (daughter, I say unto thee), she faced the author of this her momentary psychic being her lover her husband It was like that, in these moments She touched

> paradise She was walking normally, naturally, she was walking out of the mood (paradise) toward the table, she was coming-to from drowning, she was waking out of aether (BMTL, 18-19)

This too is what writing means for her, a sexless state of inspiration, an escape from sexual complications into the child sphere, 'child-consciousness' (BMTL, 62) The importance of writing is further underlined

> It might be all right for men but for women any woman, there was a biological catch and taken at any angle, danger You dried up and were an old maid, danger You drifted into the affable *hausfrau*, danger You let her rip and had operations in Paris (poor Bella) danger
> There was one loophole one might be an artist Then the danger met the danger, the woman was man-woman, the man was woman-man (BMTL, 135-136)

This basic drive behind H D 's autobiographical work, becoming an artist, explains the intense focusing on crisis-moments, rather than on the autobiographical whole Becoming an artist in these novels can be translated as leaving behind the 'biological catch', the emotional wrench of being a wife, or a lover, being involved with men It effectively means avoiding the trappings of being a woman the inevitable sociability and emotionality, an escape into sexlessness even The plots of these novels, together with the immense, all-inclusive mythical network which H D had set up around all her relatives friends and acquaintances all have the feeling of a claustrophobic determinism The woman writer can only escape by the act of writing by actually 'being there' in the isolation of writing herself faced with only the blank page But although this is the underlying characteristic uniting all the texts, relatively little time is used explicitly discussing this H D prefers to leave the re-creation of a woman writer in the subtext Of course, if writing means isolation and achieving a presence for a woman author then actually undertaking the writing means that she is achieving this isolation and presence The function of writing isolation self-performance, and a vivid impact on audience has already been achieved

The drastic way in which H D intervened interpretatively in the biographical 'truth' is explained in the texts by a consistent opposition of everyday reality with a deeper, more essential 'Reality' lying behind and beyond it In her everyday life, in the 'facts' of a life, Julia feels compelled to act in a certain way, as if she were in a play unreal-real Five characters in search of the plot, might be an alternative title 'They seemed

to be acting in a play, yet un-selfconsciously, trained actors who had their exits their entrances' (BMTL, 90) Even more indicative of the alternative patterns now seen in reality is another continuously repeated image, that of projection

> They seemed to be superimposed on one another like a stack of photographic negatives Hold them up to the light and you get in reverse light-and-shade Julia and Bella seated on that same chintz-covered couch, a composite, you get Rico seated in Rafe's arm-chair, you get Elsa, Germania in its largest proportion, superimposed simply on Rule Britannia (BMTL 89)

With the mistress and the insulted wife as mere superimpositions of the same basic woman, H D portrays the strange awareness that these highly emotional events autobiographically based after all, are merely superficial differences Behind this everyday (un)reality, lies the true reality of the heightened states When Julia decides that her own husband Rafe prefers Bella over herself, she concludes 'The fireworks had sizzled out, the show was over The chemicals in the test-tube had done their job' (BMTL 128) Similarly the traditional reader of *Her* might be irritated by the unclear relationship with Fayne Rabb dangling at the end of the broken affair with George Lowndes, by the lack of interest in this author to indicate which way this relationship is going Her and Fayne, most unsatisfactorily, go on a journey to Europe at the end of these months of intense emotion

In all these novels the conventional, linear, temporal structuring device of the plot is undermined by the continuous suggestion of more deeply 'real' alternative patterns which transcend linearity and time In *Bid Me To Live*, the continuous shifting of partners and the accompanying agony are not referred back to a causal ground (I fall in love with X because Z has rejected me) Repeatedly, the situation is compared to that of a laboratory, a chemical experiment in which relationships are continuously shifting and altering until the mixture reaches a stable form

> Yet there they were, separate elements in a test-tube
> The experiment was under way
> But it was in another, not yet defined dimension It was herself with inherited New England thoroughness who was perhaps the most experimental, herself part of it, but herself watching the mixture now poured into the test-tube, about to bubble (BMTL, 88)

Besides this repeated metaphor for her life Julia even reads patterns, signs, hieroglyphs in the reality surrounding her

> She shook out the three cigarettes on the table, they lay there in a formation, she would read the formation, like reading tea-leaves, or like reading a message in the pattern made by the fallen rose-leaves on the table (BMTL, 41)

Everyday items are traced back to the ritualistic objects they once were The implication is that they still exercise the same subconscious power over these moderns The gas-ring in *Bid Me to Live* is 'some symbolic round-stone, and the kettle for some instrument of divine or diabolic intervention' (BMTL, 16) cigarettes are 'narcotic incense' (BMTL, 17) or a torch (BMTL, 21) In fact, the smoke is 'a glyph, traced in the air' (BMTL 18) Nature is the scripted material par excellence, compared to a hieroglyph 'She walked along a path in a drawing-book It was a symbolic drawing, over-emphasized' (BMTL, 143), or it is compared to the ever-present 'magic lantern slides' (BMTL, 145)

> She had walked out of a dream, into reality This was real She was Medea of some blessed incarnation a witch with power A wise-woman She was seer, see-er She was at home in this land of subtle psychic reverberations as she was at home in a book
> The very landscape was illustration in a book The path she had just left, that twisted with apparent meaningless curves, was hieroglyph It spelt something Laid flat unrolled, it would be a huge screen in a temple in Egypt Then the path and the line of the cliff would be hieratic writing (BMTL 146)

Julia's life is 'pre-ordained written or carved on a temple wall' (BMTL 148), while nature can now be read as if it were a mystical book There is a similar still tentative suggestion early on in Her's crisis, when the sky and lawn are blackboards 'lying there it makes two blackboards across which in a moment lightning, white chalk, will brandish its symbols (give the answer perhaps) from some cruel and dynamic unseen hand making circles across blackboards' (H, 83) It is another situation of mystical Writing showing a deeper reality For H D the seer/prophet, nature is inscripted by this deeper 'reality', as if it were a book Conversely, nature, and especially its regenerative symbols are omnipresent in H D 's texts Concentric circles of trees, trees resembling an undersea humid world the impact of lightning on sky and lawn the many streams in *Tribute to Freud* all these are universal mythical symbols of regeneration, especially the combination of water and trees There is the moment of crisis/insight in *Her*

> Heat seeped up swept down, swirled about them with the green of branches that was torrid tropic water Green torrid tropic water where no

> snow fell, where no hint of cold running streams from high mountains swept down, was swept into and under branches that made curious circle and half circle and whole circle concentric circle of trees above her head (how can anyone ever draw trees?) half circle of a (she saw) beech branch arching earthward Tree on tree on tree TREE I am the Tree of Life Tree I am a tree planted by the rivers of water I am I am HER exactly
> Her caught Her to herself, (H 70)

H D is piling on literally all the mythical, regenerative symbols together, circles, trees combined with water, and the woman In the end Hermione even concludes she is the 'tree', the symbol of regeneration, so that Her's crisis is one of regeneration With her experience of the Jungian notion of 'collective unconscious', H D was obviously influenced by these universal symbols of regeneration at the basis of most myths The presence of these regenerative symbols in autobiographically based texts is important, even though we are here reading slightly against H D 's own suggestions on mythology Most mythology deals with regeneration, and the heightened moods of the 'seers' Her, Julia, Hilda are connected with all the regenerative symbols Writing about her own life, dealing with all the essential crisis periods, H D seems to have connected the activity of writing with regeneration, re-creating herself every time after a crisis writing herself back into existence In this way the books had a huge effect on the life since the activity of writing them strengthened for H D her feelings of really 'being' in existence

Equally drastic is the crisis-situation of writing in *The Gift*, during the terror-stricken nights of the Blitz, when the most horrific mythical symbol of both death and regeneration appears in a clear connection with Speaking/Writing the snake [22] The narrator describes her childhood memories as the magic to counter the danger, which is associated with a snake that 'stings' The narrator falls asleep during a raid and dreams of a snake on her parents' bed when she was just tall enough to rest her elbows on the bed The snake is drinking water out of a kitchen tumbler Significantly a second snake bites the dream-Hilda on the mouth, and she fears she will die from the poison to her mouth

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22 Some examples of the mythical snake as a clear symbol of death are the biblical snake of the Fall and the snake in the Gilgamesh epic whose shedding shocks Gilgamesh out of a similar innocent eternal life However the shedding of its skin has also made the snake a symbol of renewed life after death associated with the Greek god of medicine Asklepios

> The snake has sprung at me and I shout through the snake-face, that is fastened at the side of my mouth, "Gilbert, Mama, Mama, Mama "
> The snake falls off His great head, as he falls away, is close to my eyes and his teeth are strong like the teeth of a horse He has bitten the side of my mouth I will never get well, I will die soon of the poison of this horrible snake How ugly my mouth is with a scar and the side of my face seems stung to death But no, "You are not stung to death " says dark Mary, who is enormous and very kind (G, 57)

This must be the ultimate nightmare for the woman writer and poet Infused with Freudian elements of impotence the death of two beloved relatives, the inability to speak, and censorship by parents, the snake on the bed is also a potent symbol of dangerous sexuality However, this is not merely a fear of castration or the male poet's fear of a dried-up creativity It describes the woman poet's fear of not being allowed to speak, of dying as a result of speech The woman writer feels threatened not at the level of pen/penis, but speech/mouth After that frightening dream, the text goes back to the ritualistic description of the house she lived in as a child (G, 57) The interesting thing about H D and the orality/textuality axis is that she is so self-conscious of symbols, having studied psychoanalysis, mythology and mysticism

> We must go further than Helen than Helle, than Helios, than light, we must go to the darkness, out of which the monster has been born
> The monster has a face like a sick horrible woman, no, it is not a woman It is a snake-face and the teeth are pointed and foul with slime The face has touched my face the teeth have bitten into my mouth Mary, pray for us It is so real that I would almost say an elemental had been conjured up, that by some unconscious process my dream had left open a door, not to my memories alone but to memories of the race This is the vilest python whom Apollo, the light slew with his burning arrows
> This is the python Can one look into the jaws of the python and live? Can one be stung on the mouth by the python and utter words other than poisonous? Long ago, a girl was called the Pythoness, she was a virgin (G, 58)

H D 's interpretation of survival after this trauma of speech seems very much like a rationalization However, the sun god Apollo is still the most macho-rationalist of the Greek gods The snake now stands for a certain femininity, associated with the Pythoness and virginity Being bitten by a snake, the female poet fears castration by no longer being allowed to speak Hilda's mother says she is a virgin, but according to the dream she has already lost this power of the Pythoness, she has been bitten on the mouth The fearful snake is associated with the London bombings, for the poet another crisis potentially helping H D recover from the creative deadlock she

had been in The crisis is dangerous, creativity could be lost 'All little girls are not virgins The python took shape, his wings whirred overhead, he dropped his sulphur and his fire on us' (G, 59) But traditionally, the snake is a symbol both of death and of eventual regeneration and rebirth

Writing under the terror of the Blitz changed H D 's life Her 'war-phobia', the result of a miserable time during the Great War, becomes one of these motives to write, as DuPlessis says 'the transcendence of which became a major psychological and literary project for more than twenty years' (DuPlessis 1986, 72) DuPlessis correctly characterizes H D 's self-writing as 'nurturant autobiographies', texts in which she worked out the complexes and traumas which prevented her from writing However, a number of characteristics which H D has in common with Dorothy Richardson and Gertrude Stein indicate that there was more to the autobiographical texts than emotional and psychological catharsis

H D 's autobiographical prose sports an oral style which favours narrative performance over textual stability, in the same way that she perceives creativity and knowledge in the performative mistakes of the psychoanalytical situation Her personae are fluid characters, which makes them incompetent speakers and writers in the everyday situation They suffer from repressive male speaking and writing, and are caught in the text as they are about to change into artists, visionaries As such, they are intuitive Writers and Speakers at the same time, an all-comprising combination of language most poignantly expressed in the Writing-on-the-Wall episode H D like the two other women modernists discussed, strives for a writing situation which combines the egotism, definition and permanence of writing with the strength of presence of speech Specifically for her this ideal coincides with the dangerous but mystical visionary experience Consequently, her writing of autobiographies was a matter of regeneration It is not merely a recreation of mental stability, but more importantly it is a recreation of herself as a woman writing, an acute feeling of being herself As a result we see a collaboration between the life and the text H D is making herself into a text because this way she can really 'be' This coincides with Julia's decision to write in *Bid Me to Live*

> I am nobody when it comes to writing novels But I will find a new name I will be someone I will write these notes and re-write them till they come true (BMTL, 176)

> When I try to explain, I write the story The story must write *me*, the story must create *me* (BMTL, 181)

This finally explains the disregard for the facts proper in these autobiographical works the mythologizing of 'real' people like Pound Lawrence Aldington Gregg and Freud In the same way that true reality is mystically inscripted, so the regenerative purpose of H D is to make herself exist by writing herself The need for intense 'being' and permanent possession of the self is expressed in the title of this chapter, which is a quotation from *Bid Me to Live*, itself a book title expressing a wish to be 'a book to myself' (BMTL, 173)

> There would be no use writing you voluminous letters I would be thinking "What will he think " I would be feeling foolishly, that I might be "material " I know that is stupid self-conscious You can write a book about us if you want to write a book about us without my help But I think I wanted to help too only I didn't want a sort of family album I wanted a book to myself and as things are the threads are too tangled To write about me you would have to write about Rafe - then Bella I don't want Bella in it not in our book (BMTL 173)

Conclusion

For 'autobiographers' of such different interests, attitudes and styles these three modernists have a remarkable set of characteristics in common Firstly, all three indicate a strong awareness of the psycho-social alienation experienced by women in the speaking situation 'Absent' women speakers like Miriam Henderson and 'Hilda' feel the content of their personalities change as they address different interlocutors, responding to the roles of daughter, employee, lover literary trainee, friend All these autobiographical personae are poignantly aware of, even obsessed with, their inability to hold their own and feel truly present in the oral sphere

Perceived as part and parcel of the speaking situation is the danger of name giving All three women authors use the topics of names and naming to symbolize the fragility of female individuality in the everyday oral situation Richardson has Miriam register her feelings when she is renamed 'Miriamissima' by Hypo Wilson, Gertrude Stein persistently returns to the topic of naming, and the fortuitous relationship between their content and the 'name' used H D 's autobiographical personae are threatened by names assigned to them to such an extent that they could die (*The Gift*), function as a 'Personne' (*Bid Me To Live*) or disappear altogether under the weight of grammar (*Her*) Under these threats of naming and renaming by the male-dominated language and speaking situation, the fear of the woman speaker of losing her identity is expressed by all three authors Miriam and her friends suffer from a moral anxiety that failing to conform to the ethics of their society, they will simply fade away, their features literally blurring With her usual comic aplomb Stein in fact expresses a similar worry which she described as the inside and the outside The 'inside', the feeling of self for Stein, is only separated by a flimsy 'sack' from the 'outside', the surrounding world After her popular success with *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* she describes the influence of the outside, commercialism, publicity, the opinions of others, as seriously destabilizing her feeling of self-awareness as a writer and causing the writing block she suffered from H D 's woman characters are threatened by the surrounding nature, by the rooms they live in, desperately seeking the solace of isolation

What comes forward the strongest out of these autobiographies then, is an existential fear of early twentieth-century women concerning the strength of their

identities Weighed down by convention and morality tied to the oral sphere as untrue, 'absent' speakers, circumscribed by their environment, modernist women voice fears concerning their presence and performance as acting speakers However, combined with this, there is the occasional triumphalism and success of the New Woman speaker Miriam and 'Gertrude' win a number of conversational battles, 'Hilda' even moves into the radical presence of the prophet

The stronger ties of modernist women writers with the oral sphere mean moreover that emotional affiliations are expressed alien to the nature of the textual medium Richardson and H D in particular convey a feeling for interiority highly typical of the oral/aural person, characters living with the awareness of a sensed three-dimensional environment around them Equally the epistemological basis of textuality, the clear plot line organizing the information is felt to be reductive to women and is subverted, in its most extreme form in Stein's *The Making of Americans*, where the 'great American novel' disappears under the long-winded, repetitive 'speaking' voice of the narrator In fact the demise of the plot is intended to benefit the presentation of the woman character With the plot disrupted, the rules of textual significance are now under attack Association, the overlong discussion of trivial scenes cause the kind of redundancy which is anathema to textuality It is beneficial, however to those aiming to present the strength of women's performance when they are in touch with themselves

If the presence of men affects women's feelings of self, the presence of other women is empowering Miriam's wordless communications with her grandmother, Miss Roscorla and Amabel, Her's meaningful mirroring with Fayne Rabb, Stein's appropriation of Toklas's voice for her public autobiography indicate forcefully that the mutual presence of women is not the compilation of absentee personalities waiting in 'vacuous silence' but a strong and powerful being together which strengthens the feeling of self This then is the ultimate goal of all the autobiographies under discussion the powerful woman, the present woman, not merely presented but actually performed before our eyes As readers, we are intended to feel the strength of being of Stein's genius and saint, of H D 's seer and Richardson's Mona Lisa, however alien this wish is to the tenets of textuality To achieve this basic wish stemming from the oral sphere women modernists will seek the egotism and feeling of self associated with the atmosphere of writing

Writing is beneficial for women If the speaking situation results in a woman's 'absence' then the absence of a male interlocutor allows for a woman's presence Surprisingly, but consistently, what Richardson, Stein and H D appreciate in the medium is the feeling of presence it offers As such, the 'writing' these autobiographers aspire to is a perverse textuality, located on the boundary between the written and the spoken medium As she paradoxically attempts to incorporate characteristics like presence context, immediacy, performance, agonism, continuity into the text, the woman speaker/writer is attempting to come forward in her text, to turn her readers into an audience and make them listen Their modernist goals are to develop writing as a strong presence, so much so even that you can almost hear it Richardson thus advocates both in her essay on punctuation and in *Pilgrimage* the practice of slow, hindered but conscious reading, as occurs when reading a foreign language or a text which avoids the efficiency of mechanized punctuation Stein approaches the same topic of presence from the perspective of the writer, and her 'slow history' is a narrative in which she attempts to reach simultaneity between reading and writing, making the reader physically wait until topics are truly present to the writer Stein's refusal to cut this superfluous text, to limit it to the perfect version is a very basic rupture of the ideology of the text

This textual transgression to benefit women's presence, moreover, is connected with the genre of autobiography As 'autobiographies' *Pilgrimage Bid Me To Live, Her, The Gift, Tribute to Freud, The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas, Everybody's Autobiography* and that quirky text *The Making of Americans* should theoretically be uninteresting For the primary male readership of textuality, the lives of women like Stein, Richardson, or H D are inherently non-stories In theory we could be interested in Stein's memoirs by virtue of her friendships with Picasso, Matisse, Braque, Laurencin, and many others how two Americans happened to be at the centre of an art movement as Toklas modestly puts it Certainly, Miriam Henderson and her daily life as a New Woman are basically uneventful, while Stein chooses to stress the everyday gossip and meetings of the modernist movement or of her trip to America rather than evoke or explain the causality and history Neither are H D 's texts traditional autobiographies which explain and elucidate the life Instead she prefers to focus on the process of re-creation, surely anathema to the closure of the traditional autobiography Moreover, these are never-ending never-closed autobiographies specifically shaped to keep the autobiographical narrator alive and

in front of her audience Two of the metaphors used for autobiography by these women writers indicate that via this writing they were not aspiring to the 'aura of accomplished death' of the male autobiography This magical, paradoxical writing which expresses the presence of women is compared, by Stein, to 'nutting', a casual, enjoyable, manual occupation which makes the autobiographer go over the same area, repeatedly 'finding' new aspects in what had already been discussed and dealt with H D 's autobiographical 'sampler' is again enjoyable, casual, relaxing work, connected with the mythical knitting, sewing and weaving of women all through the ages It is an activity to be picked up left off and picked up again, a hobby which isolates the woman with that egotism which women writers found so creative, and it is writing in the Derridean sense too of course As with Stein it is essentially unfinished business By reinterpreting the genre from this again perverse perspective, Stein, H D , and from the method of *Pilgrimage* we can safely say Richardson too, managed to make autobiography into the never-finishing performance of the female self, and not the definitive, significant male life-history

In their autobiographies these women modernists specifically refuse to draw a distinction between the fictional and the factual In these cases, we cannot actually ask the question whether they are novels based on the author's history or straight autobiography Instead we are faced with a curious hybrid, the '(not really) fictionalized autobiography' Strangely enough, names have been changed but the referents remain crystal clear Hypo Wilson is the H G Wells character in *Pilgrimage* Rico is D H Lawrence in *Bid Me To Live* We cannot say that Dorothy is Miriam, or H D Her, but on a different level we are exactly meant to remember they are Autobiographical 'truth' then, already a precarious commodity in the case of traditional autobiography equally changes its nature in the light of this reinterpretation of the genre With an almost oral (dis)regard for history, these narrators are able to reinterpret their and other lives so aggressively from their own perspective Instead we get life stories reinterpreted as they are of use to the present situation, the way history works for the oral society We may feel that H D is breaking the rules of written autobiography in the most flagrant of ways, when she ignores Freud's wishes and presents him as the prophet, the 'Christ', the 'Siegmund' he never wanted to be, so as to fit him into H D 's story These are life stories carried along with the autobiographer, ever-present and ever-changing

However, there is a painful awareness of the mortality associated with appearing in other people's autobiographies As a genre central to modernism, these women writers were aware that this kind of textuality spelt death Stein's hurt reaction to the *transition* article indicates her frustration at the impossibility of challenging its authors, as well as her wish to as yet have the final say Richardson too competed with the traditional autobiography of H G Wells while H D clearly warns Lawrence in print for the death associated with the spider web of his autobiographical novel The modernists knew the future was a public stage True children of the twentieth century, they were aware of the value, even the sheer need for, publicity In the modernist battle of the autobiographies, it is significant that these female voices were clamouring to be heard by means of never-ending texts of self-performance

This communicative view of memory as almost oral stories told to an audience, brings oral or oral-style narration into autobiography and also explains why a recreation of the past is more important than the facts Via communicative, relational autobiographies women modernists can retain the oral life stories of an earlier world of strong performance, presence and warmth The 'oral' autobiography offers a knowledge one can live in, as in a house, but in scripted form it is a permanent house, in which we can 'innocently look about' like the close, friendly presumed reader of *Pilgrimage*

So what sense can be made of fictional/non-fictional autobiographies by women modernists which attempt the impossible a speaking presence in a medium defined by creative absence? At the end of this reasoning which has lead from the modernist crisis in literacy to female autobiographies which pull in the oral sphere, we can wonder whether a gender split as suggested by K K Ruthven, Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar really did exist in modernism? In the interpretation of modernism along the lines suggested by Walter J Ong the phenomenon would be regarded not so much as a movement - there were a number of manifesto-wielding movements and clubs involved - but rather as a collaborative printing and distribution network Modernists attempted to go beyond the commercialized, omnipresent and meaningless ephemeral words of the printing industry to a return to the slowly created book as a complete artistic entity In this supportive, hands-on, renovated confrontation with the text, women played an important role as distributors, printers, booksellers, amanuenses, artists and writers There was no major explicit

gender rift as the basis of modernism then, barring the sexism and gender antagonism omnipresent in society The split occurs around the topic of interiorized literacy Most male modernists were well-educated middle-class men who had gone through the (Latin) school system Most of the women modernists had not had this formal education Brought up as strong visualists and literates, modernist men to their horror saw their 'profession' as men of letters undermined by a world awash with useless, meaningless text, titillating a barely literate audience with cheap journals and newspapers, enthralling a massive 'lady' readership with sensational genres like romance, Westerns, detective fiction Women modernists did not feel personally threatened For them this new literacy was as enabling as it had been for their nineteenth-century forerunners Male modernists and female modernists proclaimed the victory of the new but with a different intent and spurred on by different motives In this reasoning, the oral and the textual are not polarized into a positive and negative pole Conversely their strength lies in their attempted combination With their attempt at the impossible women modernists like Stein Richardson and H D developed a new mythology around writing and speech a textuality stretched towards orality, intended not to offer analysis, ratiocination, distance and perfection, but warmth, presence, performance impact on the reader Any reader who 'plunges' into *Pilgrimage* or *The Making of Americans*, or the smaller but equally specialized texts of H D , and who resurfaces successfully has literally been made to live with them These 'autobiographers' are performing themselves before our eyes Their goal is both more radical and in a certain sense more limited Like the male modernists they share the wish for the pure real book But theirs are texts stretched towards orality, in order to present in writing woman as radically present and fearsome, to perform in eternal print their selves, and the presence of women

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