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Hannah Perrin-Haynes

**Collaborative Individualisms in the Autobiographical Writings of H.D.,
Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein and Emily Coleman**

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Dedication

For being always in my heart (and on my lap) as I wrote this thesis, my darling children, Florence and Maximilian.

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Finally, to my wife, Jenny; I could not have done this without your unwavering support, patience and devotion. You are my greatest cheerleader, and I adore you.

Lay Summary

In this thesis I look at the autobiographical writing of four writers: Hilda Doolittle, known as H.D. (1886-1961), Djuna Barnes (1892-1982), Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) and Emily Coleman (1899-1974). They were all female, queer, American writers, who moved to Europe to write during the period of literary modernism. I consider the term 'collaboration' to understand how these writers wrote about themselves in their autobiographical texts, which includes novels, journalism and diaries. I argue that in order to write about themselves, they always wrote about someone or something else in the process.

I look at crowd theory (what people writing during that time were saying about the effect of the rapidly increasing population on individuals), autobiographical theory (what can or cannot be considered to be an autobiography, and how the person the autobiography is about is always social rather than isolated, and how by writing an autobiography the writer comes to understand themselves better), as well as feminist theory (some background on autobiographies written by women, and the question of whether or not women are social by nature) and queer theory (the different ways they write about their lesbian relationships).

H.D. wrote autobiographical novels, in which she described herself in terms of her creative relationship with Annie Winifred Ellerman, who was known as Bryher (1894-1983). Djuna Barnes was a journalist and she revised traditional forms of journalism by making herself the central focus of each interview or article. I look at her journalism from 1913 to 1931 alongside her autobiographical novel *Nightwood* (1936). In Gertrude Stein's *Everybody's Autobiography* (1938) she is trying to maintain her individuality while remaining social. Emily Coleman published one novel, *The Shutter of Snow* (1930), and wrote 19,000 pages of diaries from 1929 to 1970. I examine her novel alongside the published diary extracts which cover a period spanning eight years from 1929 to 1937.

Abstract

In this thesis I investigate how far 'collaboration' can be used as an aesthetic interpretative category to examine the subjectivities narrated in the autobiographical writing of H.D., Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes and Emily Coleman. These writers were living and working in the collaborative literary networks of the modernist period, which provided aesthetic stimulus, models of exchange and reciprocity, and creative influence. I argue that, beyond being a social context, collaboration was also a central narrative tool used by these writers to achieve autobiographical self-definition by presenting the self relationally through the prism of an other.

I engage directly with relevant theoretical frameworks that examine relationality, including crowd theorists who were writing about the impact of the multitude and proposing methodologies for navigating the boundaries of individualism and collectivism, and contemporary autobiographical theory that examines the plurality of the autobiographical subject and how it is constituted by its relations with others.

In chapter one I look at the autobiographical novels of H.D. that include the depiction of a collaborative union with Bryher that manifested in the self-creation of multiple relational subjectivities. In chapter two I examine the journalism of Barnes from 1913 to 1931, as well as her novel *Nightwood* (1936), and find her navigating varying levels of connection to explore how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to an other or several others. In chapter three I turn to Stein's *Everybody's Autobiography* (1938), in which she is developing a narrative and stylistic conception of the inescapable effect of the multitude on a subject's self-perception, while also trying to carve a space for the subject to exist outside this context in order to preserve their individuality. In chapter four I find that Coleman's diaries are an account of an ultimately futile search for a creative other with whom she could collaborate to fully realise her autobiographical selfhoods.

The notion of collaboration enables an interrogation of the specific textual strategies that these writers use for autobiographical self-representation, which reveals distinctive methodologies for writing in a way that takes account of the context of the multitude in the shaping of and insistence on the individual.

Contents

Introduction: Reading Collaborative Individualisms.....	7
Chapter 1: H.D. and Bryher's Creative Union.....	71
Chapter 2: The Structures of Connection in Djuna Barnes' <i>Nightwood</i> and Journalism.....	116
Chapter 3: Gertrude Stein's Collaborations with the Multitude in <i>Everybody's Autobiography</i>	178
Chapter 4: The Thwarted Search for Collaboration in Emily Coleman's Diaries and <i>The Shutter of Snow</i>	232
Conclusion: Collaborative Voices and Aesthetic Renewal.....	286
Works Cited.....	294

Introduction: Reading Collaborative Individualisms

Within the wide field of autobiographical theory, I am investigating how far collaboration is an aesthetic interpretative category in the texts of female autobiographers during the modernist period, specifically H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein and Emily Coleman. I explore how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to an other or several others, and analyse the narrative techniques at play in the presentation of the self through the prism of an other.¹ By textually enacting interactions between the subject and the external other, various autobiographical selves emerge, and I examine the role collective and relational identities play in the individuation process taking place in these autobiographies.² These white, American, queer, female writers were all living and working in the collaborative literary networks of the modernist period, and they were all engaged in modernist notions of relationality and individualism, in their wide range of forms of autobiographical writing.

¹ While 'the other', especially when capitalised, often refers to Simone de Beauvoir's psychoanalytically oriented use of the term in *The Second Sex* as an internalised concept, I intend it to mean a separate other in the widest sense, whether lover, partner, family member, interviewee or the social context and sense of the multitude.

² I am not referring to the relational assemblage of internal identities examined in the work of critics such as Rosaura Sanchez and Norma Alarcon who warn against privileging singular identities, such as gender, at the expense of other identity positions such as ethnicity, race, nation, class, religion and sexuality. Instead I am referring to the collective and relational dynamics between self and external other.

The American poet and novelist H.D. wrote five autobiographical novels: *Asphodel* (written in 1921-2, published in 1992), *Paint it Today* (written in 1921, published in 1992), *Palimpsest* (written and published in 1926), *Nights* (published in 1935) and *The Gift* (written in 1944, published in 1960). The English author Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman) appears in each. Their collaboration extended the traditional boundaries of the exchange of ideas, co-authorship or mutual editing. Instead, it expanded into a collaborative union that manifested in the self-creation of multiply relational subjectivities within their autobiographical prose. Their literary collaboration was enacted on the page through the creation of multiple split selves that operate in dialogue with one another. Each was seeking out a creative other who would be both conducive to her art and who would provide subjectivities that would merge and interact with her own. H.D.'s prose is a modernist exercise that went beyond self-expression, entering the realm of self-creation for both her authorial and autobiographical selves. Through her union with Bryher she was able to create a dialectic subjectivity in a continual process of becoming that merges and interacts with an eroticised other.

Unlike H.D., Djuna Barnes did not write specifically autobiographical novels, although her novels *Nightwood* (1936), *Ryder* (1928) and the chapbook *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915) all have autobiographical elements. My focus in this thesis, however, is the autobiographical aspects of her journalism, which spanned the years 1913 to 1931. Previously considered by critics to be of

interest primarily as a means of examining and identifying precursors to her later fictional work, I keep Barnes' journalism as the main focus of investigation. I include an examination of *Nightwood* in order to illuminate an analysis of Barnes' self-presentation in her articles and interviews. In particular I consider Barnes' semi-autobiographical presentation of the character Nora Flood and the ways in which she interacts with the other characters in the novel, in particular the elusive and disembodied character of Robin Vote. The collaborative relational dynamics at play between these characters has links to those at play in Barnes' journalism, in particular in the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, and the connection between Barnes as journalist observer of her wider social context. This approach does not seek to find a temporal line of development or progression in Barnes' stylistics and characterisation, but rather to use Barnes' fiction as an entry point into her journalism, so as to scrutinise and draw out Barnes' presentation of the ways in which her individual autobiographical subjectivities collaborate with others in the articles and interviews.

Of Gertrude Stein's autobiographical writing, my main focus is on *Everybody's Autobiography* (1938). Generally in examinations of Stein's autobiographical works this text is sidelined in favour of *An Autobiography of Alice B Toklas* (1933), but *Everybody's Autobiography* is a central text in revealing Stein's response to debates on individualism and mass culture. It is in this text that I read her establishing an alternative form of individualism that

insists on independence and uniqueness while collaborating with its social context in the face of the threats imposed by an externally prescribed identity. Stein creates individualisms that are defined through collaboration with multiple relations, thereby constructing communal subjectivities that are dynamic and relational, and individual subjectivities that remain collective. I maintain an awareness of the thematic interrelationships between this and some of Stein's other autobiographical texts, including *Wars I Have Seen* (1945), *Brewsie and Willie* (1946), and *Paris, France* (1940). Interrogating these relationships reveals Stein's preoccupation with the challenges of self-representation. I discover her changing views about herself, her views on celebrity, publicity and genius and her struggle to conceive of herself as both a unique individual and as inseparably part of the wider world. Stein's consideration of the relationship between self and other sees her using collaboration to reconfigure the boundaries between the individual and the mass resulting in a refusal of stable representable autobiographical subjectivities.

I frame autobiographical writing in the widest sense, and this enables me to consider not just the autobiographies and autobiographical novels of Stein and H.D., but also the journalism of Barnes, and diary writing of Emily Coleman. I consider the published selection of Coleman's diaries that spans the period 1929 to 1937, and find in them a record of a struggle to define an individual selfhood which reflects the multiple identities at play within her autobiographical presentation of self. Coleman's ultimately futile attempts at collaborative self-

definition within her diaries reveal her attempts at textual enactments between the subject and the other. I find a similar broken vision of collaborative connections in her only published novel, *The Shutter of Snow* (1930), which is an autobiographical account of Coleman's time in an asylum where she was treated for postpartum psychosis following the birth of her son. It recounts a distorted and impossible connection between mother and baby, and like Coleman's accounts of her attempts to form creative and collaborative connections in her diaries, the relationship ultimately fails, particularly within the language of the text.

In this thesis, therefore, I show the varying levels of success in the efforts of these writers to create and present their autobiographical subjectivities through the prism of an other. By utilising a conception of collaboration as an aesthetic interpretative category I am able to interrogate and understand the specific textual strategies that these writers used for self-representation in and by their relations to an other or several others. In order to fully present my concept of how collaboration contributes to efforts towards finding alterative forms of autobiographical self-definition, I consider the theoretical framework in which this term is situated. This includes theories of the crowd and individualism, theories about autobiographies, multiplicity and self-definition, feminist theory regarding female relationality, and queer theory. In this introduction I outline the theoretical background to my thesis, and draw out the terminology that I use throughout the thesis, so as to fully illuminate my concept of collaboration as an

aesthetic interpretative category that allows a full analysis of the relational dynamics at play in the collective autobiographical self-creation in the modernist writing of H.D., Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein and Emily Coleman.

Collaboration: An Aesthetic Interpretive Category

There was a wide range of forms of collaboration within the networks of predominantly female writers and artists of the Parisian Left Bank, which was made up of communities that were both intimate and expansive, spanning the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean. Common forms of interaction were the sharing of work and ideas through direct correspondence, and critical commentary through the literary magazines, or at salons. In addition, patronage, editing and publication contributed to the exchange of ideas and the circulation of work. Work to map out these networks across Anglo-American modernism has identified various sites of collaboration and outlined how they were negotiated by modernist writers. This work has shifted the locus of modernist studies from individuals to individuals in groups in particular places.

Collaborative and participatory communities were the context and setting in which these writers chose to live in modernist cities, whether or not they fully integrated themselves within these spheres, and in this thesis I investigate what impact this had on their autobiographical writing.

Female modernist networks have received increased focus within the study of literature, sparked mainly by the publication of Shari Benstock's literary

biography *Women of the Left Bank Paris 1900-1940* (1986) which brought together twenty-four American and British expatriate writers who went to Paris for their art. This was furthered by Bonnie Kime-Scott's critical anthology *The Gender of Modernism* in 1990, and then by her *Gender in Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections* (2007), which continued to revive this interest by organising extracts of modernist writing into thematic groupings. This revealed collaborative cultures of modernist production, while inviting further consideration of the multiple effects of collaboration. As the modernist networks receive increased biographical attention and more is learned about the creative intricacies of these interactions, it follows that collaboration must cease to simply mean 'working together', and instead to start to take on a wider aesthetic significance. Susan Stanford Friedman argues that we must do the work of 'uncovering the forgotten network of relations among women and learning to hear the intertextual blend and clash on the borders between them' (*Penelope* 4).

Collaboration was a central tenet for the networks of female writers living in Paris in the early twentieth century, and a full understanding of its aesthetic impact is conceptually important within a study of modernist literature. Richard Badenhausen examines the role that collaboration with other writers played in the development of T.S. Eliot's works in his *T.S. Eliot and The Art of Collaboration* (2004). His approach is to configure collaboration as an 'operating procedure' (1), and finds that 'Eliot tended to view the writing process as one

that could succeed only through the presence of a companion, since he found the poetic material generated by his imagination unwieldy and, at times, overwhelming. He believed that the assistance of a collaborator could help fix experience in some definite form and bring the creative act to a close' (6). Badenhausen is less concerned with the aesthetic impact of collaboration, and more with the practical assistance that others could provide to aid Eliot's creative process, and his struggles with accepting that assistance. He concludes that Eliot was enormously 'dependent on collaborators' (223) in order to realise his poetic, dramatic and critical work. While this study is a fascinating account of an alliance-based creative process, my thesis differs in approach as it looks at how collaboration on the page with an other contributes towards the narrative realisation of autobiographical subjectivities, rather than the effects of the assistance provided by those with whom they worked.

In this thesis I seek to liberate collaboration from a configuration as simply a social curiosity of the period, in the same way that Urmila Seshagiri in her *Race and the Modernist Imagination* (2010) liberates race from a configuration as merely a social problem. Instead Seshagiri establishes race as 'a central organising category' that is 'essential for understanding the cultural field of modernity' (6-7). By employing the same critical strategy used in this study, such as considering the impact of race on modernist cultural renovation and the splintering of the normative, a picture of the significance of collaboration emerges. Viewed through this lens collaboration can be seen as a formative

tenet that is shifting and disordered, and which is radically unsettling of conventions.

The term collaboration has been defined in multiple ways; however, I use it to expand and refine my conception of relational subjectivities, and as a means of interpreting the narrative tools used by these writers to achieve autobiographical self-definition. To collaborate is the act of two or more people working together to achieve a goal; however, I do not use the term to mean that the writers themselves were writing together. Instead I use the category of collaboration broadly as a way to capture the widest possible range of ways in which they are creating an 'other' in the text, with whom their autobiographical selves can interact in a process of self-creation. This can range from a highly collaborative mutually creative interaction (as in the case of H.D. and Bryher), to one which is explicitly undemocratic, where the 'other' is being used merely as a tool for the subject's formation. In these cases the collaborative dynamic is stretched so far as to be more indicative of a subversive appropriation than a mutually productive creation. Here, the writer takes control of the 'other' and performs the collaboration herself, enacting an intersubjective interaction that remains relational throughout.

For example, in Barnes' journalism I show how she adopts a variety of techniques and perspectives in order to keep an autobiographical focus on her journalistic persona, at the expense of her interviewee or the topic of her articles. She invites the reader to witness her use of a subversive collaboration as a

disruption of normative strategies of representation and so to focus their gaze on her construction of self. I find that she is compulsively writing about herself, and using collaboration as the lens through which she is able to construct her various authorial and subjective personas. In her interview with actor Lou Tellegen, early on in the piece Barnes establishes a hierarchy where the interviewee is of little importance in comparison to ‘the indispensable PEN PERFORMER, an interviewer from a downtown journal’ (153). She also reverses the roles where the interviewee ends up asking the Pen Performer questions, and the reader is left with a clearer impression of the interview’s script includes Tellegen’s commentary on the Pen Performer, calling her ‘mean’ (158), ‘facetious’ (158), ‘supergenerous’ (159), ‘wrong again’ (156, 157), ‘very clever’ (156), ‘astute’ (156), ‘vastly sweet’ (156), and ‘enormously kind, peculiarly adaptable’ (156). The autobiographical subject is performing a subversive appropriation of the interview subject in order to create a uniquely relational dynamic. In this way, using collaboration as a formative aesthetic category to examine Barnes’ process of subject creation reveals that Barnes is establishing an alternative form of subject creation and self-definition, and exploiting the interview format as part of her individuation process.

However, just as collaboration can also be understood to mean multiple authorship, the other is often also being multiply written by those participatory dynamics. This can be seen in the way that H.D. writes of Bryher, Stein of Toklas, Barnes of her interviewees, and Coleman of her son, friends and lovers.

Linda Karrell defines collaboration 'as the common, even inescapable process by which an intricate interplay of competing desires etches itself across a text' (xli). However, I find that rather than being in competition, the interplay of the other with autobiographical self is, while often not democratic, in fact a mutual and productive force. Collaboration is a reconciliation of the individual with the whole.

Terms related to collaboration, such as engagement, union, affinity, bond, relational, and intersubjective also relate to the collective ways in which the autobiographical subjectivities interact. However, what these terms fail to capture is the interactive and productive dynamic that the term collaboration allows, and the specifics of how it can be used as a narrative tool. I propose that for these writers the relational properties of collaboration make it a central aesthetic category of modernist autobiographical writing. In this way, collaboration then becomes an hermeneutical interpretative strategy, offering a way out from oversimplified and reductive binary codifications. Collaboration disables notions of identity and authorship and textuality, and in collaborating within the autobiographical space, the subjectivities are opened up to a panorama of collective constructs.

For example, H.D. and Bryher participated in many literal sites of modernist collaboration such as attending modernist salons and bookshops, writing for modernist publications and corresponding with fellow modernists, and this translated over into their creative works. In the first chapter of this thesis, I

discuss the ways in which their collaborative union manifested in the self-creation of multiple relational subjectivities within H.D.'s autobiographical prose. Their literary collaboration was enacted on the page in a process of the creation of multiple split selves that operated in dialogue with one another. Each was seeking out a creative other who would be both conducive to her art and who would provide subjectivities that would merge and interact with her own. For H.D. and Bryher, their collaboration was a productive aesthetic force that stimulated the creation of merged and interacting subjectivities within their autobiographical prose writing. In this way, H.D., like Barnes, Stein and Coleman, constituted a new form of relationality, one which is queer, which doesn't privilege the individual, and one which leaves the autobiographical subjectivity in a sphere that is perpetually being created and revised.

In Victoria Stewart's 2003 study of women's autobiography, she writes that 'subjectivity is inevitably a series of improvisations in the face of changing circumstances' (169), and that 'writing provides a means of attempting to bridge the gaps which the traumatic event opens up between then and now, history and memory, the self and the other' (169). In this thesis I am interested in how these writers were attempting to bridge the gap between the self and the other. The analysis will establish which others inhabit the texts, and what roles they play within the texts, whether or not their voices emerge, and if they do so implicitly or explicitly. It will look at how far the narrative makes known the relationship with the other, and what kind of investment the narrator appears to have in the other

in their strategies of self-representation. It will look at the impact of any representations of relationality on our understanding of the rhetorical “I” or the narrator’s subjectivity. The other is understood in its widest definition, as another person in the narrator’s narrative world, whether familial, lover, friend, colleague or acquaintance. In the case of H.D., Bryher is the other with whom her autobiographical selves collaborate in a process of becoming. In the case of Barnes’ journalism it is the interviewee who takes that role, and for Stein it is the disembodied character of ‘everybody’. Coleman’s diaries are an account of a lifelong search for an other through whom she may be able to fully realise her autobiographical self; a search which never finds completion.

The threatening crowd and the creation of an individual collectivism

During the modernist period, writers on both sides of the Atlantic were coming together and creating collective and collaborative forums – social circles, salons, little magazines, theatres and bookshops, amongst others – and producing writing across a variety of different genres. Paris was amongst other world cities including London, New York and Berlin in being a hub of collective literary activity. Paris was a significant point of intersection for the writers under investigation in this thesis, as well as many others during this period. While the key fixtures included Stein’s Rue de Fleurus, Natalie Barney’s Rue de Jacob and Silvia Beach’s Shakespeare and co., the points of intersection were numerous and traversed interaction in the cafes and salons. Genevieve Abravanel, in her

essay 'Anglophones in Paris: Gertrude Stein and the Aesthetics of Collaboration' in Jean-Michel Rabaté's *1922*, writes that 'The expatriate scene in 1920s Paris was in fact dominated by the American women, including Stein, who rejected the conventions of American life in favour of new networks of social association, often with female romantic partnerships at their centres' (91). In this thesis I show that much of the intersection and development of these new networks of social interaction can be found on the page, not only when these writers wrote directly about one another, for example where Coleman writes extensively about Barnes in her diaries, when Stein wrote about her contemporaries in her autobiographies, or when H.D. uses Bryher as a character in her autobiographical novels, but also the formative interaction between the self and other in the formation of autobiographical subjectivities.

Individuals and groups writing during this period were rarely unified in their collaborative forums, each working toward their own modernist endeavours, but in this research I attempt to open out unifying elements in the creation of autobiographical subjectivities that reflect the collective and collaborative spirit of the time and place in which these writers lived and worked. For example, in H.D.'s 'Notes on Thought and Vision' (1919), an examination of her creative process, she writes of a collaborative merging of consciousness, that one can only understand when in a state of being 'in love'. This is presented not just as a romantic dynamic, but also in the sense of a creative union. She writes of how 'The minds of the two lovers merge, intact in sympathy of thought / The brain,

inflamed and excited by this interchange of ideas, takes on its character of over-mind' (47). Stein, like H.D. is careful to show her visions of collaboration included this sympathy of thought, and interchange of ideas, rather than a complete obfuscation of individualism. She avoids this by presenting herself as a genius, and her notion of genius, as Darcy L. Brandel writes, 'challenged the notion of the individual thinker entirely, cultivating a collaboration and participation with her readers' (384). I draw out these kind of unifying elements, in order to illuminate my conception of collaboration as a means through which we can better understand the collective individualisms that these writers were creating in their autobiographies.

There were other writers during this period who were engaged with moving from individualism to collectivism. Deborah Parsons notes how in *Ulysses* Joyce was moving 'away from the stream of consciousness of the individual mind, to the conception of deeper underlying currents of collective human existence' (*Theorists* 64). She also describes how 'the feeling of connection beyond the self in Woolf's writing is always related to the threat of the possible dissolution of that self' (77), in particular in the moments when 'the individual limits of consciousness dissolve' (77) in *The Waves* (1931). Parsons quotes a letter from volume four of Woolf's published letters, where she writes of *The Waves* in a letter to G. L. Dickinson that 'I did mean that in some way we are the same person, and not separate people' (77). Therefore, while these visions of an individual collectivism were a feature that can be found in a range

of modernist texts, further interrogation of these endeavours reveal multiple ways of engaging with and presenting the relational capacity of subjectivities. Critics such as Gayla Diment have found examples of this; for example, in her analysis of autobiographical novels of co-consciousness, Diment traces the way in which Woolf and Joyce altered the traditional form by ‘having two protagonists as surrogates for their younger and older selves’ (5) in *Ulysses* (1922) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). In addition, psychoanalysis looks at the divided self, such as when in a lecture on creative writing and day-dreaming delivered in 1907, Sigmund Freud spoke of ‘the tendency of modern writers to split up their ego by self-observation into many component-egos, and in this way to personify the conflicting trends in their own mental life and many heroes’ (39). These examples show how writers and theorists at the time were interested in multiple subjectivities and alternative collective individualisms, and the work of the writers in this thesis are considered in this light.³

Robert McAlmon was a well known poet and publisher in modernist forums, having moved to Paris in 1921, published much of H.D.’s work, paid for the publication of Barnes’ *The Ladies Almanack* (1928), and entered into a

³ Other examples include the response of Ezra Pound in 1914 to the conformity imposed by the masses, which Barbara Will quotes as ‘Modern civilisation has bred a race with brains like those of rabbits, we artists who have been so long the despised are about to take over control’ (5). Will references other modernists who ‘felt that the only response to the threat of “the masses” was to withdraw onto an elevated and isolated plane of creativity – the “high” of high modernism’ (5) for example Mina Loy’s self-referential “Apology of Genius” which portrays transcendence as a potential means of escape from the contaminating rabble below.

marriage of convenience with Bryher. His memoir *Being Geniuses Together*, written in 1934, published in 1938, and covering the period 1920 to 1934, highlights how contemporary debates about autobiography and collectivism looked at the role of the artist as an individual, and their search for community.⁴ McAlmon's central interest is the place of the individual within their social environment and includes a poem at the opening of the text, written by himself, which reflects: 'and one is still alone / after the passing of people, / and the turning of events, scarring / with their experience; / alone, and the winds are still blowing' (xivi). This vision of isolation presents a bleak portrait of collectivism, and the memoir is an account of a tortured search for a likeminded community. He cites H.D.'s view that 'the war had cleaned out all the best young people of the generation' (3-4) and Wyndam Lewis' sense that there was '*nobody* one could safely know in London' (5). T.S. Eliot was suspicious of Paris, writing to McAlmon that 'the right way of course is to take it as a place and a tradition, rather than as a congeries of people, who are mostly futile and timewasting' (8-9). He also writes of 'the artificial stimulus of the people' (9). These extracts demonstrate the contemporary preoccupation with individualism and collectivism, and despite the multiple collaborative networks in operation at the

⁴ A revised edition was published in 1968, which included alternating chapters written by writer Kaye Boyle, and which reads as a collaborative memoir featuring the perspectives of both McAlmon and Boyle, in the style of a reflective conversation.

time, can be read as a portrayal of a failure of community, and an impossibility of social connection.

In addition, during the modernist period, there was an increasing interest in what was often termed 'the crowd', which was positioned as a threat to individual identity. In *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, Parsons outlines the emergence at that time of the notion of crowd psychology as a specific phenomenon. In addition, in *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, John Carey outlines modernism's response to this new phenomenon of mass culture, suggesting that modernism, and its collectives, strove to preserve their seclusion from the perceived detrimental mass impact of the crowd. Certainly at that time there were various critics interested in theories of the crowd, partly due to the population increase at the turn of the century, and the view was propagated that the crowd figuratively entailed the death, not only of the individual, but also of collectives such as modernist groupings.⁵ Some of the most read of these treatises were Everett Dean Martin's *The Behaviour of Crowds* (1920), which presents the crowd mind as a psychological threat, and Gustav Le Bon's *The Crowd* (1896) which is concerned with the ways in which, within a group, individuals lose self-knowledge, and a new mentality bordering on

⁵ These texts include: Sir Martin Conway's *The Crowd in Peace and War* (1915), Willfred Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916), William McDougall's *The Group Mind* (1920), Everett Dean Martin's *The Behaviour of Crowds: A Psychological Study* (1920), Charles Mackay's *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, first published in 1841, Sigmund Freud's *Group Psychology* (1922).

unconsciousness replaces the conscious personalities of those in the crowd. In *The Crowd*, Le Bon outlines the ways in which the collective mind changes the way people think and act:

Whoever be the individuals that compose it, however like or unlike be their mode of life, their occupations, their character, or their intelligence, the fact that they have been transformed into a group puts them in possession of a sort of collective mind which makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from that in which each individual of them would feel, think, and act were he in a state of isolation. There are certain ideas and feelings which do not come into being, or do not transform themselves into acts except in the case of individuals forming a group (29).

This transformation also had implications on gender lines, and Parsons includes Hippolyte Taine's *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine* (1894) and Gabriel Tarde's *On Communication and Social Influence* (1898) as examples of texts which 'envisioned the female urban population as a huge, ever-growing mass taking over the streets' (44) and on this basis the female crowd is 'observable but remains frightening, able to subsume the onlooker in its midst' (44).

Therefore, because 'in the eyes of crowd theorists women in a group amounted to chaos' (45), the collaborative envisioning of collective autobiographical subjectivities that can be found in the writers under examination in this thesis, can be read as a radical response to attempts to control and separate women.⁶

⁶ For more on the discourses regarding women and crowd theory, see Andreas Huyssen's chapter 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other' in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*. Indiana University Press, 1986.

There were also theorists looking specifically at individualism. In 'Individualism: Old and New', published in 1931, the American philosopher John Dewey claimed that 'the problem of constructing a new individuality consonant with the objective conditions under which we live is the deepest problem of our times' (34). Dewey sets this problem against a background of a collective 'emotional life that is lacking in individuality' (26), where there is 'no ultimate inner unity and uniqueness' (26) and where 'homogeneity of thought and emotion has become an ideal' (26). Dewey attributes this to 'the threat of "America" to the traditional culture of Europe' (23) in particular through the influence of standardisation on the 'prized and vaunted "individuality" of European culture' (30). Dewey argues that American individualism, which was once a pioneer mentality, has changed to a 'condition of dominant corporateness' (37) which through the development of the industrial system 'brought about the merging of personal capacity, effort and work into collective wholes' (72). Instead, Dewey suggests, a new type of individual must develop which takes account of the 'vast complex of associations' (78) and reflects on the 'import of these connections into the imaginative and emotional outlook on life' (78).

For Dewey, it is the artist who remains 'as a surviving individual force' (41). He argues for the 'recovery of composed, effective and creative individuality' (132), and states that the questions that need to be resolved are: 'how shall the individual refind himself in an unprecedentedly new social

situation, and what qualities will the new individualism exhibit?' (79). Working towards an answer Dewey claims that 'Individuality will again become integral and vital when it creates a frame for itself by attention to the scene in which it must perforce exist and develop' (136). Within its contemporary scene, this individuality is described by Dewey as 'spontaneous' (156), 'unshaped' (156), 'a potentiality' (156), and 'a capacity of development' (156), 'a unique manner of acting in and with a world of objects and persons' (156), 'not something complete in itself' (156), 'a distinctive way of feeling the impacts of the world' (156), and it 'develops into shape and form only through interaction with actual conditions' (156). This individuality is inherently creative and is 'formed in the process of creation of other things' (157). I find in these writers a response to this call for a new individuality. For example, for Coleman it was crucial that she achieved autonomy and not be unduly influenced by others. While she craved the collaborative creative other through whom she could achieve self-definition, she also loathed the obfuscating effect that influence could have on her. Of her friend John Farrar Holms, lover of Peggy Guggenheim, she writes that 'There is no one whom I have ever known who has so formed my life' (*Diaries*, 11), but also that she 'cannot find the medium between what is in my unconscious mind and what I am saturated with from other minds' (18). This contradiction repeats throughout the diary, where Coleman craves Holms' influence but also feels the need to escape it. She is striving to create a collaborative individualism that can be formative while managing to maintain her own individualism.

This call for a form of individuality that has re-found itself within its social connections and which is inherently creative and creating, echoes the views of W. Henry Lewin. In his tract 'Individualism' published in 1909 he wrote that 'this is an age of combines' (3), and that society must rally against the 'evils of the combine' (9) to preserve 'independence and individuality of character' (3).

However, Lewin's vision of individuality is one that is not completely individualist, but rather recognises that, particularly in the economic sense, 'all the individuals in a community are inseparably bound up within the other' (5). He goes further to say that 'the productions of the scientist, the playwright, the writer, the artist, are all in a special sense individualistic, yet they are also in an equally special sense communistic and far reaching in their educational effects' (9). He proposes an 'individual-collectivism' (6) rather than collectivism or socialism as part of his insistence on individual responsibility.

This debate in the early decades of the twentieth century which insisted on various forms of individualism strove to define what form this individualism should take, and what level of independence, unity and uniqueness it should contain. In this thesis, I interrogate how far these writers participated in this debate. I ask in which ways they prioritise the conscious individual mind over the unconscious pressures of the various collectivism. Are they presenting their autobiographical subjectivities as lost within psychic isolation, or is individualism a liberating state? Are they creating new forms of individualism that are collective in nature? For example, in Stein's autobiographical writing she

explores what sort of individual she was trying to present herself as. While her texts do not conform to traditional autobiographical forms, with their disjointed narrative and lack of formal structure, we can read Stein's effort towards self-historicisation and the effort to present an individual that is independent, unified and unique. I propose that her simultaneous dismantling of the individual and insistence on the vitality of the individual means that she is creating an autobiographical self that is both present and absent, identifiable and invisible. Stein is self-fashioning her autobiographical identity through forms of interaction and participation to produce a self-narrating identity, while trying to reclaim language in order to mould an individualist aesthetic. In *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein writes that 'everything in living is made up of finding out what you are' (74) and I will show that this text is a focal point in Stein's process of self-creation and self-discovery.

In the chapter on Djuna Barnes, I describe the ways in which her autobiographical writings reveal a preoccupation with the crowd, but one which doesn't shy away from any threats of collectivism towards the protection of individualism. Instead, her writing strains against any totalising views of individualism. She rejects any notions of a complete autonomous subject, and instead the impact of others are essential for subject formation. I will show that this is found most acutely in the character of Nora in Barnes' novel *Nightwood*, where before meeting Robin her separateness and isolation is emphasised. After their brief romance, where they were they were 'so "haunted" of each other

that separation was impossible' (49), Robin becomes inextricable from Nora herself: 'in Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and about it for maintenance ran Nora's blood' (51). Here, contact with the crowd, or in this case another individual, should not be seen in purely negative terms, but rather as a positive collaborative dynamic with a generative structuring force.

Present-day critics, such as Michael Tratner and Michael Levinson, acknowledge that modernists were directly engaging with the mentality of the crowd, or 'the crowd mind' (Tratner 2), in order to 'produce a mass culture [...] distinctive to the twentieth century' (2). In his exploration of modernist collectivist phenomena, Levinson looks at how a selection of characters in modernist novels are undergoing a struggle to claim and preserve autonomous subjectivities in the face of the confines of communities. He argues that modernist writers were interested in how one can 'preserve moral autonomy within the collective forms of social life' (33), 'maintain the integrity of the self' (146) and 'define the contours of character' (128) within their social contexts. This, he argues, is a key facet of the modern novelistic imagination where there is a recurrent thematic concern with establishing 'a secure basis for individuality' (128). I, however, do not find in the texts of the writers I examine any evidence of a struggle to preserve individual subjectivities. Levinson describes Henry James as attempting to both establish and sustain 'an "I" within the sphere of an "us"' in *The Ambassadors* (77), and this comes closer to what I discover in the autobiographical writings of the writers under examination in this thesis. The 'I'

existing within the 'us' is an opportunity that is productive and generative, and not threatening or reductive.⁷

In the case of Stein, the very title of her *Everybody's Autobiography* reveals this engagement, and her frequently repeated refrain that 'the earth is all so covered with everybody' (42) shows her to be acutely aware of the impact of the crowd upon her individual autobiographical selves. She, like H.D., Barnes and Coleman, was engaged with an effort to develop a distinctive methodology for writing in a way that takes account of the context of the multitude, particularly in her shaping of and insistence on the individual. Tratner's work is important in acknowledging that rather than 'undermining [...] the individual' (4) Stein is attempting to find an 'alternative to individualism' (4) or an alternative model of individualism, which takes into account the 'psychological or philosophical changes in the individual' (4) brought about by the 'communal structures' of the time (4). My work continues and expands on Tratner's observations, by exploring the communal, or collaborative, individualisms that appear within the

⁷ See Joel Nickels in *Poetry of the Possible: Spontaneity, Modernism, and the Multitude*, University of Minnesota Press, 2012, for further analysis of the modernist questioning of whether it's possible to separate spontaneous internal thought patterns from external social meditations. Raising the question of whether an autobiography is being written as an expression through an administered social environment, and whether this has implications for authenticity, Nickels concludes that in the modernist writers he is investigating spontaneity is to be found 'less in isolated, individual minds than in sites where individual mental impulses overlap with modernity's large-scale mechanisms of public contestation and collective life (2). Therefore it is in fact through the interaction of the individual self with collective life that the communal and relational self is generated.

autobiographical writings of this wider group of modernists. Kathryn L. Ryan cites an essay written in 1984 by Allen McLaurin titled 'Consciousness and Group Consciousness in Virginia Woolf' in which McLaurin is attempting to address 'a current of thinking which was of great importance in [Woolf's] lifetime, but which has since been somewhat neglected, or obscured, or treated in only a fragmentary way'" (74). Ryan notes that in the more than three decades since McLaurin's essay this current of thinking is still largely absent from critical thought, and I am trying to address that gap by analysing the collaborative individualisms in the autobiographical writing of H.D., Barnes, Stein and Coleman.

This research will draw on these theories of individualism and the various forms of collectivism such as the crowd and other forms of groups and publics, while considering the aesthetic impact of writing within a collective historical time and place. It will look at the structuring force and generative effect of the multiple influences deriving from a collective site of modernism. For the writers under consideration in this research, their networks provided aesthetic stimulus, models of exchange and reciprocity, and creative influence. This is specifically explored in the autobiographical writings of these authors, including how their autobiographical subjectivities are informed and created through a collaborative dynamic, where relationality is both dynamic and productive. Tratner asks: 'if modernism is deconstructing the individual what is it turning the individual into?'

(4); and, in this thesis, I argue that these writers are turning the individual into collaborative and multiple subjectivities.

Autobiographical Theories: Writing Plural and Relational Selves

There are on going debates about where the limits of autobiography lie, but rather than trying to define the boundaries of this genre, I accept the open ended nature of the category. Other terminology such as memoir or life-writing can also be usefully applied, and there are various debates on the merits of the different terminologies. Max Saunders provides a comprehensive outline of these debates in his introduction to *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction and the Forms of Modern Literature* (2010). He makes useful distinctions between the terms autobiography and autobiographical writing, while introducing terms such as autobiografiction and autofiction in his exploration of ‘the ways in which modern writers have engaged with forms of life-writing – biography, autobiography, memoir, diary, journal – increasingly for the purposes of fiction’ (14). Engaging in this same debate, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson conclude that the term memoir is ‘more malleable than the term autobiography, foregrounding historical shifts and intersecting cultural formations’ (*Reading 4*). While foregrounding historical and cultural specificity are important in order to understand how the subjectivities in the texts in question are constituted in and by their relationality, the term autobiography will be used in this thesis to cover

all forms of life writing under examination, including Barnes' journalism and Coleman's diary writing.

Smith and Watson go on to write that 'the historically situated practices of self-representation may take many guises as narrators selectively engage their lived experience and situate their social identities through personal storytelling' (18). It is these many guises, and this malleability, that reveal the open ended nature of autobiography and show how the genre is so uniquely and ideally placed to be the site on which an exploration of identity and relationality can take place. In addition, Laura Marcus states, in *Auto/biographical Discourses: Criticism, Theory, Practice* (1994) that autobiographical writing is a particularly valuable resource when examining such topics as 'subject/object, self and identity, private and public, fact and fiction' (7) and it plays a central role in 'discussions of a perceived crisis of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century culture, marked by such notions as alienation, reification, the decline of community and the rise of mass society' (7). Autobiography is, as Smith and Watson describe, 'a process through which the autobiographer struggles to shape an "identity" out of amorphous subjectivity' (*Poetics* 5). It is through this process that the identities I read in the texts under examination in this thesis are found to be collaborating, and self-defining.

That the autobiographical subject is plural has been asserted by a number of theorists, most notably by Paul John Eakin in his 1999 text *Making Selves*. He writes that 'the subject of autobiography to which the pronoun "I"

refers is neither singular nor first, and we do well to demystify its claims' (43). He describes the first person of autobiography as 'truly plural in its origins and subsequent formation' (43), and claims that 'autobiography criticism has not yet fully addressed the extent to which the self is defined by – and lives in terms of – its relations with others' (43), and that 'if we are indeed relational selves living relational lives [...] we will increasingly recognise the extensive body of relational autobiography that already exists' (55). I argue that the women's autobiographies of the networks of modernism fall into this category, and explore the challenges of plurality and singularity when creating an autobiographical self, and how much these writers allow their autobiographical selves to be defined by their relations with others.

If we are, then, to consider how the self is defined by its relations with others, we must accept 'a notion of autobiography in which the focus is, paradoxically, on someone else's story' (56) or on the others in the narrative. This notion is in fact not a new one in autobiographical theory. In ancient Greece and Rome 'individuals were embedded in the social mass of given blood relations' (Weintraub 2). Weintraub identifies the development of 'the conditions of self-conscious individuality' (1) that stemmed from this early social mass in autobiographical texts up to the year 1800. He notes that in 18th century mentality something was changing: 'Individuality was not only accepted as a fact but had become a matter of great value' (333). However, the notion of individuality with which Weintraub's study grapples, positions individuality as

always constituted within a social structure, citing Goethe's autobiography (*Poetry and Truth From My Life*, 1811) as 'important as a work in which the diverse elements which must unite to produce the notion of individuality converge' (336). He writes that 'he possessed a clear sense of his own individuality, and was highly conscious of its effect on the surrounding world' (336). Individuation is a 'never-resting process' (336), which 'inevitably meant a ceaseless interaction of a growing self with an ever-different world configuration' (336). To experience such an interlinked coexistence of a forming self and a changing world was to experience history. 'A self could not value itself apart from its world' (336). For the self to grow, and achieve self-value, then an active process of engagement with external social structures is essential. Weintraub writes of 'Goethe's fundamental experience and poetic lesson of the undissolvable nexus of self and world' (376); however, he questions this nexus in the context of modern conditions, in particular industrialisation and bureaucracy. He writes of 'the great power of immense mass societies to foster the loss of genuine self-direction' (378), which serves to deny an individuality which is possible only when there is an appropriate relationship between the individual and society.

Similar themes can be found in chapter one of Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782), where he offers up his confessions of his life 'to enable my readers to make a step forward in the knowledge of men [...] and this person will be myself' (qtd. in France 28). He asks the questions 'Why write...?' (28) and 'Why

sacrifice the charm of present enjoyment so as to tell others that I had enjoyed myself? (31), and part of the answer is that 'to be loved by all who came near me was my dearest wish' (66). Weintraub writes of Rousseau's awareness of 'how men conceive of the interplay between an I and its world' (295), particularly in relation to how far his love and/or hostilities for his world extend and manifest. Weintraub writes that Rousseau is asking: 'does the notion of individuality make sense when it is not conceived as the fruitful interaction of a self and its world?' (295). He concludes that Rousseau 'was genuinely aware of being a unique and singular person. Though at moments he took pride in his singularity, ultimately he found it a cruel fate. Though he allowed for the differentiations among us, the stronger urge led him to bury these in our common nature, recapturing it from what divides us' (331-2). This demonstrates that this conflict between individualism and collectivism existed in the earliest autobiographies, and that modernist efforts to self-define within this context are rooted in this debate.

If, then, the autobiographical subject has always been plural in nature, given the indivisible relationship between the individual and their world, how does this relationship manifest during the modernist period? Contemporary theory, such as Paul John Eakin's later book *Living Autobiographically: How we Create Identity in Narrative*, published in 2008, provides a useful theoretical platform from which to position this analysis. He writes 'it is not easy to assess the impact of individualism on our thinking about our selves and lives, for such a belief tends to promote a false sense of empowerment, masking the work of the

other forces that shape us' (89). Eakin's vision of individualism as an illusion and a distortion further asserts that we cannot conceive of autobiographical subjects outside their social constructs. He writes that 'belief in individualism, which seems to authorise our confidence in our freedom to think, to act, to be what we want, to say who we are, needs to be measured against the constraints of culture that condition or otherwise set our possibilities' (103). These constraints limit the degree to which we can control and describe our own self-perception; 'How much say do we have in fashioning what we have to say?' (102). For any autobiographer, the external world is impacting their construction of their autobiographical identity, but the extent to which each autobiographer acknowledges and utilises this external force varies considerably. Eakin describes the impact of the external world as 'a cultural context of constraint within which the individual's affirmation of identity – *I write my story, I say who I am* – necessarily takes place' (146-7).

In this thesis I examine the degree to which this is a constraint or a liberating force for the writers in this study. For example, for Coleman the necessity for finding an 'external force' through which she is able to achieve self-definition is ultimately constraining, in that despite multiple attempts at finding a creative other she is not able to find the symbiosis she is searching for. She craves a union between self and other, as 'with every atom of my conscious being I knew there was a harmony, and that we can be one with it' (*Diaries*, 211). Yet, this harmony that she requires in order to find the autobiographical

agency that she seeks, is something she never finds. Despite her deep interest in Barnes, and the stimulation she provides, Coleman finds that ‘when she is there I can’t live in myself’ (308). Of her son, she states that she feels ‘the hopelessness of communicating to anyone I love, as usual’ (317). This is in stark contrast to H.D., who upon meeting Bryher, finds a creative other who is conducive to her autobiographical project. Her poetic depictions of their union *Paint it Today* highlight the discovery of a creative other who would do more than simply inspire, but additionally provide subjectivities that become part of a process of self-creation and self-reflection: ‘All the power of the wood seemed to circle between those two alert and vivid bodies, like two shafts attracting the two opposite currents of the electric forces of the forest’ (84).

‘I tried to keep “myself” out of this’: Autobiographical Writing as Self-Definition

In her essay ‘How does one speak to literature?’, Julia Kristeva writes that literature ‘releases, inscribes, and understands “lived experience” (105). The writers I examine in this study are engaged with how to inscribe their lived experience on the page, and how to understand themselves through this lens. Taking into account Kristeva’s view that language and literature are ‘an irreducible element of subject formation’ (23-4), I find that, in the texts I examine, the boundaries between autobiographical text and historical self are broken down. For example, in the chapter on H.D., I explore how her autobiographical

prose can be read as an experiment in establishing, formulating, and ultimately understanding the significance of her own life and identity. In her notes accompanying her autobiographical novel *The Gift*, written during the 1941 Blitz of World War Two, she writes: 'I tried to keep "myself" out of this, and if the subconscious bubbled up with some unexpected finding from the depth, I accepted this finding as part of the narrative' (8). This reflects Kristeva's argument that literature 'releases' the lived experience while simultaneously inscribing it. We find that H.D. is committed to the creation of a self/selves within the text that, while inherently connected with H.D., person and author, exist entirely and inseparably within the text itself. This is a narrative focussed on its 'findings' which form the cathartic role performed within H.D.'s autobiographical texts. Here writing and identity are intrinsically linked, where the author steps back from the text and the writing itself plays the central formative role, to be later discovered by the author.

Susan Stanford Friedman attributes H.D. with having 'a belief in the interpenetration of writing and identity', resulting in the creation of 'the self-in-the-text' as well the construction of the authorial self through the writing process (*Penelope*, 34). The chapter on H.D. shows how this self-in-the-text is created through an ontological collaborative union that manifests between H.D. and Bryher, which appears within H.D.'s autobiographical prose as interacting and merging eroticised subjectivities. I read H.D.'s autobiographical prose as an experiment in establishing, formulating, and ultimately understanding the

significance of her own lived experience. H.D.'s writing often explores the significance of inheritance and ancestry and her narrative enacts a relational vision of multiply split selves, while opening up unknown aspects of her selfhood through this exercise of self-discovery that situate herself firmly but fluidly amongst a relational dimension within her heritage. She uses displacement and distortion to articulate and recover displaced subjectivities that are multiple and inherently relational. In her prose she was (re)writing her collaborative union with Bryher, and in writing it simultaneously creating it. Where H.D.'s various subjectivities are in engagement with Bryher's various selves I discover the restoration of an unconscious, creative vision. I examine the ways in which their collaboration is shifting and disordered, and radically unsettling of conventions, while equally structuring and creating their merging and interacting subjectivities.

Eakin uses the term 'the relational life' (*Stories*, 57) to describe 'the story of a relational model of identity, developed collaboratively with others, often family members' (57). Certainly H.D., and the other writers I examine, were creating relational autobiographical lives, and I am interested in how they were using collaborative models to do this. Eakin writes that 'narrative is not merely a literary form but a mode of phenomenological and cognitive self-experience, while self – the self of autobiographical discourse – does not necessarily precede its constitution in narrative' (100). Similarly, I argue that collaboration is not merely a social context, or a mode of writing, but instead it is a mode of self-experience, through which the autobiographical subjectivities are constituted.

For these writers, narrative, like collaboration, is not being used to simply express identity, but rather to form it: 'narrative is not merely an appropriate form for the expression of identity; it is an identity content' (100). Eakin reasserts this point, stating that 'narrative is not merely something we tell, listen to, read, or invent; it is an essential part of our sense of who we are' (*Living*, viiii). Therefore, the collaborative narrative structures within the poetry, journalism, diaries, and autobiographical prose that I examine in this thesis are an essential point of investigation in order to fully understand the resulting relational subjectivities.

Who is the 'other' in question?

The relational models of identity, or relational life, which are developed through the narrative's structure, acknowledge the presence of external forces. Eakin states that narrative is always about other people. He reasserts that our individualism along with our sense of control over our autonomy are illusions, stating instead that 'the source of our narrative identities [...] is not some mysterious interiority, but other people' (*Living*, 25). It is through identifying and acknowledging this source that allows the construction of autobiographical subjectivities. Eakin writes that 'when we fashion an I character in an autobiography, we give a degree of permanence and narrative solidity – or "body" we might say – to otherwise evanescent states of identity feeling (77), and this is also true of the relational nature of our identities. In acknowledging

that 'the self is dynamic, changing, and plural' (*Stories* 98), we are able to examine the effect that being plural has on the self.

However, to do this, we must first understand who the others are, that are making us plural, and consider whose other biographies or autobiographies, the autobiography in question is telling. Eakin particularly highlights the relational life as being a life in the context of family relationships,⁸ but I expand this context to encompass a wide range of relationships. For H.D. the other in question is Bryher; she is the writer whose creative other is one specific person with whom they are romantically involved. In contrast, in Barnes' journalism the others with whom she collaboratively interacts, are usually strangers, as they are the people she interviews. I also look more widely at her engagement with the crowd as a concept, and her sense of living in a relational world. With Stein, I conclude through analysis of *Everybody's Autobiography* that she enacts a theoretical and formal rejection of an externally prescribed identity in favour of an individual autobiographical subjectivity that strives to exist alongside but separate from its social context. Therefore, the others she interacts with, are conceived in the widest context as the social environment, and her repeated refrain that 'the earth is all covered over with people' (54) is a central theme throughout the

⁸ Eakin applies the term relational life to 'those autobiographies that feature the decisive impact on the autobiographer of either (1) an entire social environment (a particular kind of family, or a community and its social institutions – schools, churches, and so forth) or (2) key other individuals, usually family members, especially parents' (*Stories*, 69).

fragmented narrative of the novel, and the dislocation of the individual's place in its social context becomes the primary topic of the text. For Coleman, her diary is not simply a means to record the events of her life, but instead to experiment with ways of understanding and presenting her multiple connections and subjectivities. She strives to find a creative other that she can use to achieve self-definition and self-understanding, and her rich and complex diary entries reveal her struggle to achieve this. Her attempts to define an individual selfhood which reflects the multiple influences, such as her male and female relationships, her friends and her son, are ultimately not successful.

Therefore, the others that these writers are collaborating with, to self-define through their autobiographies, are varied, from specific people to abstract conceptions of the multitude. As Eakin describes, 'the space of autobiography, the space of the self, is literally occupied by the autobiography and self of the other' (*Stories* 61). Eakin uses the term 'the proximate other' (196) to describe a parent, a child, a sibling or an intimate. The proximate other in these texts can be described as an intimate, and 'it is difficult not only to determine the boundaries of the [proximate] other's privacy but indeed to delimit the very otherness of the [proximate] other's identity' (176). This is apparent where the construction of the autobiographical identities is dependent on dynamic and

relational communal identities. The relationship is constitutive, and ‘the narration of a self can never be understood in isolation from another it acknowledges’ (4).⁹

Women Writing Modernist Autobiographies

Focussed critical interest in women’s autobiography increased significantly in the early 1980s. Much of this work took the form of autogynography, turning critical attention to women’s autobiographies which had previously been absent from the canon and from critical consideration. The resulting theory was often comparative, between male and female authored autobiographies, and this relied heavily upon normative gender models, gender binaries and gender essentialism. More recently, critics have made sure to be culturally based and historically specific in their considerations, less reliant on a comparative male/female focus, and more aware of the intersectionality of other identity claims.¹⁰ I do not attempt to make universal claims about the nature of women’s

⁹ For more on how the other can be read as a rhetorical strategy grounded in recognition and displacement of the empowered male voice see Julia Watson’s essay ‘Women Writers: Autobiography and the Other’ in James Olney’s *Studies in Autobiography*.

¹⁰ For example, in *Revelations of Self: American Women in Autobiography*, which was published in 1990, Lois J. Fowler and David H. Fowler present the autobiographical works of Anna Cora Mowatt, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Harriet Jacobs and Mary Antin, in a way which acknowledges the impact of women’s status in society upon their writing, but also recognises their diversity in terms of race, class, and politics. Similarly and more recently, Christine Etherington-Wright, in *Gender, Professions and Discourse: Early Twentieth-Century Women's Autobiography*, 2009 by Christine Etherington-Wright looks at how ‘women writers, during the period 1900-1920, in different professions, present aspects of their lives’ (4). She uses ‘the examination of women’s discourse as a

autobiography, or to make any comparison with male autobiography. Instead I look at a specific group of writers linked by their sex, their race, their queerness, their nationality, their exile, and most significantly their exploration of form and genre within their autobiographical writing, in particular how their psychic and social subjectivities are created and transformed.

Some of the women living and working in collaborative networks during the modernist period were writing literary autobiographies. For example, Virginia Woolf's *A Sketch of the Past* (1939), Vera Britain's *A Testament of Youth* (1933), Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* (1915-1967) and Edith Wharton's *A Backward Glance* (1935) were some of the key literary autobiographical texts written by women during this period. Some, such as Margaret Mead and Lillian Hellman, went on to write autobiographies and memoirs later on in their lives, but only a few were writing autobiographical works throughout their careers and focussing on autobiography as a central form for their literary development. Perhaps, the most significant of these writers was Gertrude Stein, who focussed closely on modernist revisions of the autobiographical form throughout her literary career. This however, was not done in isolation. Estelle C. Jelinek notes that 'when Gertrude Stein's autobiography [*An Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*] appeared in 1933, a huge, second insurgence of women's self-writing was under way' (187). Many of these autobiographies were by reformers and political

central interpretive device' (4) in order to analyse 'the female voice and mentality of the period by those who lived and worked at that time' (4). It is gender specific but non-essentialising.

activists¹¹, as well as by others in the public eye such as Isadora Duncan's *My Life* (1927), and Janet Scudder's *Modelling my Life* (1925). In terms of literary autobiographies, Jelinek highlights Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912), Mary MacLane's *I, Mary MacLane: A Diary of Human Days* (1917), Margaret Anderson's *My Thirty Years War* (1930), Gertrude Atherton's *The Adventures of a Novelist* (1932), Mary Austin's *Earth Horizon* (1932), Mabel Dodge Luhan's *Intimate Memories* (1933-37), Harriet Monroe's *A Poet's Life: Seventy Years in a Changing World* (1938), and Edna Ferber's *A Peculiar Treasure* (1938). In addition to this list we can consider the autobiographical works of Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), Mina Loy, Anais Nin, and Jean Rhys, as well as diarists such as Emily Coleman, and letter writers such as Virginia Woolf, whose letters Stimpson argues 'form an autobiography of the self with others, a citizen/denizen of relationships' (168).

Donna Stanton writes of 'the age-old, pervasive decoding of all female writing as autobiographical' (4). She shows how this served to devalue women's autobiographies because it was to 'affirm that women could not transcend, but only record, the concerns of the private self' (4). However, the private self, or the state of the individual was a universal preoccupation during this period, for male and female writers on both sides of the Atlantic. It was not something they were

¹¹ Jelinek notes on this list texts by political reformers such as Jane Addams's *Twenty Years at Hull-House* (1910), Ida B. Wells-Barnett's *Crusade for Justice* (1928), Emily Goldman's *Living my Life* (1931), Vida Dutton Scudder's *On Journey* (1937), Margaret Sanger's *An Autobiography* (1938), Ida Minerva Tarbell's *All in the Day's Work* (1939), amongst many others.

simply recording, but rather deeply investigating, and the resulting texts reveal an outward looking concern with how the private self interacts with the public, and the constructive formation of collective selfhoods. Stanton writes of a 'fundamental deviance that pervaded autogynographies and produced conflicts in the divided self: the act of writing itself' (13), and focussing on writing beyond the individual and engaging with a collaborative relational autobiographical self is certainly a radical act. The act of writing itself 'places the female writer in contradiction to the dominant definition of woman and casts her as the usurper of male prerogatives' (13). The usurpation of autobiography as the retrospective recording of an individual self, suggests an attempt to engage with autobiography and identity differently. DiBattista notes that the tradition of autobiography was 'a tradition dominated by male models of development and, more critically, patriarchal standards of self-evaluation' (210). Women were 'saddled by autobiographical paradigms of experience and self-understanding that often seemed ill-suited to express their personal (as opposed to public and official) understanding of their lives' (210). The standards of self-evaluation through which the writers I examine are writing are plural in construction, and that their autobiographical paradigms of experience are entirely relational. They were reimagining collaborative structures of autobiographical subjectivities and presenting their personal understanding of their lives as collective.

These writers would have had relatively limited access to female autobiographical writing, and therefore struggled to find a referential locus from

which they could situate their writing. DiBattista points out that 'women had no reliable way of gauging whether their experience was unique or representative' (210), and notes that Virginia Woolf reflects in *A Sketch of the Past* that 'to describe oneself truly one must have some standard of comparison' (210). In this sense autobiography becomes a form of self-appraisal, and feelings of apartness, exclusion and singularity stunt autobiographical productivity. DiBattista argues that there was therefore a tendency for female autobiographers 'to oscillate between presenting themselves as unique, sometimes desperately alone in their experiences of life and recommending themselves as representative of their sex and social milieu' (214). I do not find that the writers I examine are striving to be representative, or for their uniqueness to be framed as isolation. Instead, they go beyond an interest in comparison or representation of their sex, and draw the experience of an other into their autobiographical subjectivities.

The identification of ways in which these female autobiographers were working beyond the generalised tendencies found by critics puts pressure on the essentialising claim that women write autobiographies differently to men. DiBattista asks 'are women differently amazed by this existential conundrum – why am I myself? Does being a woman contribute something peculiar and known only to her sex?' (220). Autogynographic criticism often argued that women are indeed differently engaged with these questions due to their sex. However more recently, there has been acknowledgement that 'it is still by no

means clear what role gender plays, if any, in the way that a life is remembered and told' (208), and that 'there is less agreement about whether women's autobiographies, which necessarily reflecting their sex, are ultimately defined by it. Nor is it self-evident that women autobiographers feel compelled to devise new forms to express what a woman's life is and what is learned in living it' (208). I take into account the ways in which the autobiographical texts I analyse necessarily reflect the sex of their writers, but I do not make any universalising claims about women's autobiography as an entity.

Jelinek wrote in 2003 that 'most autobiographical criticism today falls into two categories: thematic interpretation and theoretical definition of the genre' (10), with a focus on psychological, historical or symbolic themes. Jelenik attempts a theoretical definition of the genre, by documenting 'the literary history of the characteristics in women's self-writings' (13), and in doing this reveals that she subscribes to the premise that women write autobiography differently. As a result her analysis leads her to universalising conclusions such as that women's autobiographies are efforts 'not only to authenticate who they really are but also to prove their worth as human beings' (263), as well as considerations of the levels of confidence of the narrators. She finds 'in most women's autobiographies a sense of feeling other, of being different from the rest of society, even from other women' (263), and concludes that 'they feel they are different from, other than, or outside the male world, a poor fit, indeed, in that world' (263). I do not find in the texts I examine efforts to authenticate

themselves, or a lack of confidence in the narrators, and rather than a sense of feeling outside the world, I discover a deep engagement with the world, whether than be a specific other or their wider social context.

Insofar as I attempt a theoretical definition of the genre, it is to look broadly at which writings constitute autobiographies, in particular in chapter two where I consider the autobiographical elements of journalism, and in chapter four where I consider the critical theory regarding how far diaries are autobiographies. However, my primary consideration is a thematic interpretation, rather than theoretical definitions of the genre, and my thematic focus is the ways in which collaboration is a formative aesthetic category in the formation of relational autobiographical subjectivities. Like Stanton I am wary of ascribing heteronormative binary female/male constructions to my examination of women's autobiography. Stanton in particular is careful not to claim that in terms of narrative women only focus on the personal. Instead, on narrative style, rather than ascribing a particular female type of narrative, she finds that 'discontinuity and fragmentation constitute particularly fitting means for inscribing the split subject' (11), and for 'creating the rhetorical impression of spontaneity and truth' (11). I will interpret the thematic elements of collective subjectivities, while opening up the modernist narrative methods of discontinuity and fragmentation at play.

Therefore, while I find that these writers are devising collaborative individualisms, I do not claim that these are uniquely female in the way that I do

claim that their collaborative endeavours are uniquely modernist. This is not in the sense of an avant-garde attempt to prove themselves to be alienated from and elevated above the established order, but rather they were engaging directly with the social order. I do acknowledge the ways in which 'female modernism challenged the white, male, heterosexual ethic underlying the Modernist aesthetic of "impersonality" (e.g., the transformation of the textual "I" from the personal to the cultural' (Benstock, *Authorising* 153). The ways in which they engage collaboratively with the textual "I" are modernist innovations in the way that they reflect a deliberate and radical break from the traditional autobiographical subject, by fragmenting and dislocating it into plural and relational entities. These writings were modernist in their subversion of the basic conventions of prose, their breaking up of narrative continuity, violation of syntax, and their use of collaborative models of subjectivity. Modernism is often described as a period in which there was a crisis of representation, and in response these writers used collaborative models of creating autobiographical subjectivities to reclaim their representation through the negotiation of language and reference.

This area of modernist experimentalism can be identified as a female response to traditional and therefore patriarchal modes of representation. Benstock writes of how female modernists all 'eschewed the conventional modes of thought and feeling expected of women; and instead chose to follow the logic of their own most fundamental perceptions and experiences' (248).

When it comes to autobiographical self-definition this logic is plural and relational. Therefore the collaborative aesthetic used by these writers is situated firmly in the linguistic experimentation that was a key facet of modernism, and reflects the female experience of exile and displacement that was prevalent for the women of the Left Bank. They were interested in how something is said rather than what is said, and rather than holding up a mirror to the world, they wanted to actually construct a new world via the reimagining of collective individualisms. The tools they used to achieve this included multiple perspectives, unreliable narration, free indirect discourse, and the use of fragments, and their creation of these solutions in response 'to the dilemmas and ambivalences arising from these connections was utterly radical' (248). As noted by Benstock, they were discovering and mapping 'the organic connections between literary and social conventions' (248) which led to 'continuous experimentation both in the substance of their actual lives and in the struggle for literature' (248). Benstock writes of them giving their all in their efforts to make their literature new, and concludes that 'the modernist woman is not unconventional; she is anti-conventional, wishing her creative energy to take every form of expression possible to her' (11). This is also evident in the creation of autobiographical subjectivities where these writers break all conventions by writing relationally and creating collective individualisms.

Are Women's Autobiographies Inherently Relational?

As well as acknowledging the debate around whether women write autobiographies differently, I also engage with the premise that women are inherently relational. Sidonie Smith states that Mary G. Mason's 1980 essay about women's autobiography called "The Other Voice" 'became the basis for much later theorising of women's autobiography.'¹² It argues that women's alterity informs their establishment of identity as a relational, rather than individuating process' (Smith, *Reading* 210). Mason used an essentialised 'woman' as an internally coherent gender distinction, and 'contrasted a male text, Rousseau's *Confessions*, with the relational texts of four women writing "radically the story of a woman"' (235). Similar textual analysis comparing men's and women's autobiographical texts has been conducted by a number of critics who consider relationality to be a specifically female quality: 'Some feminist critics defined the personal in women's autobiographies as a primary emphasis on the relation of self to others.'¹³ However, this relatedness was traced to the dependence imposed on women by the patriarchal system, or it was upheld as a fundamental female quality' (Stanton, 12). Stanton makes the important point that with the assertion that women are inherently relational we must be clear to

¹² First published in James Olney's collection of essays *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Princeton University Press, 1980 (reprinted in 2014).

¹³ These feminist critics include Susan Stanford Friedman, Bella Brodzkia and Celeste Schenck. Joy Hooten's essay 'Individuation and Autobiography' cites research in developmental psychology and sociology, by Carol Gilligan and Nancy Chodorow, to support the view that individuation is decisively inflected by gender.

do the difficult task of separating 'a manifestation of female difference, from a strategic conformity to cultural norms' (12-13). She writes that any form of female relatedness 'could signal either a special female relatedness and/or an acquiescence to the dominant sex through which the female is meant to define and confine the self in our symbolic order' (13). While Stanton is specifically considering a woman's relationships with her parents, children and husband, and the relationships I consider in this thesis are much wider than this, I do not find that distinction applies. In my analysis of the collaborative relationality in the autobiographical subjectivities of the writers I examine, rather than identifying acquiescence, I show how the relational dynamic is dynamic and productive.

This can also be found in the writing of Virginia Woolf, for whom, DiBatista argues, it is the task of the autobiographer to discover and reflect how 'disparate memories ultimately coalesce into a pattern, some ineluctable but unforced totality' ('Women's Autobiographies' 215). Similarly, in the texts I examine in this thesis, there is an attempt to bring together disparate multiple relational subjectivities into a totality of selfhood. For example, in the 'Dark Room' section of H.D.'s *The Gift*, the narrative forms out of the disjointed memories of a moment from Hilda's mother's childhood. By blurring generational divisions, and reflecting on familial reincarnation and inheritance, H.D. creates a vision of identity that is plural and in constant flux as it collaborates with and understands its heritage. This exercise of self-discovery allows her to open up unknown aspects of her selfhood, and situates herself firmly but fluidly amongst

a relational dimension within her heritage. Like H.D., Woolf has a vision of a collective life where 'everyone belongs to the same world, makes up the same work of art, forms part of the thing itself' (216), and this highlights the controversy 'between the singular self and collective identity' (216). DiBattista reads Woolf's sketches as notes towards everybody's autobiography' (216), and writes of Woolf's belief in a collective life underlying and ultimately superseding our existence as separate individuals' (216). The disparate, multiple, relational subjectivities at play in the texts under examination in this thesis reveal an autobiographical investigation of the controversy between the singular self and collective identity.

This relational capacity is described by psychoanalysts in a gendered formation. Helen Deutsch wrote in 1943 that the female psyche is made up of a layering of relational constellations. She argues for the significance of how the anatomic difference between the sexes creates psychological differences, which creates an imbalance in 'tendencies toward identification' due to the 'needs of the weak ego' (130). Identification is described as 'an innate feminine quality that, born of weakness and passivity, can serve varied and often opposite purposes' (132). This can constitute a danger for the ego where it 'deprives the individual of the full possession of his own personality' (131). Nancy Chodorow, however, in her consideration of the relational capacity of women, acknowledges the importance of feminist theory's caution over generalising claims of gender difference, where generalisations must not become universal claims or

polarisations. While Chodorow asserts that ‘gender makes a difference, but does so in particular ways’ (*Femininities* 90) she equally states that what becomes important are ‘the psychologically and culturally *specific* meanings that gender holds *for that individual*’ (91). In her essay ‘Oedipal Asymmetries and Heterosexual Knots’ she explores how it is ‘developmental pathways’ rather than anatomical differences that ‘result in constellations of capacities and needs for intimacy’ (91) which differ in men and women in specifically Western familial contexts. This is explored further in *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* where Chodorow concludes that girls ‘transform their intro-psychic object world – their inner fantasised and unconsciously experienced self – in relation to others’ (114) and that women ‘grow up with relational capacities and needs, and psychological definition of self-in-relationship’ (209) as ‘girls have more permeable ego boundaries’ and ‘come to define themselves more in relation to others’ (93).¹⁴ While rejecting these conclusions as essentialising claims for gender difference, these ‘patterns help give meaning to and interpretively situate particularity’ (89). Therefore, Chodorow’s argument for the high relational capacity of women and the significant role that this plays in self-definition through relationship is usefully configured as developmental rather than anatomical.

¹⁴ In this text Chodorow looks into the biological claim for the social role of mothering, problematizing the claim that there is a natural or instinctive motherliness in women.

H.D., Barnes, Stein and Coleman, although equally engaged with the modernist experiment of reflecting consciousness through autobiographical literature, were engaged, rather than with splitting up their egos for self-observation, in considering subjectivities through a relational dynamic. Through displacement and distortion these writers strove to articulate and recover displaced subjectivities that are multiply relational, which echoes Kristeva's formula where 'subjectivity functions less as a fixed entity than as a locus of determining forces' (Becker-Leckron 22). These forces, for these writers, are seen to be the impact of others which determines the configuration of their own subjectivities.

Chodorow's conception of an inherently female relationality where women are 'less individuated than men and have more flexible ego boundaries' (*Femininities* 44) has been an important one for autobiographical studies. Smith and Watson write that 'this notion of "relationality" would have long term implications for theorising female subjectivity in autobiography' (17). For example, Shari Benstock in 'Authorising the Autobiographical', 'offered a Lacanian reading of women's textuality as "fissures of female discontinuity" exemplified in the writing of Virginia Woolf' (Smith, *Reader* 13). In addition Susan Stanford Friedman has productively expanded theories of relationality in *Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice* where she focusses on relationality in women's autobiography as an expression of the fluid boundaries they experience psychologically.

While I note these theories, I show that relationality is a central structuring force for these female writers in their constructions of their autobiographical subjectivities, but I do not position this as a universal female quality. It is, however, helpful for considering the communal identities at play in these autobiographies, and Mason's 'postulation of an "other" toward, through, and by whom women come to write themselves' (17) is important for this study.

A helpful example of a theorist who is careful not to define a difference between men's and women's autobiography through the framework of relationality and individuality is Hertha D. Sweet Wong in 'First-Person Plural: Subjectivity and Community in Native American Women's Autobiography'. She notes that 'not all concepts of relationality are equal' (168), and asks 'when a Native woman writes or speaks in the first-person singular, who else is crowded into that "I"? Who are her relations?' (168). In her reading of Bakhtin's notion of polyvocality¹⁵ she finds that 'numerous kinds of relationality are possible' (169) and that 'a subject is not either individual or relational' (169). She writes that 'there is no consensus about the meaning of community transculturally' (172), and that 'each individual participates in a variety of multaneous and overlapping communities – social, political, linguistic, and religious communities, for example' (172). Therefore, 'any discussion of (Native) women's autobiography

¹⁵ See Wong pp. 168-9 for more on Bakhtin's notion of the polyvocality as how a singular voice challenges any monolithic construction of identity that does not acknowledge its own plurality. Bakhtin replaces individuality with a notion of a multivocal self which is characterised as multiple, shifting, and relational.

(and the subjectivity it constitutes) must resist positing a generalised female or Native relationality or a monolithic community in favour of working toward understanding the diverse and shifting trajectories they simultaneously reflect and construct' (176). Wong's work is encouraging a movement away from gendering and generalising terminology in discussions about women's autobiography, and this thesis acknowledges the importance of this change of direction, and participates in the resistance of generalisations.

Eakin makes similar efforts when lamenting that an inevitable consequence of the project to distinguish female from male autobiography, which 'has been an unfortunate polarisation by gender of the categories we use to define self and self-experience' (*Stories*, 48). He shows these gender binaries unintentionally occurring in Friedman's work where 'despite her attack on individualism, once she launches into a discussion of Anais Nin, she begins to draw on terms such as "self" and "uniqueness," and she is obliged to recuperate individualism, constructing a special "relational" variety of "uniqueness" to work out her argument' (48). Instead Eakin suggests revoking the masculinist bias in our understanding of individualism, in order to ensure that the terms of the discussion are not contaminated by patriarchal usage.¹⁶ While acknowledging that certain aspects of female autobiography are necessarily acknowledged as

¹⁶ Other statements such as Shari Benstock's view that 'the Symbolic law is to *represent* authority, to represent the phallic power that drives inexorably toward unity, identity, sameness' (Smith, *Women, Autobiography, Theory* 151), might be included in this category.

gendered, such as the political act of asserting an autobiographical self in the face of a historical denial of self-expression, this thesis will be cautious of any discussions of patriarchal restrictions that are not clearly evident in the textual analysis. Eakin suggests that ‘the criterion of relationality applies equally if not identically to male experience’ (*Stories*, 50). He argues that ‘all selfhood [...] is relational despite differences that fall out along gender lines’ (50). He asks ‘how, then, to recognise both the autonomous and the relational dimensions of men’s and women’s lives without placing them in opposition’ (52). Eakin promotes tracking ‘relational identity across gender boundaries’ (56) for the very reason that ‘the assertion of autonomy is dependent on this dynamic of recognition, identity is *necessarily* relational’ (52). As well as tracking relational identity across gender boundaries, we can also explore relational dynamics across traditional relationships.

Bella Brodzki’s ‘Mothers, Displacement and Language’ is a study of ‘the political and cultural implications of displacement and their bearing on diverse literary strategies in women’s autobiographies’ (156), and it is helpful in its illumination of the strategy of discontinuous shifts in identity. She writes that ‘self-representation is the effect of a constructed similarity or equivalence between identity and language, an attempt to cast in fixed terms the self-reflexive, discontinuous shifts in modality and perspective, temporal and spatial, that are inherent in human experience – in a word, being – and to ground them in a single subjectivity’ (156). While her focus is ‘autobiographical narratives

[which] are generated out of a compelling need to enter into discourse with the absent or distant mother' (157), as a 'search for origins' (157), we can apply her theories to other forms of relationships, including the female relationships at play in the texts under consideration in this thesis. Female relationality is often focused on family dynamics, as illuminated in studies of Frances Harrison in Sinclair's *Tree of Heaven* (1917) and Mrs Ramsay in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), but we can extend these parameters to the other and more various forms of relationships that were integral to the lives of women in modernist communities.

Shari Benstock's studies of the women of the Left Bank in Paris draws out those elements specific to the women in modernist communities during this period. She writes that 'autobiography reveals gaps [...] between the individual and the social' ('Authorising' 146), and that 'certain forms of self-writing [...] have no investment in creating a cohesive self over time. Indeed, they seem to exploit difference and change over sameness and identity: their writing follows the "seam" of the conscious/unconscious where boundaries between internal and external overlap' (148). She invites us to consider where the subject of the text locates itself, and to identify the decentred self while looking for the identifying features of discontinuity. She finds that 'the instability of this subject is nowhere more apparent than in women's writing of this period, in texts by Djuna Barnes, Isak Dinesen, H.D., Mina Loy, Anais Nin, Jean Rhys, Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf, writing that puts into question the most essential component of the

autobiographical – the relation between “self” and “consciousness” (153).¹⁷ In exploring the relational, communal natures of autobiographical subjectivities, the examination of the gaps between the individual and the social, and the decentred self’s features of discontinuity will draw out points of intersection at play between the self and the other.

A Woman-Centred Erotic: Queering Autobiographical Subjects

Susan McCabe, in her 2010 article investigating Bryher’s collaborative relationship with Marianne Moore between 1920 and 1923, recognises the need to ‘redefine female collaboration as having multi-dimensional creative, psychological, monetary, and ultimately, transreferential aesthetic and erotic significance’ (609).¹⁸ Joanne Winning in her study of Dorothy Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* series, considers the nature of lesbian autobiography. She concludes that for Richardson’s *Pilgrimage* (1915-1937), along with other texts by modernist writers including H.D., ‘auto/biographical textualities become spaces of fantasy and prescription, in which the configuration of other selves and

¹⁷ Benstock cites a number of texts that discuss this: Benstock ‘Beyond the Reaches of Feminist Criticism’ and *Women of the Left Bank*; DeKoven’s *A Different Language*; DuPlessis’ *Writing Beyond the Ending*; Friedman’s ‘Modernism of the Scattered Remnant’ and *Psyche Reborn*; Friedman and DuPlessis’ ‘I Had Two Loves Separate’; Gubar’s ‘Blessings in Disguise’ and ‘Sapphistries’; Kolodny’s ‘Some Notes on Defining a Feminist Literary Criticism’; Marcus’ ‘Laughing at Leviticus’ and ‘Liberty, Sorority, Mosogyny; and Stimpson’s ‘Gertrice/Altrude’.

¹⁸ McCabe argues that a psychoanalytic model of transference, developed during modernism, provides a necessary vocabulary for reframing collaboration.

identities who may indeed enact lesbian identity can be mobilised' (32).

Pilgrimage becomes a textual space for fantasy and revisions of self-hood which bear little resemblance to Richardson's real life, but instead tell us of her absences and losses. Therefore, while McCabe describes H.D. and Bryher's relationship as 'ostensibly overtly erotic' (619), it is the textual representation of the erotic that becomes significant, in relation to the ways in which she was queering her autobiographical subject.

Writing about a women-centred erotic during this period must be set against the socio-historic context of the time, where several authors had undergone or were undergoing obscenity trials for their depictions of homosexuality. Laura Doan's important re-evaluation of this context in a chapter on 'The Mythic Moral Panic' in her book *Fashioning Sapphism* (2001), shows that the frequently cited editorial by James Douglas, the editor of the Sunday Express who campaigned in 1928 for the suppression of Radcliffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, is not actually representative of views of the time. Doan writes that 'most editors condemned the Express's handling of Douglas's rhetoric of outrage [...] and exposed the hyperbole for what it was: flat and empty' (20), and 'critics strongly urged readers to keep an open mind because the failure or inability to deal with this important and timely topic would constitute a loss' (12). The balance between engaging with the topic and avoiding public scrutiny was one many writers struggled with. The positions of the writers under examination in this study appear to be aesthetic rather than social. For example,

H.D. devised methods for considering the erotic dimension of her collaborative union with Bryher, but she did not screen this dimension, rather she encoded it within her aesthetic model. Various devices were employed by H.D. and Bryher in their representations of the erotic dimension of their relationship, and I examine the ways in which they used collaboration as an aesthetic tool to describe these dimensions. I look at Bryher's use of ellipsis, and the ways in which H.D. creates erotic impressions rather than describes erotic acts. Rather than disguising or seeking to avoid representing the erotic dimension of her union with Bryher, she develops an aesthetic technique to reflect upon the erotic significance and experience of their relationship.

Eakin considers that it is important to reflect upon our conception of types and groups of people, where due to the fact that 'models of the person are culture specific and period specific; there is always a dynamic interplay between particular individuals and the available descriptions for kinds of human beings' (*Living* 97). The available descriptions of the writers I examine, such as female, able-bodied, white, diarist, benefactor, American, lesbian, journalist, genius, recluse, heiress, collector, poet, all play a part in their self-conception, and the queer connection between these women plays an important part of their collective individualisms.¹⁹ Where 'there is some kind of causal connection at

¹⁹ Along with identity descriptors, it must also be noted that for some there were additional factors that impacted upon identity such as the city. See Parsons, Deborah. *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* for the

work between our sense of individual identity and our social and cultural circumstances' (100), those circumstances play a role in any attempt at self-definition. Eakin asks 'how do such causal connections work, and what should we make of them?' (100). As I look at how these queer connections manifest in the texts under scrutiny in this thesis, and what we should make of them, I maintain a focus on how they become apparent within the narrative structure.

For example, in the chapter on Stein, I examine the ways in which Stein's writing which is often described as inaccessible and obscure, is actually dense with multiple meanings, and conclude that this is a specifically queer endeavour. Critics, such as Edmund Wilson, have described Stein's stylistic obscurity as due to a need to encode lesbian sexual desire; however, later critics such as Elizabeth Fifer and Marianne DeKoven believe that the Steinian text is accessible rather than obscure and that Stein's motivation comes from a desire to communicate rather than to obscure her meanings.²⁰ They suggest that it is the role of the reader to learn to read Stein's 'patterns and strategies' (Fifer 18), while accepting that 'critics will continue to chart a difficult path between an overdetermined and a random text, between what is meaningful and what is not' (17). A suggested strategy is to only register the possible literal interpretations

ways in which the city operates as a constituent of identity, in particular for H.D. and Barnes.

²⁰ Other critics argue that Stein's stylistics are meaningful and intended to create new meanings, including as Harriet Chessman in her 1989 text *The Public is Invited to Dance: Representation, the Body, and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein*, and Lisa Ruddick in "A Rosy Charm: Gertrude Stein and the Repressed Feminine" (1986).

within the texts, rather than rely upon them, and as a result 'instead of sense and thematic meaning we have limitless, dense semantic plenitude' (16).

Concurrently, this multiplicity of meaning reflects the way in which Stein presents the multiplicity of the subject, as a way, not of dissolving the individual but of securing the individual's uniquely plural nature. Just as Stein presents an individual that instead of being obscured by the multitude has instead found itself within its relations, she writes with a semantic plenitude that instead of being rendered meaningless in fact allows multiple meanings.

This endeavour is queer, as the very act of writing about yourself multiply and relationally reflects the necessity for the use of different interpretive strategies. Stein is not simply attempting to obscure lesbian desire, but to open up different ways of presenting and interpreting lesbian subjectivities, which is transgressive politically as well as formally. Queer theorists have long been interested in the ways in which lesbian autobiographical writing altered conventional modes of representation. As early as 1977 Bertha Harris suggested that 'lesbian writing engaged a desire and an excess that defied the fixity of identity, the boundaries drawn round individual subjects, around all forms of categorisation and normalisation' (Martin 380). More recently Biddy Martin in her essay 'Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference(s)' writes that 'Lesbian autobiographical narratives are about remembering differently, outside the contours and narrative constraints of conventional models' (385). Certainly the radical reconfiguration of the individual as both collective and collaborative

that the writers under examination in this thesis were performing can be read as a conscious movement away from the constraints of conventional models.

Martin views this as a political act against patriarchal language where 'lesbianism, understood first and foremost about love for other women and for oneself as a woman, becomes a profoundly life-saving, self-loving, political resistance to patriarchal definitions and limitations' (387). However, she equally warns against attempting to find any consensus about a definition of lesbian identity, particularly in relation to politics. Indeed, debates within queer theory reflect the impossibility to conceive of lesbian autobiography as a universal category, despite politically motivated attempts to create homogenous conceptions of lesbianism that suggest that there is something identifiably different about lesbian lives as opposed to heterosexual women's lives.²¹ This risks erasing lesbian autobiography by conceiving it as an invisible unitary other. Martin instead focuses on autobiographical writings that 'work against self-evidently homogenous conceptions of identity, writings in which lesbianism comes to figure as something other than a "totalising self-identification" and to be located on other than exclusively psychological grounds' (383). Importantly Martin notes that 'lesbian autobiographical writing has an affirmative as well as a critical relationship to questions of identity and self-definition' (385). This reflects my conception of collaborative models of autobiographical subject formation

²¹ These include collections of 'coming-out' stories and autobiographies by lesbians, as well as having separate sections in anthologies and readers about lesbian autobiographies.

where these writers are producing affirmative responses to the questions of how to create an collective individualism.

Therefore, I do not claim that the writers under examination in this thesis were writing specifically lesbian autobiographies. While they each present lesbian desire in their autobiographical works, with the exception of Barnes' journalism, this is not the focus of the thesis. Instead I am interested in how the signification of alternative interpretative strategies is something that is queer and by nature destabilising of boundaries. Martin envisions that lesbianism works 'to unsettle rather than to consolidate the boundaries around identity, not to dissolve them altogether but to open them to the fluidities and heterogeneities that make their renegotiation possible' (390). I agree that in writing about autobiographies with queered modes of subject creation, it is important to consider the ways in which they were renegotiating their positions as individuals. Critics have noted the analytical potential in examining these fluidities and multiplicities, such as how Carolyn Heilbrun in *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988) 'has observed the difficulty of negotiating and describing women's friendships outside a patriarchal framework by calling eloquently for reading and writing affiliation with other women as a focus of women's autobiography' (qtd. in Watson, 'Unspeakable' 395). Julia Watson goes on to ask 'what the possible practices and politics of women's affiliation are that could undo the rhetoric and claims to power of both heterosexual and lesbian hierarchies' (395).

I propose that the collaborative subjectivities in the autobiographical works of the writers under examination in this thesis are indeed a practice of women's affiliation. This practice is radical, as their lens was wider than traditionally represented spheres of female influence given that they conceive of the 'other' as not just in terms of more standard groupings of influence, such as mother, grandmother, mentor, friend. This thesis encapsulates that wider lens, and includes lesbian partners, as well as a comprehensive conception of the other including both individuals and multitudes in the sense of the social mass. These writers were performing a 'remaking of the written word as communal speech' (Watson, *Shadowed*, 185) in order to show the potent impact of women's affiliation upon autobiographical subject formation.

As Abravanel writes, 'the displaced women of this moment helped to produce an aesthetics that was collaborative, interdependent, and like modernist form, transgressive' (91). In the chapters that follow, I use collaboration as an interpretive category to examine these aesthetics. I analyse the narrative techniques and textual strategies at play in the presentation of the self through the prism of an other, and show that by textually enacting interactions between the subject and the external other, varyingly individuated autobiographical selves emerge. The concept of collaboration as an aesthetic interpretative category allows a full analysis of the relational dynamics at play in the collective autobiographical self-creation in the modernist writing of H.D., Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein and Emily Coleman.

H.D. and Bryher's Creative Union

Introduction

The American poet H.D. (1886-1961) and the English author Bryher (1894-1983) actively participated in the collaborative networks of modernism. Georgina Taylor's *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Writers 1913-1946* (2001) usefully maps out aspects of the discursive networks of modernist women writers and, rejecting a perception of H.D. as closed and private, demonstrates 'H.D.'s centrality in this international network of women writers by showing her involvement at all levels of discussion' (21). However, the particular collaboration between H.D. and Bryher extended the boundaries of the exchange of ideas. They were in each other's lives for more than forty years, but their interaction was not in the form of co-authorship or mutual editing. In fact, Bryher wrote in her memoir *Days of Mars* (1971): 'She seldom shows me anything before it is printed' and 'I had learned some sharp lessons about never interrupting her' (77).

Instead, their collaboration extended into a collaborative union that manifested in the self-creation of multiple relational subjectivities within their autobiographical prose. Their literary collaboration was enacted on the page in a process of the creation of multiple split selves that operated in dialogue with one another. Each was seeking out a creative other who would be both conducive to

her art and who would provide subjectivities that would merge and interact with her own. For H.D. and Bryher, their collaboration was a productive aesthetic force that stimulated the creation of interacting subjectivities within their autobiographical prose writing. H.D.'s prose is a modernist exercise that went beyond self-expression, entering the realm of self-creation for both her authorial and autobiographical selves. Through her union with Bryher she was able to create a dialectic subjectivity in a continual process of becoming that merges with an eroticised other.

H.D. wrote thirteen novels, eight memoirs, fourteen poetry collections, twenty-five stories and was a focal, if not founding, figure in the Imagist movement. Bryher, an heiress to a significant fortune, is mostly known for her generous patronage but she also wrote two books of poetry, fourteen novels, three memoirs and a critical text on the poet Amy Lowell.²² While commentary on H.D.'s poetry was revived in the 1980s²³, critical consideration of Bryher's work is minimal, and she appears within works on modernism predominantly within her role as a patron.²⁴ Certainly Bryher herself was keen to play this role,

²² Bryher provided financial support for many writers of the modernist period, including Gertrude Stein, Edith Sitwell, Dorothy Richardson, Marianne Moore, Sylvia Beach, James Joyce and Norman Douglas.

²³ This revival stemmed from the publication of Susan Stanford Friedman's *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (1981), Janice S. Robinson's *H.D., The Life and Work of an American Poet*, (1982), and Rachel Blau du Plessis' *H.D.: The Career of that Struggle* (1986) which outlines H.D.'s recourse to her gender as a source of creativity as part of the Key Women Writer series.

²⁴ Susan McCabe will soon be publishing a critical biography of Bryher, under the publication of the Oxford University Press, with the working title 'Bryher:

and she wrote in *Days of Mars*, 'my early life had trained me to be a servitor of the arts' (81) viewing herself as Epicurus, and providing impoverished poets with type-writers rather than food. However, Susan McCabe argues for a re-evaluation of Bryher's place in collaborative modernist spheres, where she can be seen not simply as a patron but as fully integrated into the collaborative process (632-3). H.D.'s biographer, Janice Robinson, similarly argues that 'the presence of Bryher in H.D.'s work is strongly felt' (230) and 'to underestimate the significance of Bryher's friendship would be seriously to misunderstand H.D.'s life as a writer' (230). Considered in context with her collaborative union with H.D., she develops a space as a focal player in the modernist networks.

Bryher appears in five of H.D.'s autobiographical novels: in *Asphodel* (written in 1921-2, published in 1992) as Beryl, an initially unwelcome source of revival and strength; in *Paint it Today* (written in 1921, published in 1992) as Althea, an ethereal presence dwelling in a mythical pastoral scene of renewal; in

Female Husband of Modernism'. McCabe argues that while Barbara Guest's ground breaking biography of *H.D. Herself Defined: The Poet H.D. and Her World* published in 1984 was significant in its introduction of Bryher into studies of H.D., it also plays down the importance of Bryher as a lover, supporter, companion, and collaborator. More recently, Helen Carr's literary biography of Imagism published in 2009, similarly plays down Bryher's significance for H.D., writing that 'her relationship with Bryher would only ever be comparatively briefly that of lovers, and there was none of the burning passion that she had felt for Pound or Frances Gregg, but they remained close all their lives, with many shared interests, not only literature, but film, psychoanalysis and gossip'. Bryher is described as 'highly intelligent, rebellious, unhappy and disturbed', and H.D. is described as simply being 'touched by her enthusiasm'. Quotations from Carr, *The Verse Revolutionaries, Ezra Pound, H.D. and the Imagists*, Random House, 2009, p. 875.

Nights (published in 1935) as Renne, her didactic lifelong companion; in the 'Hipparchia' section of *Palimpsest* (written and published in 1926) as Julia Cornelia Augusta, who restores the spirit of Greece; and, in *The Gift* (written in 1944, published in 1960) as herself during an air-raid in London during the Second World War. In H.D.'s two other autobiographical texts, *HERmione* (written in 1927, published in 1981), and *Bid me to Live (A Madrigal)* (written 1933-1950, published in 1960), Bryher does not appear, as they recount a period prior to their meeting in 1918.

H.D. is referenced frequently in Bryher's memoirs *A Heart to Artemis* (1962) and *Days of Mars* (1972). She also appears at the end of Bryher's autobiographical novel *Two Selves* (1923) as the result of Bryher's quest for a creative other, as part of Bryher's autobiographical trilogy of *Development* (1920), *Two Selves* and *West* (1925). In *West*, H.D. is used both as a character (Helga) and as the historically contemporaneous poet, H.D. In this text, Bryher evokes the atmosphere of H.D.'s writing to reference the tone in her novel by writing that 'This is the world here of H.D.'s *Helmsman*. One can feel the sailors forgetting the harsh sand among these flowering grasses. And suddenly the wind coming. How that poem has got the lift of the sea in it. And the feel of the forests' (68-9). 'The Helmsman', a forty four line poem, with nearly half of the lines starting with 'we', is a poem of unity and collaborative experience. As an Imagist, H.D. wrote many poems that portray the detail and essence of nature, but what is almost unique about this poem is the central use of the third person.

H.D. prioritised the first and second persons far more often in her poetry, and this suggests that Bryher, in referencing the world of H.D.'s *Helmsman*, is codifying this unique vision of unity and collaborative experience.

The opening lines of 'The Helmsman' are 'O be swift - / we have always known you wanted us' (7). They are repeated at the close of the poem, and are a dark refrain of the threatening power of the sea. They create a sense of doom bookmarking and juxtaposing with seven stanzas which are full of energy, pace and a glorification of the land. Having sought shelter, the sailors begin their worship, revelling in texture with 'the feel of the clefts in the bark', 'tufts of coarse grass', and sensation 'we tore our feet in half-buried rocks / and knotted roots and acorn-cups' (7) and 'we dipped our ankles / through leaf-mold and earth' (7). This line is imitated in Bryher's poem 'Amazon', where she writes 'You have torn your limbs / with spines of gorse-flower, bramble and cytissus' (qtd. in Friedman 194). In H.D.'s *HERmione* there is also reference to this line in 'Her feet were pencils tracing a path through a forest' (223) and 'Now the creator was Her's feet, narrow black crayon across the winter whiteness' (223). This repetitive referencing of these vivid sensations reflects their repeated reimaginings of the themes that develop out of these poetic accounts of this shared experience. In 'The Helmsman', the worship of the land allows the sailors to be able to forget 'for a moment' (8) the incoming wind and storm, and instead taste the 'sweat of a torn branch' (8). However the repetition of how they 'forgot', suggests perhaps that the storm is never far from their minds, despite revelling in how 'we caught

flower and new bramble-fruit / in our hair' (7) and 'we laughed as each branch whipped back' (7). In *West*, Bryher similarly borrows H.D.'s writing style for a discussion of contemporary poetry within the novel: 'For beauty of phrase and psychological insight there is no poet more interesting than H.D. Flower leaf and salt water and a mind like a bird, diving everywhere' (156). This description captures the scene of 'The Helmsman' and therefore repeats again Bryher's coded reference to the unique portrayal of unity and collaborative experience in this poem.

For both Bryher and H.D. their union was of great creative significance, and in this chapter I seek to draw out the impact of collaboration as an aesthetic interpretive category on their autobiographical writing. I explore how far H.D.'s autobiographical prose texts are an experiment in establishing, formulating, and ultimately understanding the significance of her own lived experience, under the guise of writing as establishing selfhood. Unpicking H.D.'s insistence on the relational elements of identity formation reveals the significance of remembrance in the conception of the individual and heritage in the merging of that individual with a creative other. Remembrance is presented as a relational process, with an alliance-based focus on subject-subject relations, where the other becomes an alternative subject. Bryher's role as creative other/subject is examined, including the ways in which H.D. refuses the tropes of the muse and instead devises alternative signifying practices to represent the impact Bryher has upon her autobiographical subjectivities. Similarly, I explore the various devices H.D.

creates in her depiction of the erotic dynamic within their relationship, and the ways in which she uses a relational collaborative aesthetic model to present their love as a form of exchange. This is displayed as being contrary to the threatening effects of the crowd, and the trope of meaningful observation is used to reject these threats so that a collaborative model of autobiographical subjectivities can instead prevail.

‘I let the story itself or the child tell it for me’: Writing and identity

In the introduction to the autobiographical novel *Nights*, H.D.’s daughter, Perdita Schaffner, who Bryher adopted, writes of how H.D. used the authorial pseudonym John Helforth as her alter ego who redoubles as the fictitious John, first person narrator of the prologue. He is looking in on H.D.’s ‘perfervid idiosyncrasies’ (xi), and her presentation of the characters who, while they are ‘totally recognisable to anyone of her immediate circle [...] she has switched them around [...] and changed their motivations’ (xi). This immediate circle she describes as ‘terribly ingrown, a volatile microcosm in the vastness’ (xiii). These, and other devices, that she uses to portray this microcosm, Schaffner writes, ‘permit H.D. to write exactly as she pleases while sternly evaluating herself. I suspect she had a lot of fun – and some pain – exploring these different dimensions’ (xi). In this text ‘she is, once again, writing of what she knows. But not with the claustrophobic immediacy of *Bid Me to Live* – which was essentially a transcript; or the emotional stream of consciousness of *HERmione*; or the

nostalgia, historical legend, and supernatural overtones of *The Giff* (xi). As outlined in the introduction, just as Kristeva argues that literature ‘releases, inscribes, and understands “lived experience” (105), H.D.’s autobiographical prose texts are an experiment in establishing, formulating, and ultimately understanding the significance of her own lived experience. I am interested in the ways in which this experimentation and formulation resulted in collaborative models of autobiographical subject formation. Kristeva concludes that language and literature are ‘an irreducible element of subject formation’ (23-4), and therefore the boundaries between autobiographical text and historical self are broken down. It is in this space between text and self, that H.D.’s autobiographical subjectivities are revealed to be multiple and relational in their formation, and where they can enact their collaboration. In the two romances a clef, *Asphodel* and *HERmione*, ‘they call her Her short for Hermione’ (*Asphodel* 41). By using the name ‘Her’ the autobiographical subject can move between a person and a grammatical term. Eniko Bollobas notes how the name is a homonym of her real name, as well the accusative/dative declension form of the third person pronoun. This means that she is both grammatical subject and object, and therefore inherently relational.

Susan Stanford Friedman attributes H.D. with having ‘a belief in the interpenetration of writing and identity’ (Friedman, *Penelope* 34), resulting in the creation of ‘the self-in-the-text’ (34) as well the construction of the authorial self through the writing process. I find this process of the self-conscious creation of a

self-in-the-text most evident in H.D.'s autobiographical novel *The Gift*. This novel, written in London during the 1941 Blitz of World War Two,²⁵ marks a transition in her autobiographical writing through a refusal to fictionalise her account. Whereas *HERmione* and *Bid Me To Live*, autobiographical novels written before *The Gift*, attempt to veil the historical accuracy by altering names, locations, and sequencing, this novel enters more closely the realms of memoir. It is a quest to recount her earliest memories, so as to have passed on the gift, the nature of which has been variously imagined as artistic giftedness, visionary capacity, and as containing the key to ending war.²⁶ Detailed historical accounts of H.D.'s ancestry structure the text, which is predominantly a refractory and uncertain layering of images, snatches of memories, and family legend, often exposed for their inherent fallibility. The memoir was written quickly and with little revision, in deference to her favoured automatic writing style and as part of an exercise to expose hidden and mostly unknown aspects of her selfhood deriving from a consideration of her heritage.

In her notes that accompany the text H.D. writes:

I let the story itself or the child tell it for me. Things that I thought I had forgotten came to light in the course of the narrative [...] Yet I tried to keep "myself" out of this, and if the sub-conscious bubbled up with some unexpected finding from the depth, I accepted this finding as part of the

²⁵ An abridged edition of *The Gift* was published posthumously, forty years after it was written, with the first unabridged edition published in 1998 including H.D.'s accompanying notes

²⁶ See Jane Augustine's introduction in the 1988 edition of *The Gift* for an outline of this terrain, including the views of Norman Holmes Pearson, Rachel Blau du Plessis, and the New Directions edition.

narrative and have so far, in going over these chapters (today is July 2nd 1944) changed very little. (257)

This reflects the ways in which H.D. is committed to the creation of a self or selves within the text that, while inherently connected with H.D., person and author, exist entirely and inseparably within the text itself. This is a narrative focussed on its 'findings' which form the cathartic role performed within H.D.'s autobiographical texts. Here writing and identity are intrinsically linked, where the author steps back from the text and the writing itself plays the central formative role, to be later discovered by the author.

H.D. starts with her singular origins - 'My name was Hilda; Papa found the name in the dictionary, he said' (8) – and ends with a vision of a semiotic union in the culmination of an air raid – '...it comes nearer, it is the shouting of many horsemen, it is Phillipus, Lover-of-horses, it is Anna, Hannah or Grace, who is answering. Now they call together in one voice...the sound accumulates, gathers sound...“It's the all clear,” says Bryher. “Yes,” I say' (142). Therefore in the process of writing this text, H.D. has performed a shift from individualism to collectivism, using the character of Bryher to enact her multiplicity. Earlier in the text H.D. imagines the powerful dimension of such a connection: 'the treasure of individual life [exists as] an actual physical entity, that continent, for the most part buried, of the self, which contains cells or seeds which can be affiliated to the selves of people, living or long dead' (51-2). This affiliation of the self with an other enacts a powerful model of individual collectivism. She is protecting and

privileging the precious seed of individualism, at the same time as celebrating the vast potential that affiliation or collaboration can offer. Equally, she is suggesting that the path to true a conception and understanding of the self is a relational one. The gift which Hilda has inherited through her family, is ultimately passed on to Bryher, linking her both with H.D. and the envisioned family connectivity: 'If the bomb fell on me, it would fall on Bryher and Bryher must go on [...] Bryher was my special heritage as I had been hers' (217).

In her overtly autobiographical therapy notes, *Tribute to Freud* (1956), H.D. writes that 'We travel far in thought, in imagination or in the realm of memory. Events happened as they happened, not all of them of course but here and there a memory or a fragment of a dream-picture is actual, is real, is like a work of art or is a work of art' (242). In stating that not all 'events' actually happened, and that what occurs in the imagination, memory, or in the creative process, is just as real as a particular event. H.D. is allowing for and privileging the reality of what she creates on the page. Robert Duncan in *The H.D. Book*, writes that 'What is important here is that she took whatever she could, whatever hint of person or design, colour or line, over into her work. What was real was what entered the picture' (242). Bryher is part of H.D.'s heritage, via the medium of the gift, and this collective dynamic exists beyond the page, and enters H.D.'s own autobiographical and literal subject formation. Duncan continues that 'Bryher delivering H.D. from her old life into a new enters a picture, becomes one of the figures, not only in their personal life, but, because that life is the

matter of a poetry, in the design of a poet' (243). Not only is H.D. created through the writing process, but Bryher herself becomes part of the design of H.D.

'The measure is pressed down and shaken together and running over':

Relational Remembrance and Accessing Individualism

In order to enact the collaboration that H.D. presents at the end of *The Gift*, she must first access and understand her core individualism, and to do this H.D. acknowledges a necessity to reject wider contexts, and to consider her position specifically within her familial heritage. In *The Gift*, she writes that:

The store of images is endless and is the common property of the whole race. But one must, of necessity, begin with one's own private inheritance; there, already the measure is *pressed down and shaken together and running over* [...] we must crouch near the grass and near to the earth that made us. And the people who created us (50).

Envisioning this self of origins as compressed and overflowing suggests a potency that will have an important bearing on her consideration of autobiographical subjectivities. Significantly this turn to individual personal heritage is conceived as a relational force. Not only are images and experiences universally shared, but the various influences of creators (not limited to biological creators) upon the formation of identity are deemed paramount. In H.D.'s autobiographical prose we read an enactment of a relational vision of multiply split selves through an examination of inheritance and ancestry.

The formative effects of an exploration of heritage within autobiography is evident in a passage in the opening chapter of *The Gift*, titled 'Dark Room'. Here, H.D. blurs the boundaries between Hilda and her ancestors, through the refusal of the narrator to accurately recall an episode from Hilda's mother's childhood.²⁷ The narrator lacks control of the narrative, inexpertly navigating the action and dialogue. The passage darts from the children crying under the family grandfather clock, to Hilda's own memory of proudly showing the clock to a visitor during her childhood. The narrator appears to strain to keep control of the narrative: 'But "why are you crying" was Mama and little Hartley, it was not Hilda and little Harold. Hilda and little Harold did not creep under the clock and cry, but it was the same clock' (2). The presence of the clock links both episodes and erases the significance of the distance of time between the different family members. This is emphasised where the narrator performs a temporal shift across generations mid-sentence, so that the action is occurring simultaneously and repetitively with its retelling: 'Mama, who was older, said, "We are crying because Fanny died". Mamalie laughed and told us the story of Mama and Uncle Hartley crouching under the clock, which was our clock in our house now'

²⁷ For an examination of H.D.'s 'mother-fixation' and see Suzette A. Henke's chapter 'H.D.: Psychoanalytic Self-Imaging', in *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life Writing*. London, Macmillan 2000 pp. 25-55. While this is outside the scope of this thesis, Henke concludes that much of the impetus behind H.D., and women's life writing in this century in general, 'has been connected by emotional webs and filaments to a wide range of traumatic episodes [and] that many of these experiences have a profound impact on the construction of female subjectivity' (Henke xxii). Therefore this would be an interesting area of investigation in relation to wider affiliations and connections.

(2). Indeed the episode itself is temporally inaccurate because, as H.D. writes, “they couldn’t possibly remember Fanny. Fanny died before Hartley was born and your own Mama was just a baby’ (3). This reveals a suspicion of the restrictions that linearity inflicts upon H.D.’s autobiographical exploration of identity. Instead, the deconstruction of the impact and significance of time results in Hilda allowing herself to be immersed within her heritage, and in doing so to find a point of identification that impacts upon her sense of self and the author’s ultimate creation of identity: ‘I inherited Fanny from Mama, from Mamalie, if you will, but I inherited Fanny. Was I indeed, Frances come back? Then I would be Papalie’s own child, for Papalie’s name was Francis; I would be like Mama; in a sense, I would be Mama’ (4). By blurring the generational divisions, and reflecting on familial reincarnation and inheritance, H.D. creates a vision of identity that is plural and in constant flux as it collaborates with and understands its heritage. She opens up unknown aspects of her selfhood through this exercise of self-discovery and situates herself firmly but fluidly amongst a relational dimension within her heritage.

Bryher writes herself into this heritage in her memoir *Days of Mars* by reflecting that ‘It was only later that we discovered we were cousins, rather tenuous ones but cousins all the same because a Puritan ancestor of hers had gone to America for religious reasons almost two centuries before and later, much later, the descendants got tangled up in some way with cousins of my father’ (115). Just as in *West*, where Bryher writes herself into the relational

world of H.D.'s poem 'The Helmsman', here Bryher is aligning herself with all elements of H.D.'s autobiographical identities, including her familial heritage.

H.D. enacts the same vision of ancestry with Bryher by writing at the end of *The Gift* that 'Bryher was my special heritage as I had been hers' (217). In *Nights*, H.D. goes so far as to create an incestuous bond between the H.D. character, Natalia Saunderson, and the Bryher character, Renne Saunderson, who was her sister-in-law, in order to embed this sense of heritage within the narrative.

'Renne was Natalia's half-lover' (92), with 'half' being used as a term for bisexuality and homosexuality at various points in the novel, and it was Renne who had 'brought [Natalia and Neil – her brother] together' (92). It was due to Renne that Natalia marries Neil, as 'Sustained contact with the steel-brain of Renne, her friend, had flung her finally into committing herself to marriage with Neil' (35). Yet, in marrying Neil, she has also married Renne, as she writes both that 'Neil was a sort of incarnation of Renne' (92), and that 'She wanted to be Renne' (18).

'Fayne being me, I was her. Fayne being Her I was Fayne': Relational Alliances

Although H.D. is known predominantly as an Imagist poet, she wrote much prose. In *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.'s Fiction*, Susan Stanford Friedman explores the transition and overlapping development of H.D. 'poet' and H.D. 'novelist'. Using Barthes' formula of poetry as inhuman and prose as

relational, Friedman argues that 'Like her nom de plume, H.D., gender in her early poetic discourse was suppressed – still there, but buried, screened. Her prose discourse, in contrast, as the language of history, unveiled the woman and directly narrated the story of her social relations in the world' (Friedman, *Penelope* 6). Therefore, I turn to H.D.'s prose writing to discover her exploration of the representation of a gendered self, in a collaborative relational dynamic with those who impacted upon her autobiographical subjectivities, and it is therefore here that a consideration of the collaborative union between H.D. and Bryher must usefully situate itself.

In an article about H.D. and intersubjectivity, Bollobas situates his arguments within the context of Patricia Waugh's claims in 1989 that 'much women's writing can, in fact, be seen not as an attempt to define an isolated individual ego but to discover a collective concept of subjectivity which foregrounds the construction of identity in relationship' (10). However, he goes further by attempting an 'alternative model of female subjectivation and intersubjectivity' where the relational construction of the self accommodates the interrelations between the individual and the community. He concludes that 'H.D.'s novels are about the relational, alliance-based self' (1), where instead of engaging in subject-object relations with others, her subjectivities are 'capable of entering into subject-subject relationships with others as much as with their own selves' (1). Indeed, the models of collaboration that I find within H.D.'s writing display that alliance-based focus on subject-subject relations.

In H.D.'s early autobiographical prose, this developmental search for alternative models of female subjectivation and intersubjectivity is evident. In *HERmione*, she writes of her early relationship with Frances Gregg (Fayne Rabb): 'Fayne being me, I was her. Fayne being Her I was Fayne. Fayne being Her was HER so that Her saw Fayne' (210). Similarly, her fictional self-portrait of a poet, Julia Ashton, in *Bid me to Live (A Madrigal)* is depicted in terms of the effect that Richard Aldington (Rafe), DH Lawrence (Rico) and Cecil Gray (Vane) had upon her sense of self and her creative abilities. She describes the success of her initial union with Rafe as being due to the fact that 'they both wanted to be free, they both wanted to escape, they both wanted a place where they could browse over their books; they had friends in common' (11). Rafe fuels Julia's creativity, and while sketching Gothic fragments at the Cluny Museum they decide that between them they might make an artist (33). Following the First World War, the stillbirth of their child, and his affair with Julia, this union deteriorates: 'how was she to speak to him, she wanted to clap her hands, say "Wake-up, wake-up," but what would she wake him up to?' (36). With the loss of their connection she feels she is 'wandering like a dope-fiend in a not-known dimension' (42). Instead she seeks out a connection with Rico (Lawrence) whose 'cerebral contact had renewed her' (58) and who becomes 'part of the cerebral burning, part of the inspiration' (67). This novel centres on the exchange and impact on her creativity that those around her have. However, it was to be her first meeting with Bryher, and their subsequent relationship, that

was to be the most significant for H.D., and where she could truly enact her collaborative autobiographical selves.

Bollobas identifies an example of this in *Asphodel* where H.D.'s alliance with Bryher allows her creativity to flourish, and 'as a way of acknowledging what she received from [Bryher] – that her gift of writing could take form – Hermione makes a very particular gesture of intersubjectivity: she offers her own daughter as a gift to her lover, thereby proclaiming the child as a token of their alliance' (1). While estranged from her husband, Richard Aldington, H.D. became pregnant as a result of a relationship with the composer Cecil Gray, and she gave birth to her daughter, Frances Perdita Aldington, in 1919. She nearly died, due to suffering from severe influenza, and H.D. attributes Bryher with saving her life by aiding her recovery and taking responsibility for the child. Certainly Bryher was enthusiastic about the prospect of being a mother to Perdita, but I do not perceive the arrangement to be one of a gift, but rather a practical arrangement that allowed H.D. to recover and fully pursue her writing, in particular her 'Notes on Thoughts and Vision' which is her most vivid record of her poetic sensibilities. In *Tribute to Freud*, H.D. wrote that:

The material and spiritual burden of pulling us out of danger fell upon a young woman whom I had only recently met – anyone who knows me knows who this person is. Her pseudonym is Bryher, and we all call her Bryher. If I got well, she would herself see that the baby was protected and cherished and she would take me to a new world, and new life, to the land, spiritually of my predilection, geographically of my dreams. We would go to Greece, it could be arranged. It was arranged, though we two were the first unofficial visitors to Athens after that war (16).

Therefore, while the relationship between H.D. and Bryher had a number of practical elements such as shared mothering of Perdita and on going financial support, it was in the collaborative construction of autobiographical self where 'the female subject narrativised as multiple will retain her subject position in diverse alliances' (Bollobas 1).

'Anyone who knows me knows who this person is': Enter Bryher

The dedication verse of *Palimpsest* is addressed to Bryher, and the final lines read: 'when all the others, blighted, reel and fall, / your star, steel-set, keeps lone and frigid trist / to freighted ships baffled in wind and blast' (x). This depiction of her as dedicated and steadfast reflects the profound impact that she had on H.D.'s life. They met in July 1918 when Bryher was twenty-five and H.D. was thirty-one, as Bryher organised an introduction having been delighted by her first readings of her poetry, and went to visit H.D. at her cottage in Cornwall. She didn't know it at the time, but H.D. was the very person she had been searching for her whole life, and her autobiographical trilogy of *Development* (1920), *Two Selves* (1923) and *West* (1925) detail this quest for her creative other.

In the bildungsroman *Two Selves* the narrator writes of the autobiographical protagonist, Nancy, 'if she had a friend something would burst and shoot ahead, be the thing she wanted and disgrace them with her knowledge' (288). She envisions this friend as a creative other, with restorative

powers resulting from an intrinsic connection they would ideally obtain. Bryher and H.D.'s first meeting comes at the end of the text, at a point where she feels she will never find this friend she so desires and is considering suicide:

A tall figure opened the door. Young. A spear flower if a spear could bloom. She looked up into eyes that had the sea in them, the fire and colour and splendour of it. A voice all wind and gull notes said:
 "I was waiting for you to come." (289)

The revelatory tone of this moment and the suggestion of the destiny of their joining together, provide an unconventional resolution to the novel. Bryher's memoir *Heart to Artemis* also ends with her meeting H.D. and her memoir *Days of Mars* picks up from this point. In this text Bryher reflects upon their moment of meeting where she writes that 'Cornwall had given me the gift I most desired when I was young, friendship with a writer' (114), and 'it was not only a door that opened that day but the beginning of so many friendships and adventures' (116). In a letter to H.D., Bryher attributes H.D. with saving her unconscious:

I want you to realise how deeply I am indebted to you, not only for my life but for my reason. If you had not been kind those days or if you had shut the door on me, I might very easily have lost the will to live (it was a struggle) or walked in front of a bus...not consciously, but in the unconscious (qtd. in Friedman, *Analysing* 8).

This separation of life and reason, the conscious and the unconscious, reveals how pervasive their connection was for all aspects of their sense of self. They both craved the vitality of a creative other, who would be conducive to her art and who would provide subjectivities that would merge and interact with her

own. For H.D. and Bryher, their desire was for collaboration was a productive aesthetic force which stimulated the creation of merged and interacting subjectivities within their autobiographical prose writing.

Central to this search for a creative other is the restoration of the unconscious, creative vision. The way Bryher restored H.D.'s creative vision can be found in H.D.'s essay on poetic principles, 'Notes on Thought and Vision', written in 1919 after the birth of H.D.'s daughter Perdita and H.D.'s recovery from pneumonia. In this text she argues that there are three mental states 'sub-conscious mind, conscious mind, over-conscious mind' (3). H.D. argues that in order for what she calls the 'over-conscious mind' to be of the highest development there must be 'an equilibrium, balance, growth of the three at once' (17). Bryher in taking H.D. on her trip to the Isles of Scilly, allowed H.D. to achieve this equilibrium. In his introduction to 'Notes on Thought and Vision' Albert Gelphi writes that Bryher hoped that H.D. 'might rest in the haven of her devotion and be healed by the wild sea and air – rest and rise again from the wreckage of the previous five years' (7) and 'there, she moved into moments of consciousness in which feelings of separateness gave way to a sense of organic wholeness' (11). H.D.'s vision is centred on the collaborative merging of consciousness, and she begins a section with the assertion: 'There is no great art period without great lovers' (21), concluding 'We must be "in love" before we can understand the mysteries of vision' (22). In describing this process H.D. writes: 'We begin with sympathy of thought/ The minds of the two lovers merge,

intact in sympathy of thought/ The brain, inflamed and excited by this interchange of ideas, takes on its character of over-mind' (25). She describes the human body as 'receiving stations, capable of storing up energy, over-world energy, that energy is always there but can be transmitted only to another body or another mind that is in sympathy with it, or keyed to the same pitch' (47). This echoes the passage discussed above, where, in *The Gift*, H.D. imagines the powerful dimension of such a connection: 'the treasure of individual life [exists as] an actual physical entity, that continent, for the most part buried, of the self, which contains cells or seeds which can be affiliated to the selves of people, living or long dead' (50-1). The path to a conception of the self is a relational one, and in H.D.'s autobiographical prose, within a relational context, where identity and language are intrinsically linked, we can see how H.D. was (re)writing her collaborative union with Bryher, and in writing it simultaneously creating it. Where H.D.'s various subjectivities are in a modernist 'process of endless splitting' (Friedman, *Penelope* 41) they are equally in engagement with Bryher's various selves. Toward this aim H.D. is writing about their relationship in an effort to understand it, creating a cathartic dimension in the prose.

'Blind him with beauty, make his eyes to see': Refusal of the Muse

The collaborative creation of relational subjectivities within autobiographical prose poses various challenges of representation, particularly within a gendered context. H.D. had to develop a methodology for representing her collaborative

union with Bryher, while maintaining an evasion of conventional representations of the feminine, including that of the muse. H.D. strove to devise an apparatus that would avoid and distort traditional discourses of the 'muse', while also representing a collaborative union operating around creative influence. H.D. held the position of muse for many writers of the period. Janice S. Robinson, in her biography of H.D., recounts when 'in 1930, when Ford Madox Ford wrote his introduction to the Imagist anthology which contained the work of Aldington, H.D., Fletcher, Flint, Joyce, Lawrence, Williams, and himself (Pound refused to contribute), he wrote: "It is my chief pride [...] to be beside H.D. who was at once our gracious Muse, our cynosure, and the peak of our achievement"' (92).²⁸ She is positioned as their inspiration, and her achievements are claimed as the collective achievements of the group.

Friedman writes that H.D.'s place in the novels of these writers was 'in the position of muse – the object of their authoritative, often desirous gaze' (Friedman, *Penelope* 85). John Cournos, a friend of Aldington and lover of H.D., wrote a novel titled *Miranda Masters* in 1926 that recounts the period during the First World War when H.D. and Aldington's marriage broke down, from the stillbirth of their child to Aldington's affair and subsequent desertion. Miranda (H.D.) is portrayed using the terminology of the muse: 'in her own fingers there was fire that stirred him, enflaming the spirit' (178). However, the novel bitterly

²⁸ H.D. also appears as the priestess of Isis in D.H. Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* (1929).

derides Miranda and laments the loss of ‘the temple of creative beauty they [H.D. and Aldington] were going to build together’ (252). He concludes that ‘she had pulled down the temple about her own ears. Dragging others down with her’ (254). She shifts from muse to ‘Miranda, the author of his misfortunes’ (265). In a similar vein, Kenneth Macpherson, who was both Bryher’s husband and H.D.’s lover, wrote a novel titled *Poolreflection* in 1926 with the character Maureen as H.D. Echoing *Miranda Masters*, we similarly read of the importance of Maureen’s ‘fire’ which is greatly appealing to the protagonist Peter and his son (40). In this novel H.D.’s position as a muse is configured as an inanimate statue: ‘Your body is hard and vicious and unkind. Polished marble slashed with holy water [...] You are crystal laid upon plate glass’ (38). She is something to be looked at, lacking in warmth and without a voice. Later in the novel, the protagonist Peter invokes Maureen’s powers of resurrection as a muse by exclaiming: ‘Take him Maureen to your room of poppy drug, blind him with beauty, make his eyes to see, whip him, flay him, spurn him, break him once and again and again, then fling him love, and love, and love, and fling him beauty on beauty, so that he may dare to rise again’ (69). Her role is entirely to ensure Peter’s vision and restoration, and any individual creative agency is denied to her.

H.D. avoids situating Bryher within this form of discourse, and does not invoke creative influence as a commodity. Bryher’s position as muse is invariably mutual and immersed rather than objectively observed. Adrienne Rich wrote in 1971 that ‘the drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a

search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society' ('When We Dead' 18). H.D.'s search for identity creation and definition within her autobiographical projects reveals a refusal to participate in the destructive aspects of objectification. Instead, representing the collaborative elements of their creative bond required the appropriation of alternative signifying practices.

H.D.'s refusal to objectify Bryher in the position of muse, goes so far as to extend into a refusal to allow a clear distinction between her various authorial voices. Instead, they slip between first, third, and free indirect voices, and she blurs the distinction between her authorial and character voices. In her production of her authorial and narrative selves, variously named (H.D., Helga Doorn, Hermione, Midget, Delia Alton), and variously imagined, H.D. is creating a series of multiple and split selves that are in a continual process of representation perpetually reimagined. With the arrival of the Bryher figures within her texts her refusal of a stable identity becomes increasingly apparent through a striking lack of distinction between the Bryher and Hermione figures.

This is often shown through a refusal to specify the identity of the female pronoun. At the point in *The Gift* where the narrator switches to the present day - 'this was January 17, 1943 and we had done all that' (209) - during a raid in the

Blitz, the Bryher figure is introduced into the narrative.²⁹ As they begin the designated process for preparing for the raid the narrator appears unable or unwilling to accurately portray who is doing what during the action of the narrative. H.D. worries that they are following the correct process but is reassured:

We had not quite forgotten because Bryher had come out of her room and switched off her light and we carefully shut all the doors. I counted the doors. "There are seven doors," I said, although of course we knew this. The hall is narrow, opening from the front-door. "I think I'll open the front door," I said, but Bryher said, "no." She sat down on one of the hall-chairs and we switched on the small table-lamp and I said, "I think I'll open the door" (209).

The merging is both mental and physical where they are shown to collectively remember the procedure, know how many doors there are, and turn on the lamp. This stands out in the text in contrast to the repetition of 'I' and the specification of Bryher. The attention to the details of the setting and the action, and the focus on recounting the dialogue stands out, and the passage reads as one mind oscillating between thoughts in a moment of fear. H.D. does not have a physical presence in the passage, unlike Bryher who comes out the room and sits down on a chair. In this way, the decision to open the door is being weighed up as if by one consciousness, which is not in conflict but consideration. Later in the text, Bryher's dialogue is in anticipation and in response to H.D.'s thoughts.

²⁹ See Goodspeed-Chadwick, Julie. *Modernist Women Writers and War: Trauma and the Female Body in Djuna Barnes, H.D. and Gertrude Stein*. LSU Press, 2011 for more on the effect of war on narrative.

This merging is also evident in a pivotal passage in *Paint it Today*, where the canoe in which Midget and Althea have been observing each other is the canoe is drawn up and ‘the sea grass and the marsh grass seemed to blend. Unless you straightened yourself and became alert and squinted carefully, you could have scarcely stated off hand where the marsh ended and the sea began’ (74). This blending and merging is as a result of their collaborative union through their mutual observation of one another, where they become indistinguishable and entirely connected.

The refusal to present Bryher in terms of being a muse is also evident in *Nights*. Of the Bryher character we read ‘Renne was never anything but loyal’ (7), and someone that one could not contradict ‘like the Delphic oracle’ (28). She was ‘all brain and such swift flash of needle-wing thought’ (44), who could be found ‘vivisecting brilliantly with the shuttle of her brain’ (46). Renne ‘was solidly incarnate in her husk; she wallowed in her sturdy personality like an eskimo, in a mud-lined ice hut. Outside, Renne was ice; inside, turmoil of desire and suppression like an eskimo in the lining of smoke and tallow’ (60). This piercing account of her strength of character and the contradictory elements of her internally and externally presented personality, speaks to H.D.’s deep understanding of Bryher’s selfhood, and the admiration and awe that she felt for her.

‘Lips long since half kissed away’: Erotic collaborations

H.D. additionally devised techniques that enabled her, not to ignore, but to appropriate alternative signifying practices to encode the eroticised elements of her collaboration with Bryher. Integral to this representation is the discourse of the erotic, and in the introduction, I outlined a recognition of the need to redefine female collaboration in terms of its erotic significance. This link between the aesthetic and the erotic is important in the context of H.D.'s representation of her union with Bryher. Various devices were employed by Bryher and H.D. in their representations of the erotic dimension of their relationship. Often this appears in their descriptions of one another. In Bryher's *West* the narrator writes that 'the name Helga was new and rich. A spear-shaft...corn-gold and sun-gold mingled...with about it something of ice and of the inner heart of a peach' (20). The ellipsis here is significant, particularly as Bryher used it sparingly. It points to the difficulty of describing their relationship and her feelings towards her, as well as the outwardly imposed restrictions she may have felt. The gaps indicate a silence, and her poetic use of colour and inanimate objects, in a text that is largely unpoetic, is indicative of an attempt, not to ignore or subvert, but to engage with the challenges of representation. Diane Collecott argues that silence on the same-sex desire in literature can be perceived as a blank absence 'or a space in which voices resonate' (176). Conversely, in H.D.'s case she devised techniques that enabled her, not to ignore, but to point to and encode the sexual element of their collaboration.

Asphodel, a novel that H.D. intended to destroy, traces H.D.'s journey in 1911 to Europe and ends in 1919 with the arrival of her daughter Perdita. In this text, in order to depict Bryher's sexual gaze we read Hermione asking Beryl: 'What is it in your eyes?' (176). Beryl's response is that 'There are other haunts, not of the intellect' (176). Their relationship, which up to that point had been represented through their discussions of Greek poetry, was now extended beyond the intellectual realm into an eroticised space. Hermione's reflections on Beryl's gaze reveals an eventual sexual recognition; 'in another layer of her consciousness she sensed something that was wrong, something that was dangerous. Eyes don't normally look out of faces like that. Small chin, small Eros chin, mouth more like a child-Eros, a mouth that was a youth-Eros [...] Lips were coral lips, smooth, lips were Eros lips' (185). With the recognition that Beryl's gaze contained an aspect outwith the intellectual, H.D. develops a recognition of a wider erotic dimension that spreads across her facial features. This is shown through reference to the god Eros along with staccato repetition creating the sense of an awakened vision. This is subtly echoed toward the end of the novel, where, after a period of crisis when Hermione's husband Darington, who was modelled on Richard Aldington, threatens her with penal servitude should she register her child under his name, we read: 'Here I am sitting on top of a bus and it might be anywhere with light snow drifting and little pink almonds all along the fronts of brick houses and behind rusty laurel hedges putting out pink fingers...Eos the dawn. Eros. Someone, somewhere makes me think of Eros'

(204-5). The wanderings of her thoughts, from the Titan goddess of the dawn to the god of sexual love and beauty, link back to the earlier association of Beryl and Eros, exposing the lesbian erotic dimension of her thoughts without directly depicting them. These coded intonations towards their sexual relationship reveal the absence of a direct attempt to represent this element, and instead demonstrate an adherence to the allusive dimension of repetition. H.D.'s texts, in particular *Asphodel*, are densely allusive, suggesting that this is not a refusal or an acknowledgement of an impossibility of representing the sexual aspect of their relationship, but a refractory epiphanic moment within the text.

In *Paint it Today*, an unfinished novel begun in 1921, we see again H.D.'s refusal of direct narrative representation to describe her union with Bryher. Toward the end of the novel, the H.D. and Bryher characters are in a pastoral scene. Having abandoned a canoe, and running through the rain to shelter indoors, we read 'Their purpose, they could not have put into words' (83), pointing again to the resonance of silence within representation through alternative modes of aesthetic ordering. Instead she describes the two running through the rain in highly sexualised terms. The indirection and camouflage that permeates the novel is lost and instead a sense of vivid urgency is developed: They were 'facing an enemy, long expected' (83), and 'there was joy in them such as comes to the heart when certainty is upon us, after hours of tension and enervating unsatisfied expectancy' (83). This inevitability and expectation

creates the background for the eroticised impression that the narrator creates.

As they ran through the wall of rain:

One would push through, the other burrow after. Then there would be a clear space for some yards and they would pause a moment, take a deep breath and be lost between thick pine trunks. The feel of it. The bite and tear and sting of it. Yet what joy is there in loneliness. All the power of the wood seemed to circle between those two alert and vivid bodies, like two shafts attracting the two opposite currents of the electric forces of the forest.

It needs two or more than two to make a living prayer of the passion of swift feet, of the passion of struggling tall white young bodies, of the passion of intense young faces, uplifted to the dash of rain and the more cruel interpiercing of rare hailstones (84).

The narrator controls the fluctuating pace of the passage with a precise use of punctuation, emphasising the tone of exhilaration. This control orders the action, and directs the reader to the significance of 'the feel of it' and the electric force between them. The repetition of 'passion', 'bodies' and 'two' creates a highly eroticised dimension, along with the focus on the physicality of the sensation through breathing, biting, tearing, piercing, and struggling. The passage stands out in the text for, although it is an exercise in creating an erotic impression rather than directly describing an erotic act, it is equally a vivid description of action – something H.D. normally reserved for the recounting of past memories. H.D. has not put their purpose into words but she evokes the sensations of their erotic experience. Rather than disguising or seeking to avoid representing the erotic dimension of her union with Bryher, she develops an aesthetic technique to reflect upon the erotic significance and experience of their relationship. In this

autobiographical prose writing, we find the 'sensuous exactitude' (Castle 768) that links back to her Imagist origins.

In the creation of fluid and multiple subjectivities, H.D. further complicates the notion of unitary subjectivity in her consideration of Bryher. This echoes Luce Irigaray's argument against a phallogentric imaginary of female sexual objectivity, in her book *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985). In response to the impossibility of an adequate definition of female subjective sexuality, she posits a representation of woman as 'never being simply one' (31) in a space where 'woman always remains several' (31). As 'woman "touches herself" all the time [...] she is already two – but not divisible into one(s) – that caress each other' (21). In Terry Castle's anthology of lesbian literature, she includes a passage from the novel *HERmione* which is an autobiographical account of H.D.'s relationships with Ezra Pound and Frances Greg. In her representation of an erotic episode between H.D.'s autobiographical character, Her Gart, and Fayne Rabb (Frances Greg), the motif of curtains is used to reflect the innate duality of a woman:

Her bent forward, face bent towards Her. A face bent towards me and a curtain opens. There is a swish and swirl as of heavy parting curtains. Almost along the floor with its strip of carpet, almost along me I feel the fringe of some fantastic wine-coloured parting curtains. Curtains part as I look into the eyes of Fayne Rabb. "And I - I'll make you breathe, my breathless statue." "Statue? You – *you* are the statue." Curtains fell, curtains parted, curtains filled the air with heavy swooping purple. Lips long since half kissed away. Curled lips long since half kissed away. In Roman gold. Long ere they coined in Roman gold your face – your face – your face – your face – your face – Faustine (773).

The image of parting curtains is frequently repeated, and also mirrored in lines such as ‘Her bent forward, face bent toward Her’. With the sensuous language of feeling, looking, filling and breathing, H.D. is creating a vivid portrayal of the coming together of two bodies, just as curtains are drawn and parted. This geometric imagery shifts from linear curtains to concentric circles, at the peak of the narrative, where their duality is made most vivid:

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. Her and Fayne were flung, as it were, to the bottom of some strange element and looming up...there were rings on rings of circles as if they had fallen into a deep well and were looking up...“long since half kissed away” (774).

This ‘concentric intimacy’ is a collaborative erotic where the innate duality of a woman is reimagined as a moment of union where together they are ‘flung’ toward an alternative imaginary. Therefore, H.D. is expertly navigating varying levels of collective relationality by using collaboration as an aesthetic category to reimagine a female centred erotic. In this way she is devising techniques that enabled her, not to ignore, but appropriate alternative signifying practices to encode the eroticised element of her collaborations.

‘Being ground to pulverized nothingness in the machine’: The Threatening Crowd

As outlined in the introduction, during the modernist period, crowd theorists, including Freud, were exploring the ways in which, within a group, individuals lose self-knowledge, and a new mentality bordering on unconsciousness replaces the conscious personalities of those in the crowd. As well as reimagining the tropes of the muse, and reconfiguring a female centred erotic, H.D. frames her representations of her collaborative union with Bryher within a rejection of what H.D. perceives as the restrictions of the crowd and of the conventions of society. This is in line with many other modernist writers of this period, particularly those living in exile from the perceived repressive nature of their home countries, and those living on sexual, racial and social boundaries, who were exploring the experience of the periphery through their writing. For H.D., while she was already socially on the periphery, it was also necessary to carve out a space within her autobiographical prose that was free from convention, where her subjectivities could enact an aesthetic renewal, and experience acute and unrestricted sensation.

In *Asphodel*, H.D. shifts the narrative tone at chapter ten with the introduction of the Bryher figure, Beryl, and articulates the forces against which they are moving. The character Delia, in whose cottage Hermione lives for the period leading up to the birth of her child, is described as 'a goddess in the machine' (166). This machine is one with destructive abilities; Delia is 'being ground and ground to pulverized nothingness in the machine' (166). However, it is also a force that can be tamed and manipulated: 'using you I have used the

machine, am greater than the machine' (166). The machine, or the modern day crowd, is something that must be beaten, in an effort to avoid being persistently destroyed and left devoid of human sensation. Beryl offers an opposing force with her association with Greek poetry which 'jags into you' (167) suggesting a cutting and forceful revival rather than oblivion.

In *Paint it Today*, the obliterating machine of conventional society is personified in the character of Julia, Josepha's mother, who accompanied Midget and Josepha to Europe. Again, it is the threat of 'nothingness' that is posed. This time, however, it is described in terms of the subversion of meaningful sensation. Midget recounts to 'her friend' (73), 'various details [...] of the conditions of what we might call real life' (73). She laments that she 'Never found out anything that mattered' (73) due to the restrictions that Julia and wider society impose. Her observation was thwarted; there was 'no one to observe continually in the open or wherever one wants, or however one wants' (73). She is prevented from seeing Josepha walking around the room in Bloomsbury because 'Julia seemed to think us queer' (73). She is also prevented from taking photographs of Josepha in a boat because 'Julia shouted there was a man (and a *French* man) coming and we must get dressed at once' (73). Julia 'kept persisting that even our shoes must go on and we must hurry as the man was looking' (73). These interjections prevented Midget from 'learning the feel of that young sage on the soles of one's feet' (73). 'Looking' – specifically at a female body - is presented as the preserve of 'the man' and something that it would be

unacceptable for Josepha or Midget to wish to do. Without the meaningful sensations of sight and touch, the pulverising threat of nothingness looms, and therefore a meaningful collaboration with an other is the mightiest of weapons against the threat of the crowd.

‘White rocks looked out at her out of enormous eyes’: Aesthetic

Observation

Lisa Walker argues in *Looking Like What you are: Sexual Style, Race and Lesbian Identity* that the visual is crucially integral to the formation of identity: ‘Identification is central to issues of visibility and identity because it is an aspect of subject formation located in the field of vision’ (141). Visual identification becomes significant as it allows ‘both self-recognition and the apprehension of “difference”’ (141). The rebellion against conventional society that Bryher and H.D.’s collaborative union poses is in their insistence on physical and visual sensation. For H.D., it is only with this access to sensation that the artist can truly experience and comprehend the world that they are reflecting and so explore the formation of their own subjectivities.

Observation is consistently an important reference point in the passages concerning the arrival of the Bryher figures, and in these scenes it is a nourishing force rather than a thwarted one. In *Paint it Today*, Midget observes Althea from across the canoe, and watches her as she adjusts her clothes. In her observations there is regularly a comparative element, allowing increased

self-recognition along with a comprehension of their differences. Observing Althea makes Midget feel 'singularly modest' and 'singularly unsatisfied with her [...] physical appearance' (72-3). In looking at Althea, Midget is able to perceive herself more clearly. This initial form of observation develops into one where, in the next chapter, they are not considered in terms of individual body parts.

Instead, as previously quoted, a greater knowledge and understanding of their bodies allows meaningful and significant sensation: 'All the power of the wood seemed to circle between those two alert and vivid bodies, like two shafts attracting the two opposite currents of the electric forces of the forest' (84).

Similarly in *Asphodel*, we read a transition from the repeated characterisation of Beryl as 'two blue eyes' (168) that incessantly stare at Hermione, to eroticised depictions of 'Lips were coral lips, smooth, lips were Eros lips' (185).

In *Asphodel*, the developing connection between Hermione and Beryl is portrayed through their observations of one another. Beryl's continual staring causes discomfort for Hermione, and as the narrative progresses we read an adjustment to Beryl's intensity. Their initial meeting is a moment of revelation, as it is when Hermione 'looked into two blue eyes' (168) that she 'remembered her name' (168). Echoing the opening of her first autobiographical novel, *HERmione*, where Hermione as a child repeats her name in an effort to perceive her identity, we read:

Hermione, my name is Hermione. Hermione was the mother of Helen, or was Hermione the daughter of Helen? Hermione, Helen and Harmiona. Hymen and Heliodora. Names that began with H and H was a white letter.

H was the snow on mountains and Hermione (who now remembered her name was Hermione) remembered snow on mountains, sensed the strong pull-forward of sea-breakers, sending the foam that was white and the white steed of some race chariot (168).

The repetition and gathering pace of the passage suggests that their connection is shown to be both immediate as well as reaching deep within her memory and stretching across continents and back to past historical periods. As the section develops, we find that it is also a reciprocal connection. Not only does Beryl's gaze set in motion a process of remembering and self-perception, but Hermione can simultaneously perceive and remember through Beryl's eyes: 'And white steeds, white flowers, white rocks looked out at her out of enormous eyes' (168). In her exploration of H.D.'s use of colour and flora, Diana Collecott identifies several examples where Bryher and H.D. use the colour white to create erotic phrases which, she writes, is a common trope in the writing of Sappho, whose writing both Bryher and H.D. would have been familiar with (164). While a connection between the colour white and the erotic may appear counterintuitive due to common associations of white with purity and virginity, it can be read as a representation of the erotic.³⁰ In an essay on H.D.'s use of 'whiteness' Renne R. Curry argues that while H.D. was attempting, not always successfully, to dismantle the racial associations of assimilative mastery with the colour white, in

³⁰ See Richard Dyer's cultural study of the racial representation of 'whiteness' for an exploration of the literary and social constructions of the ideal white heterosexual woman, and the virginal white angelic woman as a symbol of white virtuousness at pp. 126-144 of Dyer, Richard. *White*, Routledge, 1997.

fact 'white often signifies perfection in H.D.'s poetic spectrum' (21). In her study she finds that throughout her poetry H.D. 'attributes aesthetic beauty to whiteness' (29) and identifies how 'for H.D. universal transcendence and transformation result in assimilation under the emblem of whiteness' (49). This can be identified here where the connection between Hermione and Beryl surpasses mere recognition and evokes a mutual and transcendent eroticised scene.

Upon her initial meeting with Beryl, Hermione recognises the significance of their union: 'O this was it. This was to be her undoing again, again, again...' (169). Hermione, having experienced abandonment, marital betrayal and the still-birth of her child in the preceding chapters, has created a protective numbness which in *Bid me to Live* she describes as a fog, in *Palimpsest* she describes as 'her lax floating and exalted system' (87), and in *Asphodel* she describes as a space where she can 'plunge back home into your little forest' (169). The forest is a protective space where she can merge 'into the cold green, into the cold shadows and the shadows that smelt of grape-blossom' (169). In this context, Beryl becomes a force that threatens the safety and security that the fog and protective forest space offer her; she is to be 'recalled, repelled [...] brought back' (169) to a vivid space of creativity. Beryl's presence prevents Hermione's efforts to 'Smile and waste your brain...try to waste your brain...you have no brain' (169) and the passage ends with Hermione asking 'where have I put my Greek Anthology?' (169). This refers not only to her literary

connection with Greek mythology, but to the impact that Bryher's offer to take H.D. to Greece had upon her recovery from double pneumonia following the birth of her child. This is echoed in the final line of the 'Hipparchia' section of *Palimpsest* where Julia (Bryher) invites Hipparchia (H.D.) to Greece and, after initial resistance, Hipparchia says "*Greece is a spirit. Greece is not lost. I will come with you*" (94). Julia's 'small firm hand, detached and hard as ivory, dragged her back, back when she was lax and floating' (94). This process of transition and awakening is explored in the section of H.D.'s tract 'Notes on Thoughts and Vision' where she writes that 'the swing from normal consciousness to abnormal consciousness is accompanied by grinding discomfort of mental agony' (19). Abnormal consciousness, or a higher level of creative insight that Bryher inspires is resisted and then finally embraced. As we read of Hermione's distress and mental agony at Beryl's staring, probing eyes that see into Hermione and draw her out of herself, we begin to concurrently read Hermione's detailed descriptions and perceptions of Beryl. Observation and visual identification is not thwarted here. Instead, just as Beryl observes Hermione, Hermione is equally and simultaneously observing Beryl in a mutual revelatory recognition.

'What of white Althea, the white future, yet unborn?': Bryher and Narrative Resolution

H.D. and Bryher's first meeting is revealed to be a significant moment in H.D.'s development as an artist, and a significant moment in her autobiographical renderings. However, while Bryher appears invariably toward the end of H.D.'s texts she does not structurally provide any conventional resolution in the form of a love interest or saviour. Their union is not described using conventional forms of plot or characterisation. Instead H.D. breaks down the historical accuracy of the event and differs the 'plot' variously in order to utilise it as a background on to which she is able to create layers of impressions in an effort to capture not the event itself but the effects of their first meeting on her psyche. The plot is not relevant in terms of historical accuracy but instead serves to compensate as a structuring device given the lack of realist narrative form. Bryher's presence at the end of H.D.'s texts provides a tone of renewal and a sense of heightened aesthetic sensibility, rather than resolution.

Chapter seven of *Paint it Today* opens with 'So it was over' and reflection on 'recovery' and the 'world's return to normal' following the war and its effects; 'To those of us who have survived, the world stretches out, a new world, fresh, quaint, astonishingly naïve' (67). The narrative is in the first person, bringing in a more vivid voice in contrast to the stultified third person narrator preceding this section, and Midget begins to repeat 'Why not live' (70). This is the moment where Bryher (Althea) enters the text at a turning point with 'the tide being exactly at the ebb' (74). The new space in which Midget finds herself has no historical or geographical reality; instead it is a mythical scene that offers

renewal to the only inhabitants - Midget, Althea and the natural surroundings: 'This world where she had wandered, where she met and rescued her lovely friend, had more to give, was far more beautiful' (76). Midget asks 'What of white Althea, the white future, yet unborn?' (76) concluding that she now inhabits a 'living present' rather than 'the present which is dead' (80). This is reflected as they return to the canoe in which they have been silently observing one another. Midget is attempting to loosen the canoe from the sedge but 'the tide had already lifted it almost free' (82). The tide is imagined as the resulting force of renewal that their collaborative union has created. In response to this force Midget's 'head was thrown back. Her nostrils were taut with the in breath of a new layer of storm wind' (82). Without dialogue or narrative action, the characters experience a mutual revelation: 'Midget was indeed alive and Althea, her companion, was alive. [...] They were proud and young and alive' (84). This renewal is portrayed as an epiphanic moment of rebirth for both figures. In a rejection of oppressive aspects of conventional society, H.D. has carved out a space within her autobiographical prose that is free from convention, where her subjectivities can enact a collaborative aesthetic renewal, and experience acute and unrestricted poetic sensation.

The narrative resolution of *Nights*, is the suicide of the H.D. character, Natalia. H.D. uses an image of two parallel lines throughout the text, and it represents her attempt to fully imagine the collaborative joining of subject and object. Her failure is that 'for all her erotic experiments, she could not make an

equation that answered, only that last one, *two parallel lines meet*' (4). Her suicide is described as: 'She set two straight lines to infinity and she got her answer' (6); and, as 'She wanted to lie, parallel with a ceiling and she wanted to be a parallel, running to infinity and never touching that twin other-line' (89-90). While Natalia cannot resolve the equation of her two parallel lines, or establish the relational dynamic she so craved, the narrative suggests that outside her knowledge the collaboration she desired was in fact realised. This is created through the image of her watch, which before her suicide she had taken off. The narrative describes how the Bryher character Renne had noted that it was "'Her watch. Or rather," Renne added, "it was my watch"' (5). Later in the narrative we learn that 'Nat had always by her, two watches (she was fantastically punctual) yet, as she was leaving Les Murs, for the last time, automatically or deliberately strapped Renne's watch round her wrist. She wanted to be Renne' (18), and the conclusion is drawn that 'It meant somehow, in the fabulous hyroglyph of Freudian technology, that she preferred Renne and her affinities to her own' (18). Therefore, Bryher's presence as Renne, in the subconscious at the close of the life of the autobiographical subject's death, shows that again her character is not structurally providing any conventional resolution in the form of a love interest or saviour. Instead their collaborative union exists in the impossible and unrepresentable realm of where two parallel lines meet.

Conclusion

Considered in context with her collaborative union with H.D., Bryher develops a space as a focal player in modernist networks. Her significance for H.D. extends beyond the sharing of ideas, and extends into an ontological collaborative union that appears within H.D.'s autobiographical prose as interacting and merging eroticised subjectivities. They were each seeking out a creative other who would do more than simply inspire, but additionally provide subjectivities that become part of a process of self-creation and self-reflection for both autobiographical and authorial selves. Through her union with Bryher, H.D. was enabled to explore the representation of a gendered self, in a relational dynamic, and create a dialectic subjectivity of origins in a continual process of becoming and reflection.

H.D.'s autobiographical writing was experimental in the ways it reflects H.D.'s attempt to understand the significance of her own lived experience. In her exploration of inheritance and ancestry H.D. enacts a relational vision of multiply split selves, opening up unknown aspects of her selfhood through this exercise of self-discovery and situating herself firmly but fluidly amongst a relational dimension within her heritage. In H.D.'s autobiographical prose, we can see how H.D. was (re)writing her collaborative union with Bryher, and in writing it simultaneously creating it. Where H.D.'s various subjectivities are in engagement with Bryher's various selves we read of the restoration of an unconscious, creative vision.

H.D. developed alternative signifying practices for representing her collaborative union with Bryher, while maintaining an evasion of conventional representations of the feminine. Bryher's position as muse is invariably mutual and immersed rather than objectively observed, as H.D. enacts a refusal to participate in objectification. She additionally devises techniques that enabled her, not to ignore, but to point to and encode the eroticised element of their collaboration. These moments appear as refractory epiphanic incidents within the text. Rather than disguising or seeking to avoid representing the erotic dimension of her union with Bryher, H.D. develops an aesthetic technique to reflect upon the erotic significance and experience of their relationship.

H.D. additionally enacts a rejection of what H.D. perceives as the restrictions of conventional society. It became necessary for H.D. to carve out a space within her autobiographical prose that was free from convention, where her subjectivities could enact an aesthetic renewal, and experience acute and unrestricted sensation through an insistence on the physical and visual. Bryher's presence at the end of H.D.'s texts provides a tone of renewal and a sense of heightened aesthetic sensibility, rather than resolution. In this way the collaborative union between H.D. and Bryher is shown to have a central aesthetic significance. Their collaboration is shifting and disordered, and radically unsettling of conventions, while equally structuring and creating their merging and interacting subjectivities.

The Structures of Connection in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* and Journalism

Introduction

Djuna Barnes' journalistic work, which spanned the years 1913 to 1931, has rarely been considered by critics in its own right; equally, it has not been seen to be of interest within autobiographical studies. Often it has been dismissed as a commercial, rather than a literary enterprise.³¹ It has also been examined purely as a means of identifying precursors to her later fiction writing, and it is this fiction writing that has been considered to be the most significantly autobiographical of the texts within her oeuvre, a fate similarly suffered by Woolf, Richardson and May Sinclair.³² Contrary to this, my view is not only that Barnes' journalism deserves critical attention in its own right, but also that it is fundamentally autobiographical and deserving of analysis in this regard. Mary Lynn Broe refutes critics who claimed that Barnes's interviews were mere experiments that would be perfected in her later work. Instead, she highlights how 'her brilliant politics destabilises the boundaries of the text' (25) and shows how Barnes' journalism 'celebrates the sheer experimental variety even within its own historical use, as it challenges the assumptions of the privileged "high

³¹ See Mary Lynn Broe for more on the commercial elements of Barnes' journalism, including that by 1917 'Barnes frequently made as much as \$15 an article – she wrote several a day – and \$5000 a year' (25).

³² See Leila Brosnan's chapter 'Virginia Woolf and Journalism' on p. 193 of *Journalism, Literature and Modernity: From Hazlitt to Modernism*, edited by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh University Press, 2000) for more on how journalism is overlooked in critical assessments of Woolf, Richardson and Sinclair's writing.

art” of the novel (*Nightwood*). This underrepresented early writing forms a prolific portrait of experiment, particularly in aesthetic and political strategies, as it subverts genres such as “the interview” (24), in particular the disruption of the power structures inherent in the interview format.

Therefore, I keep Barnes journalistic work as the main focus of investigation in this chapter. Rather than looking for precursors to her later fiction writing, I use a reading of the relational dynamics at play between characters in Barnes’ 1936 novel *Nightwood* as an entry point to those in play in Barnes’ journalism, and as a means of illuminating an analysis of Barnes self-presentation in her articles and interviews. In particular, Barnes’ semi-autobiographical presentation of the *Nightwood* character Nora Flood interacts with the elusive and disembodied character of Robin Vote in interesting ways which are particularly illuminating for exploring Barnes’ interviewer/interviewee dynamics in her journalism.

In a similar way to how H.D.’s autobiographical prose reflects ontological collaborative unions with interacting subjectivities, Barnes’ journalism can be read as an interrogation of how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to an other or several others. For Barnes, collaboration operates as a rhetorical device that allows her to construct a textual self, which is more than a rhetorical device, but a mutual dynamic where the subject and object are creating one another. Each of her interviews and articles utilise a technique of presenting the self through the prism of another, and by textually enacting these interactions

between the subject and other, Barnes' journalistic autobiographical subjectivities emerge. In this chapter I examine the roles that collectivism and relationality play in the individuation process taking place in these autobiographical interviews and articles, and in particular how far Barnes' various journalistic personae are autobiographical and how far a collaborative dynamic is used to foster her autobiographical subjectivities.

This chapter examines those of Barnes articles and interviews that have been published to date. *New York: Djuna Barnes*, published in 1990, is a collection of forty-one pieces of journalism written by Barnes between the years 1913 and 1919, and *Interviews*, published in 1985, is a collection of forty-one interviews published between the years 1913 and 1931, including an interview of Barnes by publisher and editor Guido Bruno. Herring describes these collections as 'much of the best journalistic articles by Barnes' (80), although there are additional unpublished articles and interviews as well as articles that were published unsigned. I look at how, in both *Nightwood* and Barnes' journalism, a relational dynamic exists in which individual subjectivities becomes flexible, plural and performative rather than static and innate, depending on the subject's connection or lack of connection with the other in question. I analyse two of Barnes articles about place which reveal her concern with the importance of personal connection and subject formation: 'The Hem of Manhattan' (1917) and 'There's Something Besides the Cocktail in the Bronx' (1919), as well as articles covering public events, and her stunt journalism. I then look at her interviews

which show how her autobiographical presentation of her journalistic personae reveal her preoccupation with connection as a model for self-presentation. In these pieces, collaboration is a formative aesthetic strategy, and she uses it as a device to present how far she is obfuscating or revealing herself, and how she is presenting herself within her social context and in relation to an other.

‘Lay Bare One’s Self’: Barnes’ Modernist Journalism

Barnes started her journalistic career in 1913 at the age of twenty-one, working as a reporter for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. In her 2003 book about Barnes, Deborah Parsons surveys her oeuvre, including her journalism, and recognises that her journalism was a significant part of her work as she went on to become ‘a highly successful and well-paid freelancer, writing regularly for upmarket and high-circulation publications and publishing over one hundred articles and stories’ (7). Barnes’ biographer, Philip Herring cites her application for a Guggenheim fellowship where she details the wide variety of journalistic roles that she held as a feature writer, reporter, theatre reviewer, interviewer, illustrator, and syndicate writer for a range of different publications (76). This includes ‘more than 110 newspaper and magazine pieces for *Vanity Fair*, *Charm*, *McCall’s*, the *New Yorker* and the *New York World, Press and Telegraph*’ (Broe 22). The volume of this work highlights further that it is not an area of her work that can be side-lined in favour of her fiction, or ignored when considering the autobiographical nature of her work. Of course there are

numerous differences, one of those being the readership that she is writing for. Parsons writes that: 'These major city newspapers and monthly glossies were marketed to an affluent dilettante and metropolitan readership, one that identified itself through patterns of consumption and demanded constant information on the entertainments, restaurants, fashions and life-styles of the city' (7). With her journalism, she is not, therefore, writing for a specifically literary audience and so her interviews and articles become a unique and alternative site from which she is able to explore her autobiographical self-presentation, in particular the ways in which she was revising and subverting the genre of journalism.

One of the key ways in which she revises the genre of journalism is her modernist style of writing. Eakin notes that the self 'has always been shaped by the evolution of medias' (*Stories* 95), and it is interesting to consider how writing journalism during the modernist period, and as a focal and influential player in modernism, affected Barnes' conception and presentation of self. The very nature of journalism means it requires consideration of how to both display and conceal oneself in the interests of maintaining privacy. Pykett argues that the designation of *journalism* is antithetical to the very definition of modernism as 'to be a journalist was to be part of an army of writers who offered themselves for hire in the commercial market-place. The avant-garde literary artist, on the other

hand, eschewed the mass market and wrote for a discriminating coterie' (172).³³

If modernist writing must be an art form, then can we categorise journalism, which has the converse aim of informing and entertaining, as modernist? In the case of Barnes, there appears to be no need for an alternative definition as her writing is entirely modernist in the way she was subverting basic journalistic conventions, disrupting narrative continuity, violating the interviewee/interviewer dynamic, dislocating syntax and fragmenting, and performing a deliberate and radical break from the traditional autobiographical subject by reimagining it as plural and relational entities. Broe claims that Barnes was attempting 'a radical revision of modernism' (22) and discovers radical challenges to boundaries of space, gender, and power ideologies. Barnes provides a subheading for the article 'My Sisters and I at a New York Prize Fight' Barnes' which includes the statement 'Here Is an Impressionistic Picture of a Boxing Bout'. This shows that Barnes is self-consciously describing herself as a modernist journalist and in doing so draws attention to the many ways in which she is radically blurring boundaries and subverting expectations.

This kind of modernist writing was not prevalent in journalism, and indeed journalists such as Rebecca West were particularly critical of modernist literature in itself. Pykett writes of how Rebecca West contributed to the many 'reviews and articles which expressed a great deal of scepticism about some of the social

³³ See Mark Morrisson's *The Public Face of Modernism* (2001) for more on modernist attitudes to journalism.

and aesthetic ideas and artistic practices of self-consciously innovatory writers, many of whom were included in the canon of high modernism' (170). In response to these kind of dismissals, Leila Brosnan proposes devising a 'method of reading modernism which acknowledges the significance of the journalism of modernist writers like T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Dorothy Richardson and May Sinclair' (204). She suggests that it is possible to read journalism 'as something that is opposed to the writing of the literature that is characterised as modernist, while recognising that it cannot be separated from it' (204). While I recognise the contradictions inherent in definitions of high-modernism and the commercial mass-appeal of journalism, I find that reading Barnes' journalism as participating entirely with the challenges, disruptions, and fragmentations of modernism and therefore analysing it in this light is not only necessary but also highly illuminating. Collier notes that the challenge for literary journalists was 'not *whether* one could work as a journalist but how to do so without compromising one's intellectual credentials' (187). To work as a journalist was an convenient way for a writer to earn money, and for Barnes this was a necessity, but it also allowed her to develop her reputation and a level of public and professional recognition. However, this had its risks as to 'become identified as a journalist threatened one's credibility' (187), particularly within modernist circles. Collier describes modernists such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound as 'abandoning the public sphere' (190) by prioritising small publications

and little magazines.³⁴ Instead Barnes engaged directly with the social and political topics of the day including the suffrage debate.

Barnes' name is curiously absent from Jan Whitt's 2008 history of *Women in American Journalism*, where Whitt reclaims forgotten women journalists, including those who stopped writing for newspapers and wrote fiction instead, such as Willa Cather, Edna Ferber and Margaret Mitchell. While Barnes is not remembered in this book, her journalism, like Cather's, 'clearly reflected an artist in waiting' (88).³⁵ She was, however, very much amongst this visible group of artistically ambitious women journalists, and she is included in a chapter on the American reporter-novelist tradition in Jean Marie Lutes's 2006 study of women journalists in American culture and fiction between the years 1880 and 1930. Lutes explores the ways in which Ferber, Cather and Barnes negotiated the roles of author and reporter, and recognises that 'at the turn of the century, women reporters were already a visible subset of the nation's newspaper journalists' (1). She writes that 'according to the U.S. Census, the percentage of women journalists more than doubled between 1880 and 1900 and climbed steadily after that. Women made up sixteen per cent of all working

³⁴ See T.S. Eliot's satiric lyric 'The Boston Evening Telegraph' in his *Collected Poems 1909-1962*. Harcourt Brace, 1963.

³⁵ See Cynthia White's *Women's Magazines 1693-1968*. Michael Johnson, 1970 for an account of the growth of female journalists writing for women's magazines in particular.

journalists by 1920 and twenty-three per cent by 1930'(9).³⁶ Djuna Barnes was one of these journalists, and her success lay in her radical and distinct modernist style and unique construction of her journalistic personae which destabilised the construction of self. Lutes notes that 'Between 1880 and 1920 the newspaper woman emerged as an icon of American culture, a figure of modernity that promised to alleviate some of the alienating effects of the mass media that made possible her very existence' (10). Barnes exploits this iconography in the creation of her journalistic personae, by placing herself as a central figure within her articles and interviews, where it is her relationship with the interviewee or subject that becomes the focus of the piece. Scrutiny of Barnes' journalism reveals that she was not only developing her distinctive literary style, but also the kinds of artistic personae she wanted to create and how she wanted to display these, and other, subjectivities.

E. A. Bennett wrote in *Journalism for Women: A Practical Guide Book*, published in London and New York in 1898, that 'in Fleet Street there are, not two sexes, but two species – journalists and women-journalists' (8). This book offers an understanding of the environment in which Barnes was writing, as a

³⁶ See page 187 of Patrick Collier's chapter in Bonnie Kime-Scott's *Gender in Modernism* (2007) for more on the journalistic marketplace for female journalists, particularly in England. This chapter outlines how there was plenty of work for female journalists, particularly due to many of the educated men being at war in Europe, and this included the male dominated daily newspapers as well as women's publications. There were women taking up positions as foreign correspondents, as well as editors, and this work continued even after the end of the war.

so-called woman-journalist. Bennett outlines what he perceived to be 'the imperfections of the existing woman-journalist' (10), citing a misogynistic list of failures such as a lack of understanding of business, unreliability, inattention to detail, and a lack of restraint, all of which he finds are 'traceable either to an imperfect development of the sense of order, or to a certain lack of self-control' (11). Bennett then goes on to offer practical advice on aspects of journalism such as drafting procedures, the search for copy, how to correspond with an editor and how to write about the 'women's sphere'. Barnes, as a woman interested in women's rights and desiring of a life of independence, would have been well aware of these assumptions and expectations around her journalism, and her self-presentation must be read in this context. While, of course, Bennett's writing reveals a prevalent misogyny, his advice is perversely designed to encourage women journalists finding no 'sexual reason why a woman should be a less accomplished journalist than a man' (10) and he encourages the development of a style that is 'the expression, not only of the thoughts immediately to be set down, but of the very man himself' (38), where the journalist, to discover their style, must 'lay bare one's self' (38). Putting herself at the centre of her articles, was a shocking, feminist and radical move that made her journalism female focussed, at a time when women journalists were on the rise, and their role was an increasing source of scrutiny.

Lutes writes that, in particular the sob sisters - a term used to reference the female journalists writing sentimental human interest stories - but also other

'female reporters, writing for the world's first mass-circulation papers, served as focal points for debates on the necessity of objectivity, the propriety of women's public roles, the dangers of sexual desire, even the national passion for publicity' (7). In so far as Barnes entered these debates, she eschewed objectivity for a vivid subjectivity and showed little concern for propriety within the public role of journalism, whether in subject matter, or in her radical subversion of journalistic conventions, in particular turning articles and interviews into autobiographical explorations of herself. This is something T.S. Eliot called the 'objective correlative' (940) in his 1919 essay 'Hamlet and His Problems'; or, as described by critic Norman Sims in his collection of essays about literary journalism, 'where you write about one thing and you're actually writing about another. Or where you make one thing represent another' (93). In the case of Barnes, her interviews and articles suggest that, whether directly or indirectly, the subject matter is primarily an autobiographical presentation of herself.

The objective correlative is something, Sims notes, that literary journalists, writing for publications such as *The New Yorker* were actively considering.³⁷ In his collection, Sims looks at the development of the working tradition of literary journalism in the early twentieth century, where writers

³⁷ Here Sims is writing specifically about the journalist Joseph Mitchell, who had been with *The New Yorker* since 1938. Founded in 1925, *The New Yorker* was dedicated to short fiction, and was nurturing of literary journalists. For more background on this, see page 83 of Sims, Norman *The Literary Journalists*. Ballentine Books, 1984.

‘reshaped literary styles to permit passages across the borders between fact and fiction, journalism and autobiography, and reporting and sociology in such a way that their readers’ expectations and confidences were not violated’ (vi). In this chapter I show the many ways in which Barnes engages in this reshaping, but rather than treading carefully across these dichotomies I find that she radically blurs the boundaries between journalism and autobiography, and between fact and fiction. For example, Sims writes that ‘most magazine articles presented an almost flat character defined by the facts of age, occupation and achievements’ (93), but instead I find Barnes’ self-characterisations are alive and vivid in their description.

In Connery’s chapter in Sims’ collection, he argues that it was around the turn of the twentieth century in the United States that ‘a belief that reality could be identified and objectified came to literary expression in its purest form in the journalistic news story’ (4). As a result a specific form of journalism, known as literary journalism, emerged: ‘a literary journalistic account did not just record and report, it interpreted as well’ (6). This was achieved by introducing a storytelling form, while including details and impressions that readers would not usually expect to find in their newspapers. By eschewing conventional journalism, writers such as Barnes could provide readers with ‘another version of reality’ (6) and new interpretations of their subjects with writing that comes closer to that which readers would expect to find in fiction. Barnes used her interviews and articles to enact new interpretations of herself, and to tell the

stories of her own subjectivities through the collaborative medium of writing about other subjects and subjectivities.

‘To be “one’s self” is the most shocking custom of all’: Autobiographical Journalism

Since the resurgence of interest in Barnes’ writing, sparked in the 1970s with Douglas Messerli’s bibliography of her works, and followed by Andrew Field’s 1983 biography and Phillip Herring’s biography in 1995, which have secured Barnes’ place as an important modernist writer, critics have had varying interest in Barnes’ journalistic work. Herring determined that it would be ‘of scant interest if Barnes had not been destined for greater things; unless, of course, one had a particular interest in New York of the second decade of the twentieth century’ (12), and Messerli concludes that it is the writing that Barnes went on to do next that holds the greatest interest as ‘the roots of her writing can be seen in these [journalistic] pieces’ (80). Cheryl Plumb’s study of Barnes’ early works equally looks for what ‘clues to Barnes’ fiction are offered in her journalism’ (19). However, in contrast to these critics, I identify a great deal of interest in her journalism itself, due to the way we can find within her interviews and articles a fascinating investigation of how to present oneself autobiographically; an investigation which is entirely modernist in its radical break with journalistic and literary conventions. Therefore rather than using the journalism as a way to find clues to Barnes’ fiction, I use *Nightwood* as a thematic entry point to the

journalism, and as a means of illuminating and enriching my analysis of her autobiographical investigations.

In her study of Djuna Barnes and 'Affective Modernism', Julie Taylor asks the important question: 'How do we reconcile Barnes' apparently biographical writing with her modernist commitment to impersonality?' (5). Taylor notices a tension in Barnes' fiction writing where she is 'frequently and productively drawing on her own biography for her fiction' (5) while simultaneously deconstructing 'the notions of factual stability and coherent subjectivity on which autobiography appears to rely while, in her letters, consistently and vehemently condemning autobiographical disclosure' (5). This tension can also be found in her journalistic work, where Barnes is very clearly drawing on her own experiences for her writing, and revealing a compelling need to write about herself, but in doing so she also appears to be performing a clear questioning of the ability for autobiographical writing to capture a coherent subjectivity. Gertrude Stein states, in *Everybody's Autobiography*, 'that is really the trouble with autobiography you do not of course you do not really believe yourself why should you, you know so well so very well that it is not yourself' (53). Barnes, like Stein, acknowledges the fallibilities of autobiography, but this does not discourage her fascination with life-writing, and her on going modernist attempts to devise ways in which to present herself.

Barnes' interests in autobiography were multiple, but she was particularly engaged with formulating new expressions of the self. Taylor notices that 'In

Barnes' copy of [T.S.] Eliot's essays, a tentative question mark sits in the margin next to the claim that "The progress of an artist is a continual extinction of personality" (6). Taylor reads this question mark to figure 'as a metonym for Barnes' on going interrogation of exactly how the personal should relate to fiction' (6). I would go on to suggest that it reveals Barnes' on going concern with how the personal should feature within autobiographical writing in the construction of the various authorial and subjective personas, in particular in her journalistic work. Barnes' autobiographical journalism does not show her attempting to extinguish personality, but rather to illuminate it through recourse of collaborating with an other.

Certainly this on going concern can be found in the way Barnes spoke of her work herself. Herring describes how 'Barnes called her journalism "rubbish" and discourages interest in it' (77) and Plumb writes that 'she wrote newspaper and magazine journalism to survive, but she did not value it' (33). Perhaps Barnes' own dismissal of her work is the reason why there was an unwillingness from critics to look at Barnes' journalism in its own right. Closer analysis suggests that while it seems that Barnes' disdain and lack of value for this work partially stems from a desire to be recognised as a serious modernist artist, that is not the only factor. It is also connected to a level of discomfort that she felt around self-presentation, and her concerns over the development and presentation of an autobiographical self, given that she was, as Julie Taylor notes, 'famously resistant to biographical readings of her work' (5).

Peter Mailloux examines this resistance in his article about the difficulties of writing a biography about Barnes. He details the ways in which 'Barnes was someone who spent, not just the last years of her life, but nearly all of it, obfuscating her own past' (147). He describes Barnes' dislike of biographers as 'legendary' and how she 'made it a point never to help those who wanted to write about her' (146). Mailloux's exploration of Barnes' papers reveals insights such as how 'she inevitably demanded to see books about her before they were published; she also seems to have checked indices of books about friends and in at least one case pencilled in her name where it should have been' (145), and how 'on several occasions she describes in letters a day spent destroying notes and letters' (145), particularly her very frank letters to Emily Coleman, and that 'if all else failed, she simply changed the record' (146). Not all of her letters to Coleman were destroyed, and Monika Faltejskova finds a line in one of these letters, which highlights her concerns with the performative and social context of identity: 'The truth is how you say it, and to be "one's self" is the most shocking custom of all' (1). It is in Barnes' journalism that I find Barnes writing in a clear effort to capture and present the 'truth' of her self.

In Coleman's diaries, which are examined in chapter four, there are numerous entries where Coleman details Barnes' concern with how she is being presented. There are frequent references to the degree to which Barnes achieves being 'one's self', and Coleman is scathing of her attempts in *Nightwood*. Coleman reflects that she 'told Djuna that since I had come to know

her I thought far more of her than of anything she had written; and could not understand why she hadn't the guts to write about herself' (119). Coleman attributes this to the fact that 'Djuna cares so much what people think' (156), to the point where she can only think in the context of a crowd: 'how to take Djuna is beyond me. She can't feel anything without being in, or thinking of a crowd – John says this is not entirely so. I don't feel anything when someone like Djuna goes on – I just can't. Every word she says is dramatic, said for a reply. She can't help it' (156). Coleman's reflections reveal the modernist concern with being one's self, and her view that Barnes never fully achieved the goal of truly writing about herself, despite her many attempts across her corpus. How accurate Coleman's view is can be debated, but it is interesting that she recognises the social and collaborative elements of Barnes' self-presentation, where being part of, or even just thinking about, a crowd was necessary for her to *feel* anything, and that she was always in need of a reply, in the form of dialogue with another.

Therefore, perhaps Mailloux's claim that Barnes had an 'addiction to obfuscation' (146), which he ascribes to Barnes' desire for 'keeping herself for herself' (147) as she was 'her own best subject' (147), undermines the complexity with which Barnes viewed the intense politics of autobiographical self-presentation. While Barnes may have made claims not to value her journalistic work, the fact that within her interviews and articles we find further evidence of her addiction to writing about herself, suggests that they are

certainly of value when it comes to understanding the autobiographical nature of Barnes' oeuvre and her modernist commitment to eschewing conventional modes of representation. Barnes was compulsively autobiographical while at the same time entirely resistant to the implications of self-presentation. In her journalism she revises, reinvents and draws attention to her autobiographical personae, and the resulting subjectivities are at once fiercely individual and dynamically collaborative in their construction.

'Of all that ranting roaring crew, she alone stood out': *Nightwood* and Connection

Nightwood, Barnes' most famous novel, published in 1936, about the night life of Paris and those who inhabited its bars and cafes in the 1930s, is not entirely autobiographical, certainly not enough to be considered a specifically autobiographical novel. However, Gerald J. Kennedy writes that 'insofar as *Nightwood* carries autobiographical resonances, Nora most closely resembles Barnes herself' (234), and, as with her journalism, numerous resemblances can be found. The novel is often read as 'a personal exorcism for her love of Thelma Wood' (Parsons, *Barnes* 60), and the character Robin Vote is clearly intended to reflect Thelma Wood, while Barnes is Nora Flood. The fictionalised portrait of Barnes' relationship with Wood plays with notions of connection and separateness to the extent that it becomes the defining structure of the narrative. As in her journalism, Barnes uses varying levels of connection with an other to

reveal the collaborative nature of subject formation, where all methods of self-fashioning are inevitably presented within the limitations of the social context. I will show that in both *Nightwood* and Barnes' journalism, a relational dynamic exists in which individual identity becomes flexible, plural and performative rather than static and innate, depending on the subject's connection or lack of connection with the other in question.

Nora, 'a young woman, who was in her late twenties' (16), introduces herself in the first chapter: 'I am doing advance publicity for the circus, I'm Nora Flood' (16). She is then largely absent from the text until chapter three where we read that 'The strangest "salon" in America was Nora's' (45), which was 'the "paupers" salon, for poets, radicals, beggars, artists, and people in love; for Catholics, Protestants, Brahmins, dabblers in black magic and medicine' (45). Set in her social context, the narrative then makes Nora separate: 'Of all that ranting roaring crew, she alone stood out' (45). Nora's separateness is emphasised at various points as the narrative progresses: we read 'And in the midst of this, Nora – sitting still, her hand on her dog' (46), and that she could be found 'at the opera, at a play, sitting alone and apart' (47). She is described as 'a singular' (46), and 'her smile was quick and definite, but disengaged' (48).

There is then a moment of transition in the text when Nora and Robin meet:

The world and its history were to Nora like a ship in a bottle; she herself was outside and unidentified, endlessly embroiled in a preoccupation with a problem.

Then she met Robin (48).

Nora's status as separate from and outside of her social context becomes reversed with this meeting. With numerous echoes of the article 'Djuna Barnes Probes the Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome Circus', which I discuss later in this chapter, Nora and Robin meet at a circus, to which 'Nora went alone' (48), and sitting beside her was Robin. The narrative repeats 'Nora turned to look at her' (48) and 'At that moment Nora turned' (48). It is a clear moment of change and transition. In a mirroring of Nora turning towards Robin, so a lioness that is parading the circus ring turns towards Robin: 'she turned her furious great head with its yellow eyes afire and went down, her paws thrust through the bars and, as she regarded the girl, as if a river were falling behind impassable heat, her eyes flowed in tears that never reached the surface' (48-9). At that moment, Robin stands up and Nora takes her hand to lead her out of the circus. Barnes is expressing the transformational moment Nora experiences when she sees Robin, through the lens of the circus lion. It is a reaction that is profound but invisible; the heat is impassable, and the tears do not reach the surface, but it is one which compels a great change in Nora's sense of self.

They then have a period of union, where their connection is all encompassing: 'She stayed with Nora until the midwinter. Two spirits were working in her, love and anonymity. Yet they were so "haunted" of each other that separation was impossible' (49). 'Nora closed her house' (49), and soon

Robin 'belonged to Nora' (50) and 'in the passage of their lives together every object in the garden, every item in the house, every word they spoke, attested to their mutual love, the combining of their humours' (50). This period of union is short lived, and the narrative devotes less than a page to its description. Soon Nora becomes an outsider once more, as 'the time came when Nora was alone more of the night and part of the day' (50). Nora is then conceivable only in terms of Robin's absence, which 'became a physical removal, insupportable and irreparable' (53). We read that 'Robin was an amputation that Nora could not renounce' (53) and that 'in Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and about it for maintenance ran Nora's blood' (51). Robin is both absent and irrecoverable, and yet present in painful moments of intimacy, where 'sometimes, going about the house, in passing each other, they would fall into an agonised embrace, looking into each other's face, their two heads in their four hands, so strained together that the space that divided them seemed to be thrusting them apart' (52). They are presented as victims of a force that is both insisting on union as well as separation. This becomes a permanent state for Nora who in her desperation while talking with Dr O'Connor – a character who pretends to be a doctor, who is gender fluid and who ruminates on his and other characters' philosophical states – asks, 'She is myself. What am I to do?' (115), and tells him 'a woman is yourself, caught as you turn in panic; on her mouth you kiss your own' (129). In a moment of revelation Nora says 'I thought I loved her for her sake, and I found it was for my own' (136). She describes Robin as

'my lover and my child. For Robin is incest too' (141). Nora is estranged from herself, in her inability to conceive of herself outside of the, now largely absent, figure of Robin.

This relational dynamic shows Barnes performing a negotiation of subject and object positions. From a position of objectivity, the subject is able to define herself against an other. When this objectivity is compromised the relational dynamic becomes confused and the subject is unable to remove itself from its object of perception. In the narrative of *Nightwood* identification becomes as an illusion, and connection is something that is perpetually strived for but impossible to achieve. This effort to achieve this self-defining connection means that the subject is only capable of creating and defining itself through its creation and definition of an other. This relationship is central to Barnes' construction and presentation of identity.

Nancy Bombaci writes about the limits of self-fashioning in *Nightwood*, in terms of Barnes' fascination with 'the notion that identity is malleable and performative rather than innate and fixed' (65). The potential for transformation within this self-fashioning exists through Barnes' representation of 'characters who could simultaneously occupy the roles of subject and object' (65). It is in this negotiation of subject and object positions that Bombaci views the characterisation of Nora and Robin. Nora is described as 'a consummate *flaneur*' who 'attempts to peruse others with detached objectivity', and that it is her 'disembodied consciousness' that gives her epistemological power through

defining herself against 'those who embody sexual or racial difference' (73). Bombaci argues that 'Nora Flood's pretensions to objectivity are compromised when she becomes enamoured with Robin Vote' (76). In this characterisation Barnes is bringing 'to light the subject's inability to remove itself from its object of perception. Thus authentic possession – either as understanding or identification – is an illusion' (77). Instead 'the subject merely asserts its consciousness by disfiguring or remaking the object of the gaze through acts of perception and artistic representation' (78). This analysis comes close to recognising the formative effect of a collaborative notion of autobiographical subject formation. However, I argue that with the autobiographical character of Nora, Barnes is going beyond trying to possess the other, or to assert consciousness, but rather she is using the object in order to create the subject in a collaborative mode of relational subject formation.

The narrative around Nora and Robin also raises interesting questions around narcissism and reflection, which come into play with the collaborative dynamic between object and subject. Faltejskova recognises that '*Nightwood's* characters are locked in narcissistic desire' (3), and in the section quoted above where Nora tells Dr O'Connor that 'she is myself', this narcissism is apparent. Faltejskova concludes that this narcissistic desire where the characters are 'falling in love and loving someone as a means to one's own completion, as well as deriving one's identity entirely from the other (11) cannot succeed as 'we are split subjects situated in language [Lacan] and thus to seek such completion is

to seek doom – for it is only a mirage’ (11). However, this fails to recognise the formative impulse that can derive from this narcissistic reflection, where the subject is created rather than doomed. Caroline Rupprecht’s analysis comes closer to recognising how this narcissistic reflection can be a formative element in autobiographical subject creation, as she recognises how ‘reflection itself is [*Nightwood*’s] governing structural principal’ (93) and ‘becomes a most prominent trope for the way in which Nora imagines Robin’ (104). Nora is unable to view Robin as a structural entity, as she is only ‘conceived of in terms of reflection, whoever looks at her will see himself’ (113), and as a result Nora’s vision of Robin is ‘intimately connected with her own physical and emotional self’ (117). In that way Robin simply represents Nora’s own unconscious so that Robin functions like a medium for her’ (119). As a medium, however, Robin does more than reflect Nora’s own narcissistic desire, but instead participates in a collaborative dynamic that allows for generative autobiographical subject formation.

Bombaci, Faltejskova and Rupprecht were all writing about Barnes in the first decade of the 21st century, and this reflects the on going critical interest in Barnes’ works. However, while their analysis provides an interesting contribution to debates about modernist subject formation, they perceive the subject’s collaborative dynamic with the other in negative terms for the subject’s individuation, something I argue against in my readings of both *Nightwood* and Barnes’ journalism. In addition, Suzanne Ferguson, in her article about Barnes’

short stories, presents the interconnections between Barnes' characters as 'lacerations' (27), rather than as a productive relationship. Kathryn Lynn Ryan, in her 2014 thesis titled 'Modernism's Suicidal Impulse: Psychic Contamination and the Crowd' comes closer to viewing the individual's relationship with an other in more productive terms. Her study looks at how, during the modernist period, 'physical crowding comes to precipitate a breakdown of psychic boundaries, threatening notions of identity and autonomy' (vi). But, she tentatively posits an alternative view of the modernist urban space 'as defined by contact and communication rather than alienation and fragmentation – a place where enforced proximity produces intense interconnection rather than psychic estrangement' (26). This echoes my model of collaboration which is a generative model deriving from contact and communication which leads to an individual autobiographical subjectivity that, rather than being alienated and fragmented, is instead multiply and constructively generated.

As outlined in the introduction, during the modernist period, the mass, or the subject's wider social context, was positioned as a threat to individual identity. The critics interested in theories of the crowd propagated the view that the crowd figuratively entails the death of the individual, where literary characters are often portrayed as seeking isolation in order to re-establish an alternative model of individualism. Ryan outlines how the modernist engagement with how the individual relates to the crowd generated 'an entire body of theory that figures the individual as susceptible to the infectious thoughts, impulses,

and feelings of others' (21). She considers the repercussions of this context in the narrative innovations Barnes presents in her texts which are consciousness-centred, and finds evidence of 'the modernist desire for a completely autonomous and self-contained subject' (20). In her examination of Barnes' 'Spillway' stories she finds that 'the affects of others often overpower individuals' (24), and in *Nightwood* she finds 'attempts at self-containment' (24). She recognises that there are occasions where Barnes presents a view 'that boundary construction is inherently dangerous to others' (164). However, while psychological isolation is often seen as part and parcel of modernist subjectivity itself, and Barnes is certainly engaging with notions of isolation, Barnes' writings often strain against a totalising view of individualism. Ryan finds that for Barnes 'isolation is impossible precisely because Barnes' characters have no coherent sense of self' (167), and the remaining shards of personality 'must inevitably participate in some form of human contact' (167). This participation, particularly that between Nora and Robin in *Nightwood*, rejects the notion that contact with the crowd or with another individual, should not be seen in purely negative terms, but rather as a positive collaborative dynamic with a generative structuring force. This understanding of how, in *Nightwood*, Barnes presents varying levels of connection with an other to reveal the collaborative nature of subject formation, is reflected in the ways in which Barnes uses collaboration as a narrative device within her journalism.

‘Are you going to be purely personal?’: Connection and Place

Barnes presents her articles from an autobiographical perspective, and her autobiographical subjectivities are created through a collaborative dynamic centred around varying visions of connection. When read comparatively, two of Barnes’ articles about place reveal her concern with the importance of personal connection and subject formation. ‘The Hem of Manhattan’ was published in July 1917 in the *New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine* and recounts her experience of a tourist boat trip around the island. ‘There’s Something Besides the Cocktail in the Bronx’ was published two years later in December 1919 in the *New York Tribune* and is a portrait of the New York borough.³⁸

In ‘There’s Something Besides the Cocktail in the Bronx’, rather than journeying through the streets of the Bronx to create her city portrait, Barnes chooses instead to journey through her personal memories. She uses signposts to guide the reader such as: ‘And I dropped this memory for one when I was quite young and sneaked into Poe’s house -’, ‘Here I paused again in my memory, saying “Is this, then, what they mean when they say the Bronx?”’, and ‘And then I thought of the quarries of Fordham’ (349). These signposts come in

³⁸ For background on *The Tribune* see Adams’ analysis that states that *The Tribune* ‘was somewhat more conservative than its main New York competitors, *The Times* and *The Sun*, reflecting the values of its middle- and upper-class readership. At the same time, however, *The Tribune* employed the most women reporters of any newspaper in New York.’ (4). It also had a ‘moderately conservative stance’ (4).

quick succession, creating the impression of darting from thought to thought, in the way a tourist might dart from street to street.

In contrast, in 'The Hem of Manhattan' Barnes' position is that of the objective observer. In the opening of the article Barnes eschews her usual preference for immediate first person positioning, in favour of inviting a wider association through the use of the second person pronoun. The opening line reads: 'To take a yacht trip around Manhattan Island is to find yourself in the awkward position of one who must become a stranger in his own house that he may describe it with the necessary colour' (285). Barnes is both immediately revealing the island to be her home but also showing herself to be undertaking a difficult separation from that association. She is signalling that she is not going to write an article filled with her own personal reflections of her home, but rather to attempt to access the lens of the detached 'stiff-backed, Middle West school teachers and others, most of whom were bearded gentlemen with gold nuggets mounted and used as tiepins' (288). While Barnes is attempting to separate her voice from the voices of the island inhabitants, she does not fully align herself with the other passengers, and presents them with disdain. She writes of them sitting 'in uncompromising rows as though they were in a classroom' (288) and looking at the water 'with determination, because they were there to see, and they would see' (288). They are presented as unemotional and disconnected with their surroundings, and unable to achieve any real perception. This is most

evident in a section when they pass an army transport steamer. Barnes writes of how they:

Heard their voices, hundreds of them, coming to us over the intervening water. A strange cry, a happy cry, an exultant cry, proclaiming doom and death. They all rose up, calling aloud, waving their arms and their handkerchiefs. A few words drifted back to us as we pulled alongside and then moved on. "We'll get the Kaiser," and the often-repeated, "Come on, too." One of them standing a little forward kissed his hand lightly; others thrust their shaggy heads out of the portholes (288).

The soldiers, whose voices they hear, are desiring of connection; their voices traversing the gap made by the water, rising up, leaning forward, gesturing to the passengers, sending kisses and waving their handkerchiefs. Despite these efforts, only a minor connection is made, with only a few words reaching across the water. In contrast to the calling out and thrusting of heads out of portholes, Barnes looks around her and sees her fellow passengers 'sitting in the same passive manner, stiffly and conventionally and unemotionally' (289). They are unmoved and the connection is thwarted.

This article was written shortly after America joined the First World War and therefore the lack of interest from the passengers reflects not only a disjoin between them and their surroundings, but also between them and the international politics of the day, particularly how connected they felt, as Americans, with the war in Europe. At many other points in this article we read of Barnes turning to look at the reaction of the passengers, and each time we read of their lack of personal connection and their lack of ability to really see or

perceive the city. However, in contrast to the passengers, Barnes herself is able to present us with her vision which is one of recognition, of connection, and of understanding. She ceases to be the objective observer she professed to need to be, and indeed starts of as, with detached observations such as 'There one would notice how the buttons were made' (286), and 'Here one looks upon things because one has eyes' (286). Instead, in a similar vein to 'There's Something Besides the Cocktail in the Bronx', she starts to insert herself, autobiographically, into the narrative, with reflections such as 'And then I thought of another trip I had taken once' (290), and 'I thought again of that day I had spent on a strip of land just the other side of Hell Gate-' (292). Conversely, it is having witnessed this lack of connection, and having considered herself as the separate and objective observer that she is able to piece back together this connection with the city and its inhabitants. Barnes is critical of the type of tourism where one undertakes the 'any one of the million and ten things that one expects to be seen doing when he takes a trip to a foreign country' (286) which revolve around the actions and impressions of others, such as when they strolled 'among the ruins of what used to be the descriptive parts of Cousin Milly's letters home' (285), 'visited Napoleon's tomb' (285), 'walked where Bernhardt used to walk' (286), or 'tried to find the café where Verlaine and Baudelaire wrote their poems' (286). However she equally claims that it is only through being a foreigner, and separating oneself, that one can truly perceive what they are observing. The word 'strange' is repeated and Barnes writes that

she will be 'condemned with a thousand million unless I find myself in a lonely place [...] a place that will be as strange to me as I to it' (286). To be separate is vital as the alternative is the 'tragedy of being familiar' (286) and 'to understand one should never be on anything but a friendly footing either with architecture or with people' (286). Barnes is interested in how things are separated: 'the two shore lines are separated by a strip of level, uncomplaining water, like two convicts who have between them three lengths of impassive chain: two terrible positives separated by a negative' (288); and, 'they all sat there in uncompromising rows' (288). She signals to the fact that she is not writing a journalistic article in the traditional way: 'but as the storyteller would say, this is not beginning at the beginning. I think it was something like two-thirty when I started' (288). She points out 'the largest building in the world; it stands so-many-and-so-many feet high' (289), showing a disregard to the kind of detail one might expect. Instead, Barnes is keen to emphasise that the focus of the article is not on telling a traditional story with conventional details, but on narrating a journey of how the impressions of the city recall memories in the narrator's mind: 'And then I thought of another trip I had taken once [...] I had liked that better; there was something living and careless and human about it' (290). The focus, autobiographically, becomes herself and her living, human connection with her city, and therefore we are left with a portrait of Barnes alongside, rather than instead of, the city.

Towards the end of the article Barnes imagines 'that world that we had been around' (295) in terms of the activity and contrast at play on the island, where:

Actresses were getting their beauty sleep or were at school learning arduously a new dance. Somewhere a man was killing a gnat and somewhere else a man building a bomb. Someone was kissing, and someone was killing, someone was being born, and someone was dying. Some were eating and drinking and laughing, and others were starving. Some were thinking, and others were not. Waiters moved about in the great hotels, dragging their servility with them like trains. Pompous gentlemen in fat rings discussed politics amid spittoons, and handsome women read yellow-backed novels and gave their hands to be kissed by gallants. And there some were walking about, looking over at us as we looked back at them (294).

In this passage we do not read a vision of a city moving harmoniously, but instead one full of people of contrasts with 'one-half of the mass pulling one way and the other half in the opposing direction' (294). With the social mass of the city engaging in contrasting activities an impression of separateness is created, and yet the use of comparison means that everyone is created in the context of someone else, and therefore a collaborative model of subject formation and existence is revealed. Barnes is presented as being in the midst of this opposition, pleasure and destruction but separate from it: 'And somewhere in all this tangle of lives and tangle of buildings, inland out of sight of the sea and fog, there was my own particular little studio called home' (295). She is both part of the tangle and out of its sight, and by collaborating with this ebb and flow of the social mass Barnes is able to situate her autobiographical self.

Both of these pieces are a reflection on the impact of place on a person's sense of belonging and how the varying levels of personal connection and memory impact on one's impression of an area. Barnes is negotiating levels of connection as a technique she can use to either obfuscate or reveal her autobiographical subjectivities within the articles, and therefore control the extent these subjectivities collaborate with the others in each piece. Despite the varieties of approach both articles are an exploration of the ways in which an individual situates themselves within the context that the people of the places provide. In 'There's Something Besides the Cocktail in the Bronx' Barnes posits the idea that without a purely personal connection she is unable to understand or to describe the Bronx, and connection becomes the structuring force of the article.

When reflecting on why 'so very few people think of the Bronx, even those who live in it' (346), Barnes remembers a stonecutter who, at the end of his day's work, 'used to stand at the gate at the top of the little hill and, turning his eyes toward the town, sniff the evening air' (347). He is shown to be perceptive and observant, using all of his senses to connect with his surroundings, and of his stone carvings of weeping figures he says "none seemed to be weeping in their souls as mine seemed to be weeping" (346). Barnes then goes on to remember joining a suburban society of bug hunters at the Botanical gardens, and similarly presents their acute perception and intensity of feeling. They arrived 'flinging themselves like bombs into the

landscape' (348) and some explored the landscape continually crying 'There's a specimen!' (348) and expressing a 'great deal of excitement' (349) even at the unremarkable discovery of fiddler crabs, and others 'sat down among the rushes and began a discussion on the merits of love and hate' (348). The article which for the first half has been a journey through Barnes' memories all in aid of discovering 'what they mean when they say the Bronx' (349), shifts focus and tone with the arrival of an unannounced and unaccounted for 'man at my side' (350) who arrives to give Barnes other suggestions of what makes up the Bronx. Barnes rejects these suggestions as 'facts' in preference for speaking about her own experiences. He encourages her to 'give them a little talk about theatres' (351) including their names and where exactly they are situated. Barnes replies that 'these things mean nothing' (351) and that 'the real Bronx has nothing to do with facts' (351). Barnes refuses his suggestions of writing about clubs, asylums, homes, banks, and schools. The man asks her scornfully, 'Are you going to be purely personal?' and Barnes replies 'I am – everyone is who writes well' (352). They then struggle to find anything purely personal for Barnes to see and write about, as the Cabaret no longer has 'four o'clock teas' (354) and the stonecutter has gone. In response Barnes departs and on the train observes a woman reading a book of poetry, three lines of which serve as the end of the piece: 'The days are gone, the fair good days are past; / And in their place a leisure all distraught / With hurry and unimportant gain' (354). This melancholy refrain highlights Barnes' detachment from a place she had once known. The personal

is so far removed that Barnes becomes both unable to write about it or experience it, and without the possibility of collaboration she is unable to define her place within that context.

‘A million machines doing their bit for the universal whole’: Events and Stunts

As well as writing articles about places, Barnes also wrote articles about public events and social issues. In these articles one can also read Barnes’ preoccupation with the nature of connection, and how to situate herself autobiographically within the narrative by negotiating the collaborative nature of these connections. The narrative of the article ‘Djuna Barnes Probes the Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome Circus’ opens with a series of personal memories of previous times Barnes had been at the circus, connecting the current visit with those of her past when she ‘dangled her legs’ (191) and ‘crawled beneath these same seats’ (191). The article then goes on to explore the proceedings of the circus: the attitudes of the chorus girls and animal trainers, the reactions of the audience, and the relationship between the animal’s status as circus performers and their natural state in the wild. As part of this Barnes records an intense connection between her and the animals: ‘You know I could not keep away from them’ (195), and writes that when the elephants left the arena ‘I turned my head away. I’m glad my mother does not know as much about me as those elephants’ (193). In the final paragraph,

maintaining the fast pace of the narrative, Barnes shifts the action from the public arena to a private moment between her and the caged animals:

I went down afterward into the depths where the animals are kept, and slipping up to the cages of these animals at last privately – no longer before the public, no longer in the limelight or the footlight – I stepped up, paused without, looked around for any trainer that might be present, for any keeper, for any intruder, and finding myself quite alone, with nothing but my iniquitous past, I slowly and softly raised my hand – in salute! (197).

In this passage Barnes is rejecting the mode of representation where the journalist is the passive observer of a phenomenon that she then objectively reports on. Instead, Barnes puts herself at the forefront of the text in a position that is private and separate, and only from this position is she able to engage with the subject of her article or to present her role in the action. She makes her deference and union with the animals the central focus, and invites the reader to witness her disruption of strategies of representation and so to focus their gaze on her construction of self.

In 'My Sisters and I at a New York Prize Fight' Barnes' union with her subject, the female spectators, is more ambivalent where she shifts between observer and participant roles. She writes: 'I, a woman, join the others and watch the women come' (169), which signals her distance from her subject. She variously positions the women as objects of observation - 'They do not appear self-conscious, nor is there anything unusual in their behaviour' (171) – and herself as in union with the crowd and as an object of observation herself - 'each

one of us, meanwhile, sits motionless, scarce permitting a beat to pass her lips' (171). Biers draws attention to the subheading of the article: 'Following the Example of their French and English Cousins, New York Women Have Begun to Flock to the Ringside – Here Is an Impressionistic Picture of a Boxing Bout Before a Mixed Audience by a Woman Who Had Never Seen One'. She observes that this subheading serves to solicit readers' attention 'by promising that an inexperienced and innocent female viewer will be the object of attention in the piece, Barnes' very first lines immediately reverse these terms' (247). Instead, 'the female reporter will become the unambiguously graphic object for the crowd's enthralled gaze' (250). While Barnes does make herself the object of both the crowd and the reader's gaze, this focus does not in fact remain throughout the article. Barnes uses her impressionistic techniques to both establish and subvert her connection with the crowd and with her readers by varying the focus and presenting herself in the unstable and variable position as both part of and separate from the crowd. She equally removes the focus from herself altogether, as both a member of the crowd and an observer of the crowd, Barnes chooses to focus on the amateur fight that preceded the main event, because 'the star bout was not the one in which the human game was played' (173). This 'human game' is presented through the connection between the fighters where 'they are thrust apart; then they meet again' (171), and when the defeated boxer sinks to the floor 'only a great loneliness, a sense of complete isolation, fills him' (171). In highlighting the various unions and individualisms in

the context she is writing within she is dissecting the format of articles and interviews by interrogating strategies of representation. Daniela Caselli writes that Barnes is writing as 'part of a modernist framework that challenges representational habits' (7), and that through this she is questioning the politics of originality and authenticity and highlighting 'the ephemerality of existence' (15). In this article, as well as 'Djuna Barnes Probes the Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome Circus', it is not the ephemerality of existence that Barnes is concerned with presenting, but the ephemerality of connection between people, in these cases the crowd or audience, and the subjects of observation. Barnes' connection with the animals at the circus is fleeting, her connection with the crowd at the boxing match is perpetually shifting, and the boxers' union with one another is destroyed with the victory leading to total isolation.

Barnes also participated in the tradition of stunt reporting, with the articles 'How it Feels To Be Forcibly Fed', 'My Adventures Being Rescued', and 'Dinah the Bush Girl'. Lutes warns against the often claimed view that the role of the 'girl stunt reporter' was a new format that Barnes constructed, because in fact 'Barnes first entered a newspaper office twenty years after the heyday of the girl stunt reporters' (148). Rather than an instigator of this form, Lutes views Barnes as having made a significant contribution to this format, through the ways in which 'Barnes cultivated a personal image that went along with her radical perspective' (149) and 'revised an existing tradition of sensation journalism' (149), by assuming 'with a vengeance the newspaper woman's role as a vehicle

of publicity' (149). The cultivation of a personal image reflects the autobiographical focus Barnes maintains throughout her journalism. For Lutes this focus on personal image and publicity meant that Barnes 'may have been the most brilliantly self-dramatizing Girl Reporter of all' (150). This idea of her autobiographical self-presentation and dramatization of her role as a stunt performer within these articles is key for exploring the self-conscious dramatisation of connection and identification.

In 'How it Feels To Be Forcibly Fed', Barnes is attempting to write about the experiences of British women who were on hunger strike in prisons as part of the suffrage cause. In this article we can read Barnes' self-dramatisation in terms of her connection with and attitude towards the community of women who were experiencing force feeding as a political act. Barbara Green describes Barnes' self-representation in this piece as 'a radical act' (84); however, while the act itself is radical in Barnes' use of her own body as a mean of subjection, the article itself is not radical in a political sense. Barnes refrains from making an explicit condemnation of the doctors administering the act or the political circumstance that allows the act, or from fully aligning herself with the political cause. Instead, Barnes negotiates her levels of connection and identification within the text which allows the reader to consider their own political reaction to the event.

By making herself rather than the British suffragettes the central focus of the piece, the article becomes an autobiographical exploration of connection and

identification. The opening line is 'I have been forcibly fed!' (174), and the article goes on to consider 'In just what relation to the other incidents in my life does this one stand?' (174). For the suffragettes it was a political act, whereas for Barnes 'it was an experiment' (174) and 'only tragic in my imagination' (175). It allows Barnes a level of 'comprehension of certain of the day's phenomena' (175) but not, at this stage in the article, a sense of political or personal alignment with the subject. She is outside the movement, and outside the event, looking in. Green writes that Barnes is enacting a disruption of 'a structure of representation that positions the female body as silent, passive, spectacular' (71), and this disruption is evident as through writing the article Barnes is able to look back at those who are observing the spectacle. The article progresses with a portrait of the social context around her. We read 'a woman by the stairs gazed wonderingly' (175), and the reader is left to surmise what she is wondering as she watches Barnes. We read 'out across the city, in a flat, frail, coherent yet incoherent monotone, resounded the song of a million machines doing their bit for the universal whole' (175), and the reader is invited to consider the relationship between this medical and political act and the wider happenings of the world. This echoes the ways in which Barnes, along with H.D., Stein and Coleman, were all considering the relationship between their individualisms and the wider social context, in the light of the population increase and industrialisation of modernity. We also read how the doctor ties her down and binds her and how 'the three [men] took me not unkindly, but quite without

compassion, one by the head, one by the feet; one sprawled above me, holding my hands down at my hips' (176), and the reader is invited to consider the power dynamics between Barnes and those administering the feeding. Having established the social context or the observers, the perpetrators and the wider world, Barnes' self-representation loses its centrality and vision. She enters a state of 'passive revolt' (176), with her eyes 'outcasts in a world they knew' (176). As the procedure begins we read 'now I abandoned myself. I was in the valley, and it seemed years that I lay there' (177) and that 'I, too, was detached'. Barnes presents herself as detached from both herself and her environment as she 'lapsed into a physical mechanism without power to oppose or resent the outrage to my will' (178). By losing her sense of self, and denying herself a voice, Barnes is able to write about herself as an external observer. She is, as Lutes writes, 'turning herself into an object of her own commentary, stressing her personal performance, narrating the process of her own objectification' (147). Barnes is simultaneously removing the voice of Barnes-as-stunt-journalist and then giving agency to Barnes-as-narrator to give an external perspective of the action. Lutes goes on to say that in documenting a loss of self, Barnes is declining to 'protect her readers from the dangers of over identification' (147-8) and is enacting a form of communion with both the reader and the suffragettes. This then becomes a redefinition of 'the subjective, embodied newspaper woman' (147) in that 'mainstream stunt reporters, for the most part, acted as buffers, insulating newspaper readers from too much contact with their subjects'

(148). Instead, Barnes 'placed herself at centre stage to thrust an unsettling degree of contact upon her readers' (148). This contact is symbiotic, as Barnes is not only inviting the reader to consider the implications of her actions, but also striving to present herself as part of the social whole rather than the individual, separate journalist undertaking the experience. Indeed, Green considers this article to be an 'act of identification' (80) which 'places individual voices and actions within a matrix of collective struggle and collective voice' (80). During the experience Barnes sees 'a vision of a hundred women in grim prison hospitals, bound and shrouded on tables just like this' (178), and afterwards decides 'I had shared the greatest experience of the bravest of my sex' (179). This shift from detached individualism in the beginning of the article to a vision of communion with her subject, reveals Barnes' ability to negotiate levels of identification and connection to serve the purposes of her work. It becomes a primary journalistic device for Barnes to represent not only herself within the article, but also to present her message and underline the tone of the piece.

Connection is equally the structuring force of 'The Girl and the Gorilla', in which Barnes uses comedy to describe her interactions with Dinah the gorilla at the New York Zoo. The keeper is 'a little doubtful as to the way that Dinah would receive me' (181) but the Professor was 'confident that Dinah would find something, however trifling, in me that would meet with her approval' (181). Barnes finds that 'the largest and most splendidly satisfying thing in Dinah's life is herself. She would rather stand well in her own estimation than upon a social

setting' (181), but despite her individualism Barnes finds some level of connection with her subject:

When she puts her arms about you, it feels something like a garden hose. It is at once impersonal and condescending, and yet rather agreeable. And yet when she laid her head upon my knees, I was not embarrassed but only pleased that she had found something in me, as representative of the women she had come among, to make her trustful. Of course she had to spoil it all by gravely putting an orange peel upon her head (183).

Barnes is describing the effect of the interactions on herself, presenting a range of emotions felt at the physical contact and her sense that she was a female representative. The sense is built up that the gorilla is not only capable of understanding the subtleties of one to one interactions, but also able to demonstrate those subtleties, not through language, but through her actions. In this way the parameters of the connection are established and then subverted through comedy as we are forced to laugh at ourselves for being so drawn into the humanisation of the gorilla. Therefore, while the subject matter is altogether non-political in comparison to 'How it Feels To Be Forcibly Fed', it shows in a more light-hearted tone Barnes' adept ability at negotiating levels of identification and connection to serve the purposes of her work.

'The indispensable Pen Performer': Barnes' Autobiographical Interviews

I will now examine Barnes' interviews in order to show how her autobiographical presentation of her journalistic personae, particularly those of the interviewer,

reveals her preoccupation with connection as a model for self-presentation. Her negotiation of the varying levels of connection between interviewer and interviewee reveal the ways in which collaboration is a formative aesthetic strategy within these journalistic pieces. The term collaboration serves as a more dynamic expression of the connection that Barnes is portraying, as the connections are productive and compelling. Barnes uses collaboration as a device to present how far she is obfuscating or revealing herself, how far she is presenting herself as individual or social, and how far she is presenting herself as connected or isolated. She uses a number of techniques to deftly negotiate the positioning of the interviewer, or her autobiographical subject, to place herself at the centre of the narrative. From there she radically subverts the interview format and uses collaboration to establish a self-defining connection through the prism of an other.

Broe states that 'Barnes set about subverting the interview format, exposing the interviewer's power, as she shaped the whole exchange into a highly evaluative art' (*Silence* 10). This analysis picks up on how Barnes invites the reader to consider not only the nature of interviews, but also the power dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewee. However, I argue that it does not go far enough in terms of recognising just how radical Barnes' revision of the nature of interviews was. Her engagement with the interview format was entirely modernist in her use of impressionistic writing to depart significantly from traditional norms, and styles. She exposes the interviewer's power by

performing a fundamental metamorphosis from interview to autobiography, and exploits the relationship between interviewer and interviewee to create autobiographical subjectivities that are collaborative and plural.

For example, in her interview with actor Lou Tellegen, 'Lou Tellegen on Morals and Things', Barnes subverts the interview format and writes it as a 'one-act encounter', with a script complete with stage directions and dialogue. Lou Tellegen was a Dutch born actor, director and screenwriter who made silent films and performed on the stage. He would have been well known to the readership as he was helped in his career by Auguste Rodin, for whom he modelled, and he joined the company of Sarah Bernhardt where he became famous for his various roles, including as Bernhardt's leading man. Barnes' decision to present this interview as a script not only reflects Tellegen's career, but it also makes a radical shift away from traditional interview formats, which would be a narrative description of a subject by a largely indiscernible interviewer.

The piece starts unexpectedly with a long fifteen lines of scene setting, with great detail about the vault-like cellar, including seemingly indulgent and pointedly unnecessary asides as 'a short flight of spiral iron stairs, as deft in shape and as necessary as a curl-paper exterior to an iron-grey grandparent' (153) and an exhaustive list of the dozen items on the dressing table. In contrast, Tellegen, the subject of the interview, is introduced simply and non-descriptively as 'In the near centre of the room a chair; in the chair sits Lou

Tellegen' (153). Thus, Barnes immediately distorts the reader's expectations about the focus of the piece. It is then at the rise of the curtain that the real star of the show, Barnes, is revealed; 'there is discovered the indispensable PEN PERFORMER, an interviewer from a downtown journal' (153). This revision of the interview format, distorting the focus and subverting narrative expectations, reveals Barnes' hyper-consciousness of the social politics of representation and self-representation, and the autobiographical nature of her journalism. She establishes a hierarchy where the set is of more interest than the interview subject, who is merely a character, near the centre but not in the centre, and of secondary importance to the leading actor, the autobiographical subject, the Pen Performer. Barnes is immediately asserting the primacy of herself, as interviewer, over the interviewee, and therefore is asking the reader to consider the subject through a different, more collaborative, lens, from a different angle, and indeed to partially turn away from the interview subject and instead to include the autobiographical subject of the interviewer in their reading. In this sense, however, the collaboration is entirely undemocratic; Tellegen does not have any control of his presentation or role within the piece, and Barnes uses him as an object to help to assert her position as subject. Even where the narrative may appear to give Tellegen more agency, it is still under the terms of the Pen Performer, in particular where Tellegen asks the Pen Performer questions, in a reversal of the usual interviewer/interviewee roles. The question is often simply 'Why?' (158) in requests for the Pen Performer to elaborate on

her comments, but there are also requests for clarification such as ‘what’s that?’ (154) and ‘do you think so?’ (155). The interview’s script includes Tellegen’s commentary on the Pen Performer, calling her ‘mean’ (158), ‘facetious’ (158), ‘supergenerous’ (159), ‘wrong again’ (156, 157), ‘very clever’ (156), ‘astute’ (156), ‘vastly sweet’ (156), ‘enormously kind, peculiarly adaptable’ (156). In fact the reader is left with a clearer, if not more contradictory, portrait of the Pen Performer than that of Tellegen, and therefore the piece becomes primarily autobiographical. The Pen Performer offers no commentary on Tellegen, and even appears to be barely listening to his answers to her questions. He asks ‘Where was I?’ (155) and she replies, somewhat dismissively, ‘You were saying that Shakespeare – or no, something about the mind’ (155). However, Barnes does not miss her brief entirely and does provide some impressions of Tellegen, through quoting his reflections on an eclectic range of topics such as whether it is immoral or indelicate to enter a lady’s bedroom, and how artistic he finds bullfighting.

As well as shifting the focus from the interviewee to the interviewer, or autobiographer, there is also a shift of focus from the interviewee to the nature of interviews themselves. The Pen Performer raises ‘the question of the hypocrisy of interviewing’ (156), and Tellegen says ‘You ask questions I’m not supposed to answer, and then I answer them as I’m supposed not to’ (156). The Pen Performer then responds with ‘a sigh that indicated patience’, and says ‘If interviews were like that, it would turn out alright. But the interviewer never asks

what he wants to, because he never gets the real truth' (156). In acknowledging the impossibility of establishing any truths from her process of questioning, Barnes is highlighting that she intends to use her journalism toward different ends: namely, exploring and presenting her position within the texts and the social context that they present. If it is not an interview, then it can become an autobiography, and a site from which the autobiographical subject can collaborate, on the page, with the interview subject in order to create a uniquely relational dynamic. In this way collaboration becomes a formative aesthetic category in Barnes' process of subject creation. Barnes is establishing an alternative form of subject creation and self-definition, and exploiting the interview format as part of her individuation process.

In many of Barnes' other interviews, we can find this careful balance between providing a commentary on the nature of journalism, and performing a shift from interview to collaborative autobiography. In her interview with silent film actor Raymond Hitchcock she writes that 'it was not an interview – it was a friendship' (205), thereby introducing a collaborative dynamic while subverting the interview format. In her interview with dancer Gabrielle Deslys, Barnes reflects on the futility of how she 'plied her with questions that she never thought to answer' (44), suggesting that the interview format is not suited to gain an insight into the interviewee. Likewise, when interviewing the producer Flo Ziegfeld, Barnes writes: 'Getting at Ziegfeld is a task devoid of principle. You have to be a good liar, wholly daring and willing to risk your immortal soul' (69).

She is dismissing interviewing as a technique for discovering the interviewee, while also drawing attention to her own technique and her autobiographical journalistic persona. When interviewing singer Ruth Royce, Barnes writes 'You are not a visitor, you are a second mirror'(146), and Barnes rejects the interview format altogether when interviewing James Joyce, stating that 'one may not ask him questions, one must know him' (294).

In *Djuna Barnes' Consuming Fictions* (2008), Diane Warren looks at how Barnes subverts the cultural boundaries of the individual across her works, including in her journalism. Certainly Barnes' move to turn her interviews into collaborative autobiographical pieces reflects a subversion of boundaries. Warren notes Barnes' awareness that writing, including journalism, is 'an artificial cultural process' (23) and that within this process the journalist plays 'an important role in the exchange' (23), and a key role in the shaping of the interviewee. However, Barnes is in fact being much more radical than simply playing an important role in the exchange. She shifts the focus almost entirely in her own direction, to the extent that the journalist actually takes the central role of the subject. Warren is right to note that 'Barnes drew attention to the ways in which identity is constructed in the public eye' (24), but it is in fact her own identity to which she primarily wishes to draw attention. Integral to Barnes' examination of the ways that identity is constructed through the processes of journalism, including the interview, is the way that she was considering the

effects of the role on her own identity, and how she reflected her identity through her journalistic personae.

The relationship and tension between autonomy and cultural constraints that Warren flags are central to this debate. The fashioning of the self can never be divorced from the social context or the genre in which it is being presented. Warren's interrogation of the relationship between textuality and identity leads her to conclude that 'identity is constructed in an interdependent matrix of psychological and societal concerns: a matrix that is often shown to be constraining, and frequently damaging to the individual' (xvi). This analysis goes some way towards recognising the collaborative nature of identity construction, and how it becomes a formative aesthetic device for Barnes in the creation of her autobiographical subjectivities within her journalism. However, for Barnes it is a productive and generative matrix, rather than one that constrains or damages her autobiographical construction of self. Her works are, as Warren recognises, 'an extended exploration of the delineation of the individual, locating identity in a complex cultural matrix' (xvii), and while locating and expressing these identities can be volatile, it is precisely within this matrix that we find this collaborative construction of her autobiographical personae, within the social and cultural context in which she is writing.

This reconsideration is particularly evident in the article 'The Confessions of Helen Westley,' where Barnes confuses the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Through this Barnes highlights her subversion of the

expectations of the reader. Rebecca Concraine, in her thesis about Barnes' New York journalism, notes that Barnes 'ventriloquises for her interviewees, putting words into their mouths' (229). This is a direct assault on the traditional task of the interviewer who is required to accurately present the words of the interviewee, or to summarise their words in a way which is honest, revealing and interesting to the reader. Barnes subverts these tasks entirely, as in the opening of this article. It begins with direct quotations from a phone call:

"Hello, is this Miss Barnes?"
"Yes."
"This is Helen Westley."
"Ah, how do you do?"
"I want to be interviewed again."
"Very well" (251).

The opening assertion that, yes, this is Miss Barnes, places her at the very centre of the article. By enacting how the interview came about, Barnes draws attention to the performative nature of the interview, and also presents it as a personal reflection in the guise of a diary extract. That the interview was at the request of Westley suggests that she is coming to the interview with something prepared to say, and this constructed performative approach contrasts with Barnes' autobiographical telling of the event. Authenticity is a strong theme in this piece and it is brought to a head when, later in the article, Westley asks Barnes if she is making notes and Barnes replies 'I don't have to. My memory always makes a paragraph out of a note automatically' (258). This suggests that it is Barnes' performance, and not Westley's, that is going to be presented, and

therefore the reader is invited to think about the wider implications of the piece beyond simply the record of an interview.

Performance remains in focus for the duration of the article, as Barnes gradually explores the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. Barnes orders “something with a cherry in it” (258) which is placed in speech marks to highlight the constructed performance of the speech act. Westley then arrives and places her second hand book on the table: ‘It is Murray’s *History of Greek Literature*, and she knows it looks well’ (258). Westley then directs the conversation and delivers a monologue that, with interjections such as ‘to continue’, appears pre-rehearsed. Barnes interjects, in order to reveal the interviewer’s role of directing the interview: “Some advice for young actors would come in here very nicely” (258). However, Westley refuses to engage with the directions of the interviewer, which include other interjections such as: ‘A little faster with your youth, Helen’ (253), ‘Advice Here’ (253), and ‘A little too early for the snake, I think’ (254). The interviewer does however manage to ‘trap’ Westley into sharing her views on vampirism, leading Westley to say ‘Really, Djuna, you are sort of clever, aren’t you?’ (258) and for Barnes to reply ‘I am only a little less conceited than you yourself, Helen’ (258). Barnes is refusing to be the passive interviewer to the prepared interviewee, and instead forces herself to the forefront of the narrative. At this point the interview process collapses with Westley suggesting they ‘stop it’ (258) because they are ‘a funny couple to be sitting here talking a lot of nonsense’ (258). Barnes however, back

in control of the process, instructs that she still has 'at least three pages more to fill' (258) and prompts Westley to talk about contentment with the threat that 'I shall never again write you up for any paper in the world – this is your last chance' (258). Westley cannot take the opportunity and therefore Barnes is given the space within the article to give her opinion on Westley's age and appearance. As Westley departs she says that she wishes she could be closer to the public so that they can 'become acquainted with the peculiar worth of my extraordinary and individual features' (262). Barnes does not offer herself up as a journalistic medium to give the public close access to Westley, as her interest is in reflecting herself rather than her subject. Therefore, in this interview Barnes is suggesting that not only is the interview process unsuited for the true depiction of an other or self, but that it is also a performance which the interviewer and interviewee struggle to direct in order that pages may be filled. Barnes is therefore enacting a modernist destabilisation of the conventions of the interview, and highlighting the constructed nature of the interactions between, and positioning of, the subject and object within interviews.

In 'I'm Plain Mary Jones of the USA', an interview with the activist Mary Harris Jones, Barnes portrays a different interviewer/interviewee dynamic, but one which can equally be read as a self-conscious performance of the constructed nature of interviews and a depiction of the futility of the process for the true depiction of an other or self. A difficult relationship between interviewer and interviewee is established at the outset: 'Mother Jones stood up in front of

me and demanded, "What do you want?" (95). Barnes responds: 'I stood my ground, though somewhat meekly, and said that if she didn't let me get more than that I should lose my job. It worked. She said no one should lose anything through her' (95). Despite securing the interview, Barnes then has very little control over the discussion to the point where she ceases to become the interviewer but instead operates as a second person world view through the voice of Jones. Barnes becomes 'none of you know' (97) and implicated with 'your so-called Christian Associations' (102). Jones speaks of 'our lives' (97) to the exclusion of Barnes. It is in fact when Jones turns her back to Barnes to take a phone call that Barnes' keenest insight is made possible; Barnes writes that her back 'gives her away' (103), as it is 'a flat, straight back, and broad. It has never had time to become individual. It is not a personal vertebra' (103). In presenting an entire absence of relationship between the interviewee and interviewer Barnes is able to present Jones as a figure not capable of personal connection, and therefore to comment on her motivation and style of her activism. At the end of the article Barnes asks companions of Jones 'what Mother does when she is not fighting' (104) and her question is ignored, thereby adding to the characterisation of Jones as an activist solely focussed on her social aims and uninterested in any individual or social personal connections. It is due to this that the piece fails to be collaborative and therefore also fails to be autobiographical. If Barnes cannot write of herself 'through' her interview subject, then she is unable to write of herself at all.

It is evident in Barnes' writing that she is thinking beyond the interviewer/interviewee dynamic, and draws others into view by frequently questioning those around her interviewees, as in the interview with Mary Harris Jones. Barnes' autobiographical personas are searching for collaborative others within the text. This can be in order to aid her understanding of her interview subject, such as in her interview with Broadway director Arthur Voetglin, where Barnes finishes the article with her asking his secretary if she knows him and is cryptically told that Barnes 'won't understand' (83). This same technique is adopted in her interview with actor Raymond Hitchcock, Barnes turns to his brother for information as she 'can't make him give up a single interview' (92). This shifts the focus from the interviewee to the interviewer and her gathering of information, the wider social context in which the interview is occurring, and her search for a collaborative other through which she is able to present her interview subjects.

Barnes also widens the perspective by frequently describing her own mood and reflections once she goes out into the street following on from the completed interview. At the end of her interview with a Broadway producer, 'Flo Ziegfeld Is Tired of Buying Hosiery', Barnes sees Ziegfeld's face merge into that of his press agent, thereby implying inauthenticity, and then she goes out into the street: 'I stood in the glare of a Broadway day and a cabby swore at me gently for looking his horse between the eyes for fully a minute as I smiled inanely and remembered, remembering, smiled again' (75). This shifts the focus

from the interviewee, to Barnes and then to the social perimeter of the interview, as a way of revealing the wider context as well as the effect that the interview process had on Barnes. The reader is not let into the secret of what it is that Barnes is remembering, but is invited to witness her connection with the horse which serves to emphasise Barnes' lack of connection with her interviewee who is elusive throughout.

Barnes repeatedly makes her presence known in her interviews, and one of the ways she achieves this is through frequent interjections and personal asides. For example, Barnes reveals her presence and voice in 'The Hem of Manhattan' with 'perhaps I am melancholy as I have often been told' (288). She tells boxer Jess Willard that 'the public isn't interested in me. It wants to hear about you' (143), and starts to ask him a follow up question – 'now what do...' (143) but then steers the focus of the reader back to herself by instructing the reader to 'Observe my attempt to get him off the subject' (143). Barnes is keen to reveal herself as well as her process. Douglas Messerli observes that 'as a feature writer Barnes could make no pretence that she was not the source of what she reported' (16). This is something that can equally be found in her interviews, and it is a theoretical approach that Messerli sees Barnes continue with in her fiction writing. That her works were autobiographical is largely accepted, indeed Faltejskova writes that critics have even gone so far as to accuse 'her of writing little more than diaries thinly disguised as literature' (2). However there has been little scrutiny of the ways in which Barnes' work is

autobiographical, or the processes and techniques she uses to be autobiographical. This analysis of the autobiographical nature of her journalism reveals various techniques, particularly the prioritisation of using a collaborative other, be it the interview subject or other characters brought into the piece, in order to provide the lens through which Barnes may present herself.

In her interviews we read Barnes establishing and developing her journalistic identities and personae, which are autobiographical in their construction. Plumb observes in Barnes' writing a close examination of 'individual integrity in a world hostile to it' (19), and a close identification with 'the artist's point of view' (20). In Barnes' journalistic work she is, Plumb writes, exploring the notion of how an artist should live, how they should love and how 'to observe life' (21). Barnes is asking these questions for the purposes of her interviews but also as part of the process of the autobiographical construction of her own artistic persona. As part of this interrogation of the artist's life Plumb observes in Barnes' early newspaper work an 'emphasis on individual consciousness'(33), but she fails to acknowledge that it is her own autobiographical consciousness which is Barnes' primary focus. She often refuses the role of the passive observer and instead participates in the action of the text, making suggestions as in 'The Green Pastures', an interview with the cast of a play with the same title, which is a retelling of biblical tales from an African-American perspective, such as 'it would be an excellent thing to give an annual performance [...] that it might become a tradition of his people'. The actor

who plays Jesus, Richard B. Harrison was 'very pleased with the suggestion' (346). As well as making suggestions, Barnes criticises, refutes, and plays with her subjects, all of which serve to make her the primary focus over the interviewee.

'Alfred Stieglitz on Life and Pictures: One Must Bleed His Own Blood' opens with an account of when in 1914 Barnes showed the arts patron Mabel Dodge her pictures. Barnes describes herself as having 'half of the "old manner" with me and but a slight hint of the new' (213), and that 'these were my grateful days' (213). She remembers 'how funny I looked in the midst of that artistic atmosphere' (213). While she was 'in awe of no one', she also 'felt cold because I wanted so dreadfully to feel warm and hopeful and one with them' (214). Barnes is painting herself as part of a community but also entirely separate and distinct from their lives. These reflections are then interrupted with: 'But all of this is entirely out of the way, except to give a small pen picture of myself at the time when Mr Alfred Stieglitz first came into my life' (214). This suggests that the narrative focus is about to turn to Stieglitz, however, as with her other interviews, the focus remains on herself. Her observations of Stieglitz are interspersed with observations about herself, such as: 'someone has told me that I have a peculiar habit of noticing mouths' (215). Stieglitz is denied any agency as he is presented as merely watching the world pass through the open doors of his gallery; he can simply 'stand and watch and learn' (218).

Barnes asks him a quick series of questions, for which he provides short answers, such as: “And what of thinkers?”, “Brains of insurmountable heights out of which come incurable thoughts” (220); “And one should not be in love?”, “One should not be in love, it prevents work; and cool, logical study one should love.” (220). This, more traditional question – answer format, is then unexpectedly interrupted with a personal and tangential aside:

And I thought:

From this place I have been standing eternally, looking out toward the world with my eyes and seeing men pass and look back at me. And I cold and lonesome and increasing steadily in mine own sorrow, which is caught like the plague of other men, until I am full and my mouth will hold no more, and my eyes will see no more, and my ears will stand nothing further. Then do I begin the steady, slow discharge which is called “wisdom,” but which is only that too much the eyes cannot see, the ears cannot hear, the mouth cannot hold (220).

It is not immediately clear whether it is Barnes or Stieglitz who is having this thought, and the reader is forced to consider in whose voice it should be read, causing a kind of double-reading as the reader tries out each voice to see which fits. It is not in speech marks, suggesting initially that it is Barnes’ rumination, where the ‘I’ is the autobiographical ‘I’ of the interviewer. But it also echoes Stieglitz’s earlier observations about standing and watching and developing a vast but alienating knowledge, or wisdom. The lack of clarity about whose thought is being portrayed creates a symbiosis between Barnes and Steiglitz, and a collaboration of thought.

The interruption ends as quickly as it started, and readers find themselves plunged back in the midst of a traditional interview format with the interviewer asking a fairly unimaginative and routine question: “And so your life from day to day?” (220). Barnes is considering her position as an observer and an object of observation, and developing an awareness of her own detachment which has become all consuming. In the final line of the article, Barnes asks herself ‘what happened in the lives of the others that makes it necessary for them to form a sort of “public-society”?’ (222). She is aware of her separateness, but also interested in the alternative. The article does not offer a solution or a response but leaves both Barnes and Stieglitz in a limbo of social connection.

Conclusion

It was five years after *Nightwood* was published, when Barnes was forty years old, that she decided to permanently and entirely eschew the crowd, by taking up a new life in Greenwich Village as a recluse; a life which was to last her remaining forty years. Benstock warns against reading this ‘either as an inability to live in the world, or as an elaborate eccentricity’ (267), but rather as a self-imposed choice, and a refusal to be a seen object. Barnes’ work of creating and understanding her autobiographical selves through collaborative others came to an end. As previously quoted, Barnes wrote that ‘The truth is how you say it, and to be “one’s self” is the most shocking custom of all’ (Faltejskova, 1), and the

time came when she no longer needed to be part of the wider social matrix in order to truly be herself.

Before she became a recluse, Barnes' writing shows that she had a compelling need to write about herself in order to understand herself, and that she refused to participate in the modernist extinction of personality. She was compulsively autobiographical, and in her work she revises, reinvents and draws attention to her autobiographical personae, resulting in identities and subjectivities that are at once fiercely individual and inevitably social in their construction. I read her journalism as an interrogation of how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to an other or several others, and how they collaborate with one another, and argue that her journalistic work reveals her hyper-consciousness of the modernist social politics of self-representation. Her journalism is a rich point from which to view her exploration of self-presentation, and worthy of close scrutiny, as in her interviews and articles a fascinating investigation of how to present oneself autobiographically can be found; an investigation which is entirely modernist in its radical engagement with destabilising conventions.

I have shown in this chapter that in *Nightwood*, as in her journalism, Barnes is negotiating levels of connection as a technique to present her autobiographical subjectivities, and to control the extent to which these subjectivities collaborate with the others in each piece. An examination of Barnes' preoccupation with the theme of connection reveals the ways in which

collaboration is a formative aesthetic strategy within these journalistic pieces.

Collaboration comes to be a dynamic and relational expression of the various connections that Barnes is portraying. She used her interviews and articles autobiographically to enact new interpretations of herself, and to tell the stories of her own subjectivities through the collaborative medium of writing through other subjects and subjectivities.

Gertrude Stein's Collaborations with the Multitude in *Everybody's Autobiography*

Introduction

In 'A Transatlantic Interview, 1946' Gertrude Stein wrote that 'narrative in itself is not what is in your mind but what is in somebody else's' (qtd. in Neuman 15). She lived and wrote from the Parisian Left Bank from 1903 to 1947, and was acutely engaged with the challenges and contradictions that she faced when writing autobiographically, not least reconciling 'the ambiguous position of all narration and particularly of autobiography between an internal and an external point of view' (Neuman 15). Her writings show that she was trying to understand the inescapable effect of the multitude on a subject's self-perception, while also trying to carve a space for the subject to exist outside this context in order to preserve their individuality. In response, Stein disrupted expected modes of representation by devising strategies of collaboration in order to create formative relational dynamics within her individual subjectivities. She eschewed grammatical conventions in her experimental writing in order to foster alternative modes of signification, and in doing so carved out a vivid space for a new collective vision of individualism.

Stein wrote a range of autobiographical texts, and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* was the most famous of these. It was her first commercially successful book and published in 1934 at the age of 60, it gave Stein a level of

public recognition she had not previously received. It details the years 1903 to 1932 when Stein and her partner Alice Toklas were living in Paris, and while it pertains to be an autobiography it is in fact narrated through the ventriloquised voice of Toklas. It ends with the narrator recounting a moment when Stein's disappointment that Toklas had not yet written her autobiography made Stein resolve to write it for her; the final line concludes 'And she has and this is it' (272). While this device shows Stein to be using Toklas within her autobiographical writing as part of her construction of her own autobiographical subjectivity, this is not an equivalent to the ontological collaborative union that is enacted between H.D. and Bryher in their autobiographical prose writing. Instead, it is in Stein's other autobiographical writing that her collaboration develops with a wider social context than one specific other. In her autobiographical writing she is establishing alternative individualisms that can exist productively and collaboratively within the social mass.

Everybody's Autobiography was published four years later in 1938, and covers Stein's lecture tour of America that resulted from the success of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. While the commercial success was not replicated with the second autobiography, it is a more ambitious and experimental text which goes further in her complication of the autobiographical form and her autobiographical subjectivities. The narrative opens with a reflection on life in the aftermath of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* and goes on to recount the lecture tour and their return to France. The narrative

voice is more disjointed with the focus leaning away from reflections on episodes involving Stein's immediate social circle and more toward Stein's perceptions on the role of the individual within the social context.

In his book on modernism and celebrity, Timothy Galow notes that '*The Autobiography [of Alice B. Toklas]* has amassed a provocative and wide ranging critical literature, while *Everybody's Autobiography* has received relatively little attention' (90). He attributes this to it often being perceived by scholars as 'a marginal effort designed to cash in on the success of her lecture tour' (90). I do not find any evidence to suggest that it was a marginal effort, and instead conclude that the lack of interest is due to the text offering less in terms of voyeuristic content regarding the literary celebrities of modernism. The focus is on America instead of France, and she presents herself through the lens of a wider social context than the lens of her immediate social circle as in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. The autobiographical text *Paris, France* which followed *Everybody's Autobiography* in 1940, is a short portrait of Stein's experience of and views on Paris and France, and has also received comparatively little critical attention. The same is true of the autobiography *Wars I Have Seen*, which recounts Stein's experiences of three wars (the Spanish-American War, and the First and Second World Wars) and was published in 1945.

In this chapter I focus on *Everybody's Autobiography* in an effort to redress that imbalance and because it is a central text in revealing Stein's

response to debates on individualism and mass culture through her establishment of an alternative form of individualism that insists on independence and uniqueness while maintaining its social context in the face of the threats imposed by an externally prescribed identity. I also look at the rest of her autobiographical corpus, including *Paris, France*, *Wars I Have Seen*, and *Brewsie and Willie*. In these texts, Stein creates an individual that is defined through relations, thereby constructing a communal identity that is dynamic and relational, as well as an individual identity that remains collective. Galow importantly notes that not enough work has been done looking at the relationships between Stein's texts in the context of her 'complex process of self-historicisation' (44), and this study will maintain an awareness of the thematic interrelationships between these autobiographical texts. Interrogating these relationships reveals Stein's preoccupation with the challenges of self-representation. I discover her changing views about herself, her views on celebrity, publicity and genius and her struggle to conceive of herself as both a unique individual and as inseparably part of the wider world. Stein's consideration of the relationship between self and other sees a collaborative reconfiguration of the boundaries between the individual and the mass resulting in a refusal of a stable representable identity.

In the opening line of the preface of *Everybody's Autobiography*, the narrator states 'Alice B. Toklas did hers and now everybody will do theirs' (ix). By aligning this second autobiography with her first, Stein is revealing her similar

intention to write about herself through the prism of an other or others. The first chapter opens with 'I always remembered' (1), therefore fixing the reader's attention on Stein's reflections of herself in the way of conventional autobiography. The narrative is soon disrupted with a reflection on how the weather may have affected the fate of Europe, and thus the lens is widened geographically and historically. In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein is attempting to create an autobiographical self within an autobiography of 'everybody'. The narrative therefore becomes a struggle to define and create this self in the face of contextual barriers, such as the threat of what Stein defines as 'organisation', the impact of population increase, and the limitations of identity and autobiography itself. In response Stein devises strategies of collaboration in order to establish and explore an autobiographical self that is individual, unique and separate. These strategies include an exploration of the impact of publicity and genius, and an interesting interrogation of the significance of counting and money.

'The earth is all so covered': The Impossibility of Connection

Early in *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein introduces her concept of 'organisation' which results from her sense that 'the earth is all so covered with everybody' (42) and a feeling that 'nobody can let anybody alone' (49). She writes that 'the world is completely covered with people and these people would like to be completely organised to live' (83). Stein depicts this desire for

organisation as a modern phenomenon: 'The eighteenth century began the passion for individual freedom, the end of the nineteenth century by conceiving organisation began the beginning of a passion for being enslaved' (49). Stein is firmly against this pervasive organisation which has fuelled the desire to be controlled within a grouping. She writes of 'the gloom of organisation' (270) and that people 'are being organised and it makes them sadder [...] and anyway people can't just go on being sadder or there would be no will to live' (269). Stein juxtaposes being enslaved with the will to live and what she calls 'individual thinking' (269). Stein writes that 'when a population gets large they cannot do their own thinking that is they cannot feel that they are doing it and as they do not feel that they are doing it naturally well naturally organisation is what they do and if they do that, then being organised there is no thinking to be done' (177). Michael Tratner identifies this sentiment in Gustav Le Bon's 1895 text *The Crowd*, which, as outlined in the introduction, explores how when there is a crowd a new mentality bordering on unconsciousness replaces the conscious personalities of those in the crowd. It is this unconscious mentality that Stein associates with her term 'organisation', and which she finds so damaging to the individual.

She articulates the threat of organisation in *Brewsie and Willie*, which is a narration of conversations between the G.I.'s who came to Stein's salon during the war to debate the post-war question: 'living is what we all got to do, now what are we going to do, how we going to live' (85). Stein problematises lack of

distinction within the multitude in a discussion where Brewsie uncertainly wonders 'perhaps if we did not articulate all alike perhaps something might happen' (114), and Stein's suspicion of organisation is played out. Brewsie considers that there are 'lots more than anybody needs but they all go on living' (87), and the consequence of this is for the population to become 'employee-minded' (64) rather than pioneers. Brewsie frequently asks the question 'are we isolationists or are we isolated' (103) and attempts to steer the conversation back to this topic, but the narration as well as the conversation fails to remain with this subject, suggesting that the answer may be both isolated and isolationist. Brewsie's main topic of consideration then becomes: 'do we think alike or don't we think at all' (103), with a distinction made between thinking and articulating where 'when you begin to articulate alike, you got to drop thinking' (104). Therefore, the effect of the multitude is presented as an unthinking stasis in the development of a nation. In the final passage in the text titled 'To Americans' which opens 'G.I.'s AND G.I.'s AND G.I.'s' (113) and is addressed directly to them, Stein insists 'you have to learn to be individual and not just mass job workers' (113). One of the members of the group states that 'fighting knocks the scare out of you, the scare of being alone. You are never alone when you are fighting' (46). Finding themselves newly alone following the war, Stein is arguing for individuality over employee-mindedness, so that they may think independently and originally, within the social context.

Like *Brewsie and Willie*, the historical moment of *Everybody's Autobiography* is situated as a time when social relations have radically altered. She portrays the preceding period as a time when people could get lost, when dogs barked at the wonder of the moon and people were in distinct groups. The alteration that Stein perceives is that now 'the earth is all so covered with everybody' (42). She is interested, while wondering 'about the world being covered all over with people' (154), in what 'a much frequented road' (154) in the fifteenth century might look like. The shift in perception has meant that 'nobody can get lost any more and the dogs do not bark at the moon any more because there are so many lights everywhere that they do not notice the moon any more' (274). The repetition of 'any more' creates a sense of lamentation and despair, and the image of the electric lights obscuring the moon reflects the multitude of people obscuring the brightness of an individual. Stein writes that 'the earth is covered all over with people and they all do the same thing in the same way' (46). The multitude not only obscures individualism but prevents it entirely. In this way, Stein's view is that people have become interchangeable: 'I am not mentioning everyone I knew not even a great many but I am mentioning some and anyway why they are all here. Well because the earth is all covered over with people and it is' (64). Stein places her concern with the multitude at the centre of the fragmented narrative, with her frequent repetition of this phrase. She sets it up as a thematic centre point, and her autobiographical reflections stem from this observation. She considers the relevance of autobiography when

the individual has become so multiplied to the extent that people have become interchangeable, and therefore the individual's place in its social context has become almost entirely dislocated. Stein repeats that 'The only thing that really bothers me is that the earth is now all covered over with people and that knowing anybody is not of any particular importance because anybody can know anybody' (82). In this vision the social order is fragmented and disjointed, and Stein recognises that she is going to have to utilise her innovative modes of narration in order to reimagine her autobiographical subjectivities in this context.

One effect of this new sense of a multitude is that the connection between people is lost. Whereas for Djuna Barnes connection is a structuring theme within her journalism and in the autobiographical elements of her novels, for Stein connection is often presented as lost within the overwhelming presence of the multitude. Barnes used the theme of connection as a narrative technique that allowed her to varyingly conceal or display her autobiographical subjectivities within her interviews and articles. This allowed her to control the extent to which these subjectivities collaborate with the others in each piece, and in this way collaboration comes to be a productive and relational expression of the various connections that Barnes is portraying. Instead, Stein, while repeatedly insisting that 'the earth is all so covered with everybody' (42), portrays connection as an increasing impossibility, and *Everybody's Autobiography* reveals her attempts to find a way to express her individual autobiographical voice within this context. She writes that 'now since the earth is

all covered over with everyone there is really no relation between any one and so if this is to be Everybody's Autobiography it is not to be the autobiography of everyone it is not to be of any connection between any one and any one because now there is none' (80). While the title of the text purports to be about 'everybody' as a whole, this suggests that it is about 'everybody' as individuals, within a social context where all forms of connection have become fragmented due to the threat of the multitude.

Stein goes on to say that the reason detective stories are such good reading is because 'the man being dead he is not really in connection with any one' (80). Stein is revealing that she is interested in extracting her autobiographical individualism from her connections in order that the text can be interesting and relevant. However, while Stein appears to argue for an authentic individualism in her construction of her autobiographical identity she struggles to write of herself in these terms. While she is 'filled with the fact that there are so many millions always living and each one is his own self inside him' (228), the effect of that multitude is keenly felt, and therefore a collaborative model becomes the only way in which Stein can create the autobiographical subjectivities of herself, and of everyone. In her autobiographical works Stein is responding to the threat that the multitude poses to individualism by finding new ways to interact with and exist within its social and physical context. Stein is recognising the inescapable effect of the multitude on a subject's self-perception, as well as the necessity for the subject to exist outside this context in

order to preserve their individuality. In response Stein devises strategies of collaboration in order to establish and explore an autobiographical self that is individual, unique and separate, but always socially constituted.

While Stein is interested in reflecting upon the homogenising impact of organisation and the multitude upon the individual, society is not something that she entirely eschews in favour of isolationism. Instead, she portrays herself as a central figure within this multitude, and society as something she wishes to closely engage with. In *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* the year 1907 is described in terms of Stein's writing as she was 'just seeing through the press *Three Lives* [and] deep in *The Making of Americans*' (11), Picasso's portrait of her 'which is now so famous' (11), and Matisse's *Bonheur de Vivre* in 'the golden age of cubism' (11). Stein is positioning herself as both central to the artistic movements of the early twentieth century, and intimate with its main players: 'everybody called her Gertrude or Mademoiselle Gertrude' (10). As the narrator traces Stein's past we learn that she 'liked knowing a lot of people and being mixed up in a lot of stories' (68) and that any 'lonesomeness brought back all the melancholy of her adolescence' (90). Far from being a solitary genius, we read that 'Gertrude Stein enjoyed all these complications immensely. Matisse was a good gossip and so was she and at this time they delighted in telling tales to each other' (10). She portrays herself as being 'good friends with all the world' (75) where she 'can know them and they can know her' (75). However, Stein does not entirely integrate herself with those around her, instead maintaining a

level of independence and isolation, as she tells Toklas: 'No, I like living with so very many people and being all alone with english and myself' (78). For Stein a combination of sociability and solitude is essential. She writes of the 'rather desperate inner life' (78) of her adolescence in contrast to the 'cheerful life of all her aunts and uncles' (78).

This insistence on sociability continues into *Everybody's Autobiography* where in the preface Stein introduces herself by stating: 'It is very nice being a celebrity a real celebrity who can decide who they want to meet and say so and they come or do not come as you want them' (ix). She also early on situates herself in her family context: 'I am the youngest of the family, it is nice being the youngest or the oldest, I am the youngest' (3) and includes a brief family account in chapter three: 'we had a mother and a father and I tell all about that in *The Making of Americans* which is a history of our family but I can tell it all again, why not if it is interesting' (114).³⁹ Stein's presentation of her social context in her autobiographical writing goes beyond a desire to describe those with whom she associated during her life. Her writing suggests a consideration of the very nature of sociability and the impact that others have on a conception of selfhood. In *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein recounts a discussion with the French poet and painter Francis Picabia about the Spanish revolution and the reasons Picasso was awarded the Directorship of the National Museum in Milan, the

³⁹ *The Making of Americans*, completed in 1911 and published in book form in 1925, is a thousand page novel that traces the psychological development of two families across three generations.

Prado. Stein writes: 'Well said Picabia angrily what difference does it make to any of us what any of them do, and it is true what difference does it make to any of us what any of them do' (111). In repeating the statement, which in its initial use is a rhetorical dismissal of the actions of others, Stein turns it into a question and suggests that for her it is an important one to answer. In response Stein presents her autobiographical individualisms as existing collaboratively within their social context.

Three years prior to the publication of Stein's first autobiographical text, the American philosopher John Dewey, of whom Stein would have been aware via William James, published 'Individualism: Old and New'. As outlined in the introduction, in this text he claimed that 'the problem of constructing a new individuality consonant with the objective conditions under which we live is the deepest problem of our times' (34). In response to the totalising threat of the multitude of society, Dewey suggests, a new type of individual must develop which takes account of the 'vast complex of associations' (78) and reflects on the 'import of these connections into the imaginative and emotional outlook on life' (78). This is a call for a form of individuality that has re-found itself within its social connections and which is inherently creative and creating. Tratner asks the question: 'if modernism is deconstructing the individual what is it turning the individual into?' (4). In the case of Stein, her simultaneous dismantling of the individual and insistence on the vitality of the individual means that she is creating an autobiographical self that is both present and absent, identifiable

and invisible. Stein is self-fashioning her autobiographical identity through forms of interaction and participation to produce a self-narrating identity, while trying to reclaim language in order to mould an individualist aesthetic. In *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein writes that 'everything in living is made up of finding out what you are' (74) and this text is a focal point in Stein's process of self-creation and self-discovery. While her texts do not conform to traditional autobiographical forms, with their disjointed narrative and lack of formal structure, we can read Stein's effort towards self-historicisation and the effort to present an individual that is independent, unified and unique.

Michael Tratner writes that 'many modernist literary forms emerged out of efforts to write in the idiom of the crowd mind' and therefore to 'produce a mass culture [...] distinctive to the twentieth century' (2). *Everybody's Autobiography* shows Stein engaged with this effort to develop a distinctive methodology for writing in a way that takes account of the context of the multitude, particularly in her shaping of and insistence on the individual. Tratner acknowledges that rather than working towards an 'undermining of the individual' (4) Stein is considering an 'alternative to individualism' (4) or an alternative model of individualism, which takes into account the 'psychological or philosophical changes in the individual' (4) brought about by the 'communal structures' of the time (4). This anxiety is evident in Stein's *Everybody's Autobiography* where she applies this struggle to establishing an autobiographical subjectivity that is

autonomous, so that she can both establish and sustain ‘an “I” within the sphere of an “us”’ (Tratner 77).

‘Anything is an autobiography’: Autobiography and Impossible

Subjectivities

Stein was engaged with establishing alternative forms of collaborative subject creation by breaking down any notions of a coherent singular autobiographical subjectivity. In *Everybody’s Autobiography* she provides a commentary on her views on her chosen genre and its viability as a model for establishing an autobiographical identity as a way of self-consciously disrupting strategies of representation. Engaging in what Sidonie Smith describes as Stein’s experimentation with the formal modes of autobiography in an attempt toward ‘fracturing it beyond recognition’ (175), Stein sets out in the preface of *Everybody’s Autobiography* to establish the parameters of her vision of autobiography. Stein asserts what an autobiography is - ‘anything is an autobiography’ (xi) – and, later in the text, what it is not - ‘An autobiography is not a novel no indeed it is not a novel’ (167). Stein goes on to explain the text’s title and her claim for writing the autobiography of everybody. She writes that ‘autobiography is easy like it or not autobiography is easy for any one and so this is to be Everybody’s Autobiography’ (xi). This insistence that the genre is not a difficult one to write, that it should not include the fictional or formal elements of the novel, and that elements of autobiography can be found in sites

other than the autobiographic text, suggests that Stein is making a claim for a natural authenticity in the narrative of this text. Stein also invokes the commercial aspects of autobiography as well as the natural and daily process of the telling of one's life, when she remembers a Mrs Harden reflecting to her daughters 'when I think how often you tell the history of your lives for nothing' (96). Stein is making a claim for her efforts to capture the frequent, easy, and inevitable nature of autobiography, rather than its formal and constructed elements, and therefore to capture a sense or essence of the autobiographical subject rather than to construct a formal or recognisable autobiographical subject.

Part of this refusal to construct and present an autobiographical subject is an insistence that autobiography cannot be used as a means with which to capture or present a fixed identity. This is asserted throughout *Everybody's Autobiography* as the impossibility of true perception of self, and the inauthenticity of an identity that is externally imposed. Stein writes that 'identity 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' (53), and concludes that 'that is really the trouble with autobiography you do not of course you do not really believe yourself why should you, you know so well so very well that it is not yourself' (53). The repetition of the 'yourself' brings it to the foreground and forces the reader to pause on the word, therefore breaking it up into its component parts of 'your' and 'self'. This is coupled with a repetition of

'you', therefore highlighting the distinctions between the words 'you', 'your' and 'self'. The contrast between the second person pronoun and its possessive form draws out the question of how far an individual is in possession of the pronoun that refers to 'self', as a personal perception of being. In this context the reflexive 'yourself' becomes an impossibility where the subject is denied access to or possession of a defined or stable selfhood. Stein's acknowledgement of her own inability to perceive of herself, through the limitations of memory or the ability to 'remember right' (53) and that it can never 'sound right' (53), in that she cannot recognise herself in her recollections, lead her to conclude: 'You are of course never yourself' (53). You and yourself are made separate, and an inability to be or perceive 'yourself' means that 'there is no identity' (54) and identity becomes 'not a thing that exists' (55). In the context of this refusal of identity, 'autobiography is written which is in a way a way to say that publicity is right, they are as the public see them' (53), rather than a way of capturing and presenting yourself, but instead echoing an externally prescribed identity that the public perceives.

This, however, appears to reflect Stein's views on the motivations of other autobiographers rather than her own. Instead, Stein is fracturing this public identity in order to both reclaim it and deny it, to the point where no stable or identifiable public or private identity can be found within *Everybody's Autobiography*. Sidonie Smith writes that it was the assumption of the presentation of 'a normative subjectivity' (54) along with 'the chronology, [and]

multiple levels of referentiality that made autobiography an uncomfortable genre for Stein' (54). Smith explores Stein's efforts in 'breaking the monopoly of the old universal subject and its metaphysical "I" in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, by complicating autobiographical authority to reveal 'the ambiguous nature of the autobiographical subject' (67). She concludes that by qualifying 'the promise of coherence and univocity privileged in traditional (nineteenth-century) autobiographical practice' (68), Stein manages to 'shift the narrative perspective to an externalised subjectivity' (69) and by doing this creates herself 'as entity, as the noun, "Gertrude Stein"' (69). As an externally prescribed entity Stein can then figure herself as an abstract 'genius of a specific history' (69) rather than a 'psychological or self-conscious subject' (70) with a 'teleological trajectory' (70) or having a 'story of evolutionary selfhood' (70). I read a similar breaking of the monopoly of the universal subject in *Everybody's Autobiography*, and in this text the autobiographical presentation of herself as an entity is one of the means by which Stein is both arguing for the absence of identity and displaying this absence through her presentation of a disembodied and unconstructed autobiographical self which provides no route to a stable discernible autobiographical subject.

This undermining of autobiographical identity leads Smith to suggest that, instead of an autobiography, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* could be called 'a first-person biography or a second-person auto/biography or an un/collaborative storytelling' (112). While each of these categories could equally

apply to *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein enacts a clear separation of this text from *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and *The Making of Americans*. Stein writes that *The Making of Americans* was an attempt to describe 'how every one who ever lived eats and drinks and loves and sleeps and talks and walks and wakes and forgets and quarrels and likes and dislikes and works and sits' (117). Instead, *Everybody's Autobiography* 'is not a description of them at all' (117-8), but a departure from description in order to enact the absence of identity, and suggest the lack of relevance of an externally prescribed identity to capturing or presenting the kind of indistinguishable autobiographical subjectivity that Stein is attempting.

We learn more about this effort in Stein's text *The Geographical History of America (or The Relation of Human Nature to the Human Mind)* which was published in 1936, and is a collection of prose, plays, dialogues and philosophical reflections. Here she writes that 'there is no real reality to a really imagined life any more' (66). This 'really imagined life' could encompass both a fictional character as well as a constructed identity within an autobiographical or biographical narrative. If as Stein suggests there can be no more 'real reality' in novels, biographies or autobiographies then a new form is required, with an alternative focus. In *The Geographical History of America* Stein suggests a title for an autobiography - 'The Witnesses of my autobiography' (81) – and goes on to write 'think what an admirable title that would make for an autobiography think only think how many different titles have been invented for autobiographies, just

think only think and it is astonishing how many people can think of a new title for an autobiography' (81). In reflecting on how autobiographies continue to be written, Stein is revealing her interest, not in adding to the list of those with a wish to write and present the story of their lives, but with the witnesses of her first autobiography (*The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*), and with 'everybody'. She is showing herself to be interested in shifting the focus and form of autobiography by not writing about an imagined perception of identity, asking 'If they asked who is who what would identity do' (202). Instead, Stein is clear that 'it is so evident that identity is not there at all' (235) and is working to free herself from the term and its implications. This includes revealing and resolving her doubt: 'but it is oh yes it is and nobody likes what they have not got and nobody has identity. Do they put up with it. Yes they put up with it. They put up with identity' (235). The implication is that while others are prepared to 'put up with identity' Stein is engaged with divorcing herself from its constraints, while accepting that though identity may not have an authentic relationship with one's self, it exists on a level that can be keenly felt.

'A layering of parts of an unspecified whole': Stein's Semantic Plenitude

In Stein's autobiographical writing I find Stein attempting to articulate her autobiographical subjectivities differently, through her aesthetic choices. She writes in *Paris France* that 'the characteristic thing of the twentieth century was the idea of production in a series, that one thing should be like every other thing,

and that it should all be made alike and quantities of them' (61). In this way Stein is striving not to be characteristic of the twentieth century, by articulating herself as a unique writer through her aesthetic choices, so as not to be considered to be part of a series. *Everybody's Autobiography* is thematically and stylistically more readable than her non-referential poems in the collection 'Tender Buttons' but less accessible than *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, due to its shifting pronouns and abrupt thematic changes. Yet I must be cautious about concluding that toward the crafting of a distinctly autobiographical individual Stein takes the approach of inaccessibility by limiting the possible success of her readers, as this form of reading can fail to take into account Stein's particular engagement with the notions of readability, meaning and subjectivity.

There is a range of critical debate about Stein's motives around her readerly inaccessibility, and the degree to which she subscribed to the view that she was indeed intentionally inaccessible or obscure. Early critics, such as Edmund Wilson in *Shores of Light* (1952), attributed Stein's stylistic peculiarities to a desire to encode her lesbian sexual desire. This was expanded in 1970 with Richard Bridgman's literary biography *Gertrude Stein in Pieces*, in which he read her impenetrability as symptomatic of her lesbianism.⁴⁰ Later critics have found alternative motivations behind Stein's readerly inaccessibility, such as in 1994

⁴⁰ Critics who later expanded this analysis to read Stein's stylistics as a multidimensional language of lesbian desire include Linda Simon's *Biography of Alice B. Toklas* (1977), Catharine Stimpson's essays "The Mind, the Body and Gertrude Stein" (1977), "The Sonograms of Gertrude Stein" (1985), and "Gertrude Stein and the Transposition of Gender" (1986).

when Bob Perleman asks ‘whether understanding was finally a very significant issue’ (142) and in 2008 when Darcy L. Brandel writes that the ‘cultivation of readerly difficulty often deliberately alienates audiences in the hope that their struggles with the text will generate new perspectives’ (372). Others question whether Stein’s writing is in fact inaccessible: Elizabeth Fifer believes that the Steinian text is accessible to readers and that Stein’s motivation comes from a desire to communicate rather than to obscure her meanings.⁴¹ Fifer, and others including Marianne DeKoven, argue that as readers we must learn to read Stein’s ‘patterns and strategies’ (Fifer 18), while accepting that ‘critics will continue to chart a difficult path between an overdetermined and a random text, between what is meaningful and what is not’ (Fifer 17).

While neither Fifer or DeKoven look at Stein’s autobiographical works, the reading methodologies that they propose are revealing for a consideration of how Stein’s aesthetic choices contribute to her collaborative creation of alternative individualisms.⁴² For example, DeKoven concludes that we should

⁴¹ Other critics argue that Stein’s stylistics are meaningful and intended to create new meanings, including as Harriet Chessman in her 1989 text *The Public is Invited to Dance: Representation, the Body, and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein*, and Lisa Ruddick in “A Rosy Charm: Gertrude Stein and the Repressed Feminine” (1986).

⁴² Fifer examines the work that she considers to be ‘difficult’ including *Two, Bee Time Vine, As Fine as Melanctha, Painted Lace, Stanzas in Meditation, Alphabets and Birthdays, Geography and Plays, Operas and Plays, Last Operas and Plays*, and *Useful Knowledge*. DeKoven examines the work that she considers to be ‘experimental’ which includes her work after *Three Lives* (1906) and before *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1932), however even within this period she excludes *The Making of Americans*, ‘GMP’, ‘Many Many

‘dispense with all of these translations and interpretations, and instead simply register, without any attempt to reconcile, order, extend, apply, or make sense of them, the various meanings the sentence offers’ (13). By only registering these interpretations, rather than relying upon them, we find that ‘instead of sense and thematic meaning we have limitless, dense semantic plenitude’ (16).

Concurrently, this multiplicity of meaning reflects the way in which Stein presents the multiplicity of the subject, as a way, not of dissolving the individual but of securing the individual’s uniquely plural nature. Just as Stein presents an individual that instead of being obscured by the multitude has instead found itself within its relations, she writes with a semantic plenitude that instead of being rendered meaningless in fact allows multiple meanings.

Therefore, I find that Stein’s balancing act between readability and inaccessibility, is reflective of her presentation of an individual that is establishing itself and its meanings through a relational and queer dynamic. Through her engagement with the axis of readerly difficulty Stein is constructing a variously in/accessible and non/referential subjectivity. As Barbara Mossberg notes, Stein is appearing in her writing ‘to be compulsively autobiographical, telling All, confessing, alluding to secrets and intimate private moments’ (242), but at the same time she is also obscuring this “All” with stylistic, syntactic, and grammatic ambiguity’ (242). Considering ambiguity rather than obscurity allows

Women’, ‘A Long Gay Book’, ‘Two’, ‘Tender Buttons’, ‘Lifting Belly’ and any of the famous portraits, as she does not believe they constitute a literary unit of experimental work.

an interrogation of the camouflage of references to the self. Stein's subjectivity in this text is not designed to be absent or to be awkwardly difficult to access, but rather Stein is capitalising on what Lisa Schoenbach terms the 'energies of shock and defamiliarisation' (13).

The stylistic ambiguity of Stein's autobiographical subjectivity is a commentary on the nature of autobiography and the challenges associated with securing an individuality within a social context that is pervasive. Vermeulen writes that Stein's poetic response to this challenge arises out of 'the anxious suppression of the threat of the loss of a sovereign form of subjectivity' (150). This threat is posed by the dissolution generated by the pervasive desire for organisation and the resulting loss of an individuality. Vermuelen writes that Stein is enacting a 'formal and experimental resistance to subjectivity' (152), but this is a resistance to identities that are imposed by others which may result in the loss of the self to the point where the self is lost to itself. Therefore Stein devises methods to engage with the social context that are self-determined and privileges the maintenance of a collective individual. She is reacting against and protecting herself from a system whereby her selfhood would become subsumed by an oppressive and imposed public identity.

Therefore she is devising an alternative technique to both present herself and protect herself. It is interesting to note that in Leon Katz's article about his interviews with Alice B. Toklas, he writes that there is much in Stein's notebooks that she carefully conceals from her autobiographies. As is the nature of

autobiography, Stein's autobiographical subjectivities are carefully constructed in order to both present and protect herself and also have the effect of obscuring herself. As Berman writes, 'the Steinian subject exists on several axes at once' (159) so that 'the gathering of identity always remains partial and fleeting' (20) as is reflected in the formal choices to present 'partial or incomplete perspectives' (20). Therefore for Stein, the success in this narrative is the avoidance of creating a stable autobiographical subjectivity and instead presenting what Perloff describes as 'a layering of parts of an unspecified whole' (102). This can be considered to be a specifically queer endeavour in the terms of Marilyn R. Farwell's *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives*, in which she describes the discursively constructed lesbian subject as entering 'diverse narrative structures' (23) where the lesbian subject is a textual strategy in itself and a way of configuring alternative narrative patterns.

'Knowing about the stars in an unlimited space': Stein's New Collective Individual

In Stein's short novel *Ida: A Novel* (1941), the protagonist has various and contradictory manifestations throughout the text. Ida has several husbands, and is presented each time in terms of being the other: 'and now Ida was not only Ida she was Andrew's Ida and being Andrew's Ida Ida was more than Ida she was Ida itself' (90). She is also presented as herself, not as herself, and as becoming herself: 'Ida returned more and more to be Ida. She even said she

was Ida' (146). In *Ida*, the relational other is in fact internal rather than external like those found in the autobiographical writings looked at in this thesis. She is described as 'Ida-Ida' (7), and she talks and writes to herself by conceiving of her plurality of selves as a twinning: 'one day she decided to be a twin' (18). While this is presented as a decision that she makes, it is also something that occurs during her birth: 'And as Ida came, with her came her twin' (7). She is clear however that this is an internal, imagined conception of a twin, rather than a literal person, insisting in one of her letters that 'I am all alone and I am thinking of you Ida my dear twin' (18) and 'I am here, I am like that, but you dear Ida you are not, you are not here, if you were I could not write to you' (19).

This has echoes of H.D.'s *HERmione* where she writes autobiographically of her early relationship with Frances Gregg (Fayne Rabb): 'Fayne being me, I was her. Fayne being Her I was Fayne. Fayne being Her was HER so that Her saw Fayne' (210), and also with her explorations of the origins and meanings of the name Hermione in *Asphodel*: 'Hermione, my name is Hermione. Hermione was the mother of Helen, or was Hermione the daughter of Helen? Hermione, Helen and Harmiona. Hymen and Heliodora' (168). Both Stein and H.D. are demonstrating the challenges of depicting subjectivities within their context, but that it is ultimately only possible to achieve this as a collaborative dynamic that results in a collective individual. Barnes demonstrates the same collaborative vision in her presentation of Nora Flood and Robin Vote in *Nightwood*, where Nora says of Thelma that 'she is myself' (115) and even after their separation

their connection is so profound that, as previously quoted, 'in Nora's heart lay the fossil of Robin, intaglio of her identity, and about it for maintenance ran Nora's blood' (51). Stein, H.D. and Barnes are using collaboration as a means to engage with an other to reveal the collective nature of subject formation, where all methods of self-fashioning and self-knowledge are inevitably presented within the limitations of the social context.

In Jessica Berman's reading of *Ida: A Novel*, she writes of a 'community of the subject' (197) and describes the text as an 'experimentation with a wandering "I", which establishes itself by establishing its relations' (198) as part of the creation of 'meaningful alternative models of community' (3). This analysis is useful in recognising the productive and generative aspects of the collaborative nature of subject formation that I find in Stein's autobiographical works. In *Everybody's Autobiography*, as in *Ida: A Novel*, the narrative reveals what Berman describes as an 'exploration of the sheer multiplicity of identities and relationships which resolve into narrative coherence only when we stop trying to separate and solidify them' (194). While Stein laments that her new sense of a multitude results in the connection between people being lost, she is equally revealing 'the overlapping webs of experience that surround any Steinian subjectivity' (198). There is a clear 'connection between narrative and the reconstruction of community' (4), particularly in terms of nomadism and exile and the establishment of communities. The coherence of *Everybody's Autobiography* can only be found once we recognise the impossibility of Stein's project to reject

the multitude in favour of individualism, and instead identify the multiple ways and multiple locations where we can find Stein engaging collaboratively with the multitude in order to foster the individualism for which she advocates.

The multitude, therefore, does not always have to be read in terms of threat and abolishment. Early on in *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein recollects a moment she describes as awful when she realised that 'the stars are worlds' and that 'there were civilisations that had completely disappeared from this earth' (3). These concerns returned to her later in life, and later in the text, where she repeats that the 'fact that stars were worlds' (210) is linked with the fact that 'space had no limitation' (210), and for Stein this 'contradiction is there in every man and every woman' (269). She considers how people 'live on this earth and you cannot get away from it and yet there is a space where the stars are which is unlimited' (269). Whereas 'being on this earth with the space limiting' (259) suggests restriction, instead 'knowing about the stars in an unlimited space that is nobody could find out if it was limiting or limited' (259) suggests an unknown expanse. Stein associates the limitation of space on earth with the passing of generations and civilisations. She writes that civilisations 'always came to be dead of course they had come to be dead since the earth had no more size than it had how could other civilisations come if those that were did not come to be dead but if they did come to be dead then one was just as good as another' (210). While Stein recognises the need for renewal, she reveals her concern with hierarchy and posterity: 'after all every one was refusing to be dead' (210),

or to be consigned to a past civilisation. In *Paris, France*, Stein writes 'it is true that the world is round and that space is illimitable unlimited' (65). In demonstrating the physical notion of an expanse of space and the necessary cycle of generations, Stein is presenting a context in which her autobiographical subjectivity must be flexible and variable enough to encompass this spectrum. The contradiction of the opposing forces of the multitude and the individual mirrors the opposition of the expansive but restrictive universe in which the individual must exist, and Stein's autobiographical subject is forced to find new ways to interact with and exist within its social and physical context.

'I am I because my little dog knows me': Capturing the Momentary

Existence of Self

Divorcing herself from the constraints of the imposition of identity is essential for Stein, in her efforts to escape chronological description and instead depict momentary existence, an empiricism favoured by the impressionists. Recalling walking with her friend, the writer Thornton Wilder, and discussing 'writing and telling anything' (263), Stein lamented that she 'had not simply told anything' (264) and on reflection states 'And now I almost think I have' (264) with *Everybody's Autobiography*. In contrast, Stein writes that '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' (264). Instead Stein felt it was essential

that she created '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' (264), reaffirming that 'now in this book I have done it if I have done it' (264). This reveals that this text is an effort to write a simple narrative of what is happening 'as if it is existing' (264), but that Stein is unsure whether or not she has fully achieved her task. This doubt is echoed later in the text where she is 'hesitating whether it was the narrative about which I had talked to Thornton' (266). Stein does not wish to present a historically or temporally defined identity, but instead to invoke a present sense of her own existence.

Timothy Galow writes that in Stein's writing 'true identity is always an impossibility, because it relies on the presumption of a static and knowable past that can be used as the basis for identity claims' (116). I agree that Stein interrogates the temporal challenges of invoking a defined identity, yet she does not succumb to a defeatist notion of it being an impossibility, and instead engages with how to present alternative identities by taking into account social contexts and presenting the self using experimental stylistics. Stein's interest lies not in a knowable past but in each moment, as it is only by fully experiencing time that identity can be traversed and an individual selfhood can be experienced and utilised. Stein laments that 'everybody wants every minute so filled that they are not conscious of that minute passing' (224) and claims that 'you have to be a genius to live in it and know it to exist in it and express it to accept it and deny it by creating it' (244). While identity is 'not a thing that exists

but something you do or do not remember' (55), and while 'there is no identity' in the context of memory 'because nobody really thinks they are the same as they remember' (54), an authentic selfhood exists outside of these constraints and instead is able to command and experience time. This is summed up in *The Geographical History of America*, as 'identity is history and history is not true because history is dependent on an audience' (139), and it is the fallibility of the audience, and audience memory that leads to the impossibility of identity. Here an external social context, or an audience, is presented as uncondusive to self-definition, and therefore a collaborative model of subject formation becomes flawed when tested against the strictures of the authenticity of memory.

However, when the authenticity of remembering is replaced with the authenticity of *knowing*, the collaborative model once again becomes robust. When Stein looks at the effect of audience upon the creation of identity in another context, not through an audience's ability to remember but through the instantaneous and present moment of knowing, then here identity becomes once again possible; an identity that is collaborative but external. Toward this Stein employs the motif of her 'little dog', which S. C. Neuman considers to be 'a public who establishes the identity of the personality and the writer, the individual and what is written' (40). In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein writes 'it is funny about identity. You are you because your little dog knows you' (32), and repeats this later in the text with: 'I am I because my little dog knows me' (50). As the text progresses Stein begins to doubt this assertion. The statement

becomes a question: 'am I I because my little dog knows me' (68), and Stein reflects that once a dog becomes older 'he does know you but it is not the same thing, of course he does know you, but it does not worry him' (68). If the dog is no longer actively knowing her (or worrying about knowing her) then does Stein cease to be 'I'? Stein notes that in the same way as often she cannot properly remember people, for her poodle, Basket, 'sometimes it does happen he does not know us when he sees us, of course it does and can' (56). The doubt increases later in the text where back in Bilignin, France from the tour of the States, Stein 'became worried about my identity' (259) and remembered 'I am I because my little dog knows me' (259). This paradigm is no longer reassuring and Stein writes 'I was not sure but that that only proved the dog was he and not that I was I' (259). This is interesting when considered alongside Stein's explanation of her association of identity and dogs. She writes 'I was writing all about identity and dogs I always write about dogs why not they are always with me and identity and that is always with me, there is me myself and there is identity my identity' (176). The recurring use of the present tense in the context of knowing and identity reinforces Stein's view of identity as existing only within an instantaneous and present moment of knowing by an other.

In linking identity and dogs Stein is able to show that for her identity is something that is always with her but that is external and separate. It is not part of her, but rather part of an other, in a collaborative model of shared self-definition. The motif of the little dog appears also in *The Geographical History of*

America, where the separateness is also emphasised. Stein repeats the statement that 'I am I because my little dog knows me' (233), and follows it with 'The figure wanders on alone' (233). Here it is not clear whether the figure is Stein, or the combination of Stein and her little dog, but elsewhere in this text Stein is clear that she and her dog form separate figures. In writing 'Any dog has identity. The old woman said I am I because my little dog knows me, but the dog knew that he was he because he knew that he was he as well as knowing that he knew she' (134), Stein is privileging her dog with a separate self-knowledge that she denies to herself. While the dog is able to simultaneously know himself and know her, Stein reveals a perpetual doubt as to the existence or location of their identity: 'the person and the dog are there and the dog is there and the person is there and where oh where is their identity is the identity there anywhere' (234-5). The final line of *Everybody's Autobiography* reveals Stein's acceptance of her doubt and the ultimate unknowability of self, bringing the focus back to instantaneous sensation: 'perhaps I am not I even if my little dog knows me but any way I like what I have and now it is to-day' (278).

'Count by one and one': Putting the Individual in Context

Along with presenting the momentary existence of the self, another technique that Stein uses to create a new collective individual is through the medium of counting. In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein positions herself as the hope in the face of organisation and describes herself as the first one to emerge out of a

cycle of enslavement and freedom. She writes 'of course as soon as everybody is enslaved why then they will begin to pine for freedom' (49) and proposes that 'so then everybody has to begin again as if no organisation could be done but not yet no not yet and not every one no not every one and hardly any one yes hardly any one' (177). Stein is inferring that individual thinking is the privilege of the few, and the implication is that she will be or is the 'one' to do it. Stein links this impulse to 'begin again' and embark on individual thinking with the modern art movement. She writes: 'I am always hoping to have it the picture be alive inside it, in that sense not to live in its frame, pictures have been imprisoned in frames, quite naturally and now when people are all all peoples are asking to be imprisoned in organisation it is quite natural that pictures are trying to escape from the prison the prison of framing' (272). Stein, equally focussed on escaping from imprisonment and restriction of thinking, is enacting a form of escape from the dominant force of organisation.

Stein enacts the necessity and means of this escape through the activity of counting, and a close scrutiny of the word 'one'. Through this scrutiny Stein extracts a core sense of individualism from the word. In *The Geographical History of America* she disassociates the word from identity: 'Identity has nothing to do with one and one' (147), and in *Everybody's Autobiography* she reduces the importance of names and therefore elevates the importance of the word one: 'I used to think the name of anybody was very important and the name made you and I have often said so. Perhaps I still think so but still there are so many

names and anybody nowadays can call anybody any name they like' (10).

Names, like identities are infinite and externally imposed thereby having no relation to the individual 'one'. Stein is highlighting the counting process where a number does not and cannot exist without its component one's. Counting, she argues, is a peculiarly human activity where 'the only difference between men and animals is that men can count' (100). In *Everybody's Autobiography* she writes that 'counting is really pleasant when there is something to count' (124) and that 'everybody everybody is counting and is counting money' (123). Aside from being a pleasant human activity, it is also presented as an essential activity to ensure and preserve individuality. Stein expresses concern that 'just now counting is a more absorbing occupation than it ever has been, people thinking in millions, they love the sound of numbers, it is the religion of everyone just now counting is all there is of religion for them' (100). Thinking in millions and an obsession with plural numbers is dangerous for Stein in that it absolves the individual. Stein is concerned about this in the context of money: 'I was kind of worried about the fact that money is always voted in round numbers so many millions and billions and when it is gathered by taxes it is always little sums or big sums but always uneven sums' (268). She asks 'how could so many uneven sums make an even one and how could that even sum be paid out again into uneven ones and not leave something the matter' (268). Thinking of millions as 'an even one', irons out the inconsistencies of the 'uneven ones' that make up the multitude. It is the ones that are significant, and it is for this reason that for

Stein 'counting more than ten is not interesting [...] because the numbers higher than ten unless they are fifty-five or something like that do not look interesting and certainly when one goes higher than a hundred there is not much difference, of course there is but yet again there is not' (102). Stein's ambivalence about higher numbers, unless they are of interest such as a mirror of each other – '55' – reaffirms her interest in the individual in its context with other individuals. By rounding up numbers, or talking in hundreds or millions, the significance of the individual 'one' is lost.

Instead, Stein advocates a system of counting 'one one one'. Stein expresses interest in the way that her Aunt Fanny counted: 'she said the only way that you could save with dignity and then use the money that had accumulated was by counting one one one. You should never say three or even two, you should keep strictly on a basis of one' (131). Stein's aunt 'did always count by one and one and she still does and she still can manage to have everything come out the way it should by the simple process of counting one and one' (131). Stein posits this as a victory by stating 'she had again won by counting one one one' (131). Later in the text Stein writes that she counts 'by one one one' (152) as a tool for overcoming nerves when public speaking. She writes that one one one 'is what an audience is' (152) and that 'if one has not a sensitiveness to numbers and naturally counts by one one one then there is no trouble in talking to them' (152-3). In this way, Stein is using the medium of

counting as a narrative technique to create and present a new vision of collective individualism.

Publicity and Value: Collaborating with the Public

In the preface of *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein writes: 'I was very much interested to know just what they knew about what is good publicity and what is not' (xiii), and later that her 'real interest in reporters began' (187). This interest remains in the autobiography *Wars I Have Seen* where Stein reveals a heightened interest in publicity. She is very keen to speak to someone in the press, recounting how she 'said if you see a journalist again tell her that I want to see her' (240) and 'asked him to bring back a newspaper man or woman' (242). Earlier in the text Stein writes that this interest is universal: 'There always has been a great passion for publicity in the world the very greatest passion for publicity' (165). This passion Stein attributes to an appreciation of publicity as an art itself: 'It is very interesting but the end of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century realised the beauty of publicity for its own sake as an end in itself, this is very interesting' (165).

In a study of Stein's relationship with rhetoric, Sharon Kirsch argues that Stein adopted public relations strategies in order to promote herself and her work, and concludes that Stein is acutely aware of her audience, and of her constructed relationship with the public. Kirsch acknowledges that by the time Stein was lecturing in America in 1934 'the idea of publicity as something to be

managed by and cultivated for *individuals* was quite new' (257) and that the notion of an individual personality was increasingly prevalent. Kirsch likens Stein's technique as that of a 'branding campaign' (262) in an effort to shape her image and sell her products (258). I, however, view Stein's engagement with the notion of publicity as concurrent with her engagement with the challenge of how to present an individual within its social context. She is interested less in strategising ways of presenting herself publically, and more in interrogating the impact of publicity on identity, and she approaches these questions with an almost scientific outlook.

Where Kirsch's analysis becomes more aligned with Stein's interrogation of the nature of publicity is where she concludes that Stein's relationship with her audience 'enacts more than collaboration: It enacts invention' (266) where 'the inventive potential of delivery becomes kairotic where the speaker herself is created within the event even as she creates the audience' (266). This is something that I find across the autobiographical works of H.D., Barnes, Stein and Coleman, where their texts are experiments in establishing, formulating, and ultimately understanding the significance of their own lives and identities. Not only is Stein creating herself while speaking, but she is equally creating herself within her endeavour to construct an autobiographical subjectivity. This is particularly important within the context of the threat of an encompassing organisation within a social multitude, and faced with the limitations of autobiography and imposed identity. Stein turns to publicity as a means of

creating, controlling and destabilising her autobiographical subjectivity, and as a means of collaborating with her public.

For Stein, publicity in terms of public recognition seems to be essential, and she scrutinises her own personal response to this recognition, and the effect it has upon her self-definition.⁴³ There are frequent references in *Everybody's Autobiography* to the pleasure Stein felt in receiving flattery. She writes that 'it is always more pleasant to be flattered than anything and admiration is the most pleasing flattery' (77). She 'received really a quantity of fan letters' (132), and wondered 'why should I have been so pleased when they wrote to me but I was' (132). She also writes of how she and Toklas 'liked it' (155) when 'always they said everybody said there is Gertrude Stein' (155), and when told that her work had been collected and printed by an admirer she writes 'I like best to be told this thing' (254). While in America Stein recounts that she and Toklas 'went somewhere and we met every one and I always do like to be a lion, I like it again and again, and it is a peaceful thing to be one succeeding' (277). Earlier in the text Stein links being 'a lion' with being 'a celebrity': 'I used to say that I would not go to America until I was a real lion a real celebrity at that time of course I did not really think I was going to be one. But now we were coming and I was going to be one' (143). This necessity is also evident in *Wars I Have Seen*; however, Stein reveals a lack of confidence in the security of her fame in this

⁴³ See Tirza True Latimer's article 'In the Jealous Way of Pictures' for an account of the ways in which Stein cultivated this public recognition through the management of collections and networks.

text: 'I told them who we were, and they know, I always take it for granted that people will know who I am and at the same time at the last moment I kind of doubt, but they know of course' (245). She reveals her surprise at their recognition: 'I told them who I was thinking some one of them might have heard of me but lots of them had and they crowded around and we talked and talked' (251).

Stein is also interested in interrogating and presenting the processes and impacts of becoming a celebrity: 'It was the beginning of travelling and being a celebrity and all the privileges attached to that thing. Everybody had always been all right to us but this was being a different thing' (142). These changes included: 'everybody in a hotel or restaurant noticing you everybody asking you to write your name' (153); having 'to sign my name for all of them' (195); and, people being 'as pleased to see me as they had been, Alice Toklas said they now said there goes Miss Stein before they had said there goes Gertrude Stein well anyway having them say it was still a pleasure' (256). This interest is made even more evident considered alongside Alison Tischler's study of Stein's 'vast collection of newspaper clippings' (13), including public parodies of Stein's work. She notes that 'in 1934, at the apex of her fame, Steinian language was taken up by print ads, department stores on Fifth Avenue in New York and product designers' (23), and finds that in Stein's archives, alongside her manuscripts are 'clippings of newspaper articles and advertisements that mimic her style' (27). Tischler is concerned with showing how this alignment positions 'modernism and

mass culture side by side' (27), and outlines the mutual benefits for the advertisers through imitating Stein's writing style to 'bolster their claim that their products were fashionable' (24), and for Stein to gain exposure as well as help 'to explain her most difficult prose to the public' (24). In her exploration of Stein's newspaper clippings collection Tischler finds that 'the question of who Stein was, was 'a persistent query throughout the clippings from the 1910s and 1920s' (22). The presentation of a public identity is central to *Everybody's Autobiography*, and Stein uses her autobiographical writing to construct a subjectivity as well as to refuse to fully answer the question: Who is Gertrude Stein?

Stein shows an acute understanding of the effect that public awareness has on her identity and her work. She writes in *Everybody's Autobiography*: 'if no one knew me actually then the things I did would not be what they were' (60). She is arguing that it is necessary for her to be a publicly recognised figure in order for her work to take on the function that Stein intends, namely a collaborative one. She writes of her frustration that the America public show more interest in her public persona than in her work and concludes 'there is no sense in it because if it were not for my work they would not be interested in me so why should they be more interested in me than in my work' (37). For Stein, her self and her work are inextricably linked. She is aware of the limitations of celebrity and flattery, citing Picasso's view that:

when everybody knew about you and admired your work there were just about the same two or three who were really interested as when nobody knew about you, but does it make any difference. In writing *The Making of Americans* I said I write for myself and strangers and then later now I know these strangers, are they still strangers (82).

In asking 'but does it make any difference' and highlighting the potential significance of now knowing the strangers that she once wrote for, it appears that Stein does not fully subscribe to Picasso's view but instead considers public awareness to be highly significant.

This significance is primarily around the effect that public awareness of self and work can have upon self-definition. In Stein's essay and lecture 'What are Master-pieces and why are there so few of them' Stein writes: 'After the audience begins, naturally they create something that is they create you, and so not everything is so important, something is more important than another thing, which was not true when you were you that is when you were not you as your little dog knows you' (156). Once the audience is created or 'begins' then they also start the process of creating the persona they are observing, and that alters perspective and creates an external identity that is separate from the self that existed before the audience began. On arrival in New York, Stein and Toklas 'saw an electric sign moving around a building and it said Gertrude Stein has come and that was upsetting' (150). This form of public acknowledgement gives Stein 'a little shock of recognition and non-recognition' (150), which she describes as 'one of the things most worrying in the subject of identity' (150).

This is because of the significant affect that public recognition can have, to the point where Stein concludes that ‘the moment you or anybody else knows what you are you are not it, you are what you or anybody else knows you are’ (74).

Stein goes on to make the distinction between ‘alone you’ (74) and ‘the whole country in which you have your being’ (74), showing that the social context in which you live is separate but integral to the self that exists outside of that context. The self that a public can create is considered by Stein in terms of characterisation. She writes that novels can no longer be written ‘since there is so much publicity so many characters are being created every minute of every day that nobody is really interested in personality enough to dream about personalities’ (53). Stein argues that the public cannot believe the creation of imagination ‘when publicity makes them up to be so much realer than you can dream’ (53). She concludes ‘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’ (53).

Is the role of autobiography here to confirm the view of the public, or to confirm that there is no identity that exists outside public perception? Barbara Will determines that ‘Stein’s point is clear: that modern autobiography and its sister forms – film, radio, and advertising – not only entertain and fascinate but reconfigure the divide between private and public, individual and mass, turning “personality” from something inherent into something that can be made and manipulated by an “outside”’ (154). Certainly Stein’s writings show that she was trying to understand the the inescapable effect of the outside mass on a

subject's self-perception, while also trying to carve a space for the subject to exist outside this context in order to preserve their individuality. Stein is disrupting expected modes of representation by devising strategies of collaboration in order to create formative relational dynamics within her individual subjectivities.

Timothy Galow's survey of the impact that the rise of a national celebrity culture in the United States had on the literature of Stein looks at how Stein 'negotiated this new landscape while constructing [her] public personae' (xi), and theorises 'an authorial identity that exists only in the very instant of creation but is still capable of instilling texts with permanent value' (xiii). He argues that Stein characterises 'celebrity as a threat to personal autonomy' (90-91), and publicity as an attempt to 'solidify a limited, and limiting, public identity that stands in direct opposition to the metaphysically unrepresentable person she had been attempting to fashion in her work' (98). I do not find that Stein presents publicity as a threat to her personal autonomy, but rather as a topic with which she must engage, and as an additional strand of her wider interrogation of the impact of social context on the individual. Her engagement with publicity does not affect a solidification of her identity but rather continues to widen and fracture her collective individualism and to expand its collaborative engagement with the multitude.

This can be seen in the way Stein uses the theme of money to further consider the transformative effect of value and publicity on the individual. Stein

remembers in *Wars I Have Seen* that: 'I had already given him my autograph on a piece of French paper money, it is hard to write on French paper money but I finally did get the habit' (248). Stein makes her interest in money clear, writing about her fascination with money as a child, and her happiness and excitement at earning money. She associates money with the context of the multitude, writing that 'as the world is now all covered over everybody has to live together and if you live together call it what you like it has to be money, and that is the way it is' (269). Money links people and is an integral part of the social context, as well as individual self-conception. Stein recalls that she had never made any money and since her success 'I feel differently now about everything' (30). A main tenet of this change is that 'somehow if my writing was worth money then it was not what it had been' (67), to the point where 'if it completely changes then there is no sense in its being what it has been' (67). Stein's success with *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* had the effect that 'slowly everything changed inside me' (32) and 'suddenly it was all different' (32) because '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' (32). Therefore publicity and value are not presented as a threat to individual autonomy, and Stein's writing does not represent an attempt to solidify a limiting public identity, but rather becomes a point of reference from which Stein can situate her collaborative, multiple autobiographical individualisms.

'I am the most important writer writing to-day': A Democratic Genius

Alongside Stein's concern with how external value and publicity impacts identity, is her project to present herself as a genius. In *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein demonstrates a level of arrogance which is similar to that displayed in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. She states 'I know that I am the most important writer writing to-day' (18), and that she 'had always been so ahead of every one' (271). Stein recounts moments with those around her where they express their admiration: 'He said he wanted to see if I was as interesting as my book was. I said I was. He said yes and he went on slowly talking' (51); and, an art dealer accrediting her with Picasso's return to art after a period of time writing poetry, 'oh thank you thank you, he said, he must paint again oh thank you thank you said he' (26). However, Shari Benstock in *Women of the Left Bank* writes that Stein's 'enormous ego' (158) was apparently developed in reaction to a community of artists who refused to take her work seriously' (158), rather than an affirmation of public opinion. In *Wars I Have Seen*, Stein acknowledges that public acclaim can cause negative reactions. She writes 'those who succeed best, who have the best instincts for publicity, so have a great tendency to be persecuted' (165). While Stein is not attempting to escape the persecutions and inaccuracies of publicity, she is drawing attention to the farcical arrogance attached to self-promotion and attempting to be the primary author of her self-presentation in the public sphere.

While arrogance and genius is linked with self-aggrandisement and the creation of a particular 'brand' to publicise, it is also integral to Stein's promotion of individuality in her construction of an autobiographical self. Critics have determined several motivations behind Stein's presentation of herself as a genius, such as Will's view that 'Stein's ruminations on genius were part of a lifelong process of self-making and self-splitting' (136), and Janet Malcolm's view that this is 'a critique of the nature of biographical representation itself rather than an accurate portrayal of her life and of those around her' (16). Will's assessment of Stein's 'ruminations' is useful in that while Stein does make some absolute proclamations around her status as a genius, she equally reveals an uncertainty around the implications of the term, which calls into question Malcolm's view that Stein is critiquing the usefulness of the term as a category of representation. Rather than asking whether or not Stein was a genius, it is more constructive to ask 'what did the notion of "genius" enable Stein to do or undo? What kind of possibilities and constraints were signified for Stein by this act of self-naming?' (Will 2).

In *Everybody's Autobiography* Stein repeats her view of a genius as being singularly different and separate from the rest, asking 'what is a genius and why are there so few of them' (74), and stating 'the earth is covered all over with people but geniuses are very few' (141). The existence and expression of genius is paramount for Stein: 'in a way I really am only interested in what a genius can say the rest is just there anyway' (100). While, as Will notes, genius

is 'a term both embedded in and generative of cultural hierarchies' (135), Stein shows a level of humility in her claim to be a genius herself by suggesting that this was not through merit but a random process of selection: 'It is funny this thing about being a genius, there is no reason for it, there is no reason that it should be you and should not have been him, no reason at all that it should have been you, no no reason at all' (60). Stein shifts from second person pronoun to first person, opening up a sense of the democratic and unpredictable nature of the process: 'The only thing about it was that it was I who was the genius, there was no reason for it but I was, and he was not there was a reason for it but he was not' (61). In repeating the structure of the previous sentence but with a pronoun change Stein is inviting or provoking the reader to think of themselves in those terms. If we consider this in the context of Stein's tutor, the philosopher William James's conception of genius as 'the faculty for perceiving in an unhabitual way' (Levin 153), the shift becomes a prompt for the reader to consider their modes of perception and whether or not their focus is 'unhabitual' or stunted through the threat of organisation.⁴⁴ It also requires us to reflect upon Stein's unconventional methods for narrating her unhabitual perceptions, and to retain a focus on her narrative stylistics. Will writes that this 'unnamed, general, and generic "you"' (137) serves 'a strategic purpose in working to fracture the

⁴⁴ See Jaques Le Rider's *Modernity and Crises of Identity: Culture and Society in Fin-De-Siecle*, translated by Rosemary Morris, Polity Press, 1993, for analysis of Weiniger's theories of how the soul of the genius not only contains the entire universe, but is also a summary of humanity where 'the personality of the genius contains every human type' (56).

presumed autonomy of the autobiographical “I” (146), and it does so to the extent that it takes the focus away from Stein as genius, and turns it outward to look at the reader as genius, or individual thinker. Bob Perleman writes that this presentation of ‘the excessive unremarkability’ (156) of being selected to be a genius can be read as a form of defence; however, it appears in this context to be an opening up and offering of the term for wider claiming.

Stein also shows an uncertainty and interest in whether a genius has a different self-perception than someone whom she would consider not to be a genius. She determines that ‘if you are a genius there is nothing inside you that makes you really different to yourself inside you than those are to themselves inside them who are not a genius’ (225) but also wonders ‘what difference is there inside in one from the others inside in them who are not one, what is the difference, there is a difference what is the difference, oh yes it seems easy enough to say it and even if you know it although inside in yourself you do not know but there is one if there is one (225).⁴⁵ This demonstration of doubt where the circular process of certain statements and questions, or the conditional ‘if’, alongside the distinction between saying it, knowing it and knowing it ‘inside in yourself’, produces a matrix of assertion and negation. The proximity of ‘inside in

⁴⁵ This echoes a passage from her lecture titled ‘The Gradual Making of the Gradual Making of Americans’ which can be found Stein’s *Lectures in America*, Beacon Press, 1935 (rpt. 1985 with introduction by Wendy Steiner): ‘I had to find out inside every one what was in them that was intrinsically exciting and I had to find out not by what they said not by what they did not by how much or how little they resembled any other one but I had to find it out by the intensity of movement that there was inside any one of them’ (138).

one', 'inside in them', and 'inside in yourself' create an inward focus that presents genius as an internal and individual category of being. Stein's interest is not whether others agree with her determination that she is a genius, but that she understands the effect that genius has inside in herself, or inside in others. Brandel writes that 'Stein's genius challenged the notion of the individual thinker entirely, cultivating a collaboration and participation with her readers' (384). However, this reading suggests that it is through directly addressing her readers that Stein is provoking her readers to consider themselves in terms of being an individual thinker, rather than challenging the notion at all. Stein writes that she is very interested in genius in others: 'I always ask her is he a genius, being one it is natural that I should think a great deal about that thing in any other one' (275), but not to the detriment of individual thinking.

Stein's demonstrates further uncertainty about the implications of the category of being a genius. She states that 'It is funny this business of being a genius, everything is funny' (53), and asks 'What is a genius. Picasso and I used to talk about that a lot' (68), 'And so what is it that makes you a genius. Well yes what is it' (68), and 'It is puzzling. What is a genius. If you are one how do you know you are one' (68). Stein also links the physical act of writing with the being of a genius by asking: 'And if you stop writing if you are a genius and you have stopped writing are you still one if you have stopped writing. I do wonder about that thing' (70). In this perpetual questioning Stein is refusing a stable definition of her term, and therefore its relationship to constructing her autobiographical

identity. Bob Perleman writes that 'Stein's luminous sense of the genius continually creating meaning without having that meaning freeze into dead, and hence identifiable, shape' (157). Stein is attempting to open up the term and provoke her readers to engage with its implications. In his discussion of the distinction between Stein as writer and Stein as genius, Perleman observes that in *Everybody's Autobiography* 'there is nothing standing between Stein and the rest of the world, which is presented as hardly to be distinguished from her own art' (167). Stein's vision of genius is one that is democratic, outward facing and focussed on dialogue and this is an integral component in Stein's promotion of collaborative individuality in her construction of an autobiographical subjectivity.

Conclusion

In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein is engaging with the many implications that an externally prescribed identity can have on an individual autobiographical subjectivity. Her writing reveals herself to be in favour of an individualism that not only exists alongside its social context, but which actively collaborates with the implications of a social mass in order to create new modernist subjectivities. This autobiography, which has received comparatively less critical attention than Stein's first, is a central text in revealing Stein's response to debates on individualism and mass culture and her preoccupation with the challenges of self-representation. In Stein's construction of an alternative form of individualism we read an insistence on independence and uniqueness in the face of the

threats and opportunities provided by an externally prescribed identity. While these themes run through other of Stein's works, including her novels and essays, it is here that we find her most concerted attempt to resolve the contradiction posed by the inescapable and productive effect of the multitude on a subject's self-perception, while acknowledging the necessity for the subject to preserve its individuality while also responding to its presence within the multitude. In response Stein devises strategies of collaboration - including establishing a narrative methodology for presenting momentary existence, presenting the social politics of counting, engaging with publicity and value and the signification of herself as a genius - in order to establish and explore an autobiographical self that is individual and unique, but social in construction.

In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein is positioning herself as a central figure in the artistic movements of the early twentieth century, and we read a struggle to define and create this self in the context of a time where social relations have radically altered. The autobiography is a consideration of the very nature of sociability and the impact that others have on self. In her insistence on individualism Stein is striving to develop a new type of individual, within the acknowledged limits of her chosen genre. Stein is making a claim for her efforts to capture the frequent, easy, and inevitable nature of autobiography, rather than its formal and constructed elements, and therefore to capture a sense or essence of the autobiographical subject rather than to construct one.

Autobiography becomes unable to capture or present a fixed identity due to the

inauthenticity of an identity that is externally imposed. Stein is engaged with divorcing herself from the constraints of an externally prescribed identity, by presenting the fallibility of audience and audience memory as a threat to an authentic perception and experience of self in a specific moment. Stein does not wish to present a historically or temporally defined identity, but instead to invoke a present sense of her own existence. Engaging with the constraints and implications of the imposition of identity is essential for Stein, in her efforts to escape chronological description and instead depict momentary existence. Stein responds to the collaborative opportunities that the multitude poses to individualism by finding new ways to interact with and exist within its social and physical context.

In demonstrating the physical notion of an expanse of space and the necessary cycle of generations, Stein is presenting a context in which her autobiographical subjectivity must be flexible and variable enough to encompass this spectrum. Stein presents herself as one of a few that are able to see above and traverse the dominance of social organisation which insists on control and enslavement and an unthinking mentality. Stein enacts the necessity and means of this escape through the activity of counting and the word 'one', and through this scrutiny extracts a core sense of individualism from the word. The notion of publicity is also integral to Stein's autobiographical projects. She is publically presenting herself while at the same time refusing to do so, as a means of creating, controlling and ultimately obscuring her autobiographical subjectivity.

She opens up and offers up the category of 'genius' in order to provoke her readers to engage with its implications, and develop unique ways of thinking. Strategies of readerly difficulty, or ambiguity, work to preserve the individual from external construction, and stylistic obscurity in the construction of an inaccessible and often non-referential subjectivity provide a commentary on the nature of autobiography and the challenges associated with securing an individuality within a social context that is pervasive.

Stein creates an individual that is defined through relations, thereby constructing a communal identity that is dynamic and relational, and an individual that remains collective. Stein is both arguing for the absence of identity and displaying this absence through her presentation of a disembodied and unconstructed autobiographical self which provides no route to a stable discernible autobiographical subject. Stein is responding to a call for a form of individuality that has re-found itself within its social connections and which is inherently creative and creating. As Stein frequently repeats, 'the earth is all so covered with everybody' (42), and it is this 'everybody' that allows Stein to utilise her unique and innovative modes of narration in order to reimagine her autobiographical subjectivities as both individual and multiple, and always collaborative.

The Thwarted Search for Collaboration in Emily Coleman's Diaries and *The Shutter of Snow*

Introduction

Emily Coleman's life work was her diaries; she wrote them over a period of more than four decades, and for the first time a selection, edited by Elizabeth Podnieks, was published in 2012, under the title *Rough Draft: The Modernist Diaries of Emily Holmes Coleman, 1929-1937*.⁴⁶ In her introduction Podnieks writes that the diary will appeal to 'those interested in Coleman's individual selfhood and consciousness' (xlvii) in the wider context of how women during this period 'grappled with how to define and realise themselves as artists, intellectual, maternal, sexual, and spiritual beings within and against the scripted and often limiting roles imposed on them' (xlvii). The diaries are indeed a record of a struggle to define an individual selfhood which reflects the multiple identities at play within her autobiographical presentation of self. Coleman's attempts at self-definition within her diary reveal her collaborative textual enactments between the subject and the other, and the autobiographical selves that emerge are both collective and individual and always situated within their social structure.

⁴⁶ She started diary writing in 1915, but most of the early diaries are not extant, including her diary of 1928-29 which she destroyed.

Unlike H.D, Barnes and Stein, Coleman was not listed in Shari Benstock's influential book, *Women of the Left Bank*, which tracked 'the artistic community that formed on the Paris Left Bank early in the twentieth century' (3), and 'examines the lives and works of these women in the Paris context' (3). Nonetheless, as Podnieks argues, Coleman was in fact 'part of the loose knit group uncovered in the study' (94). She lived on the Left Bank, knew its most influential figures, including Barnes, and wrote for a variety of modernism's main avant-garde magazines. Julie Vandivere ascribes the reason Emily Coleman is largely ignored in modernist literary studies, to modernism's interest in 'relatively prolific writers' (184), whereas significant portions of Coleman's work are as yet unpublished. Amy Lee quotes American playwright Virgil Geddes as viewing Coleman 'more as a catalyst during the twenties in Paris than an exemplary writer' (116).⁴⁷ Certainly Coleman was a significant catalyst for Barnes and others including Peggy Guggenheim and Emma Goldman, but her writing is also deserving of consideration, not necessarily for any striking literary influence it may have had at the time, but for its bold modernist innovations. I include her in this study, due to the many biographical as well as literary parallels she has with the other writers under exploration, including the clear preoccupation Coleman

⁴⁷ See Amy Lee's article "Emily Holmes Coleman" *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005, pp. 116-138 for more on how Coleman's unpublished manuscripts and letters, that are held in the University of Delaware's collections, reveal the significant influence that Coleman had on her literary friends during the Modernist period.

maintains over the autobiographical presentation of self as simultaneously individual and collective.

While lesser known than Stein, Barnes and H.D., like them Coleman was an American with ambitions to be a writer. She was born Emily Tyler Holmes in 1899 in Oakland, California, and it was while at boarding school in New Jersey she began to aspire to a literary life, studying English Literature at Wellesley College from 1916 to 1920. She married Deacon (Deak) Coleman in 1921, and they had a son, John Milton Holmes Coleman, in 1924. She suffered puerperal fever following his birth and was institutionalised, the experience of which she fictionalised in her only published novel, *The Shutter of Snow* (1930). She moved to Paris in 1926 to pursue her literary career, choosing the cultural stimulation of Europe over the conservatism of America, publishing surrealist poems and stories in *Transition*, working as society editor at the *Tribune*, editing anarchist Emily Goldman's memoirs, and participating as an active patron of modernism. Her prolific diary writing began in around 1915, and Podnieks describes it as 'a story of passion: passion for self, family, friends, and lovers; for writing, aesthetics, and literature; for spiritual and natural worlds; and for place, performance, and community' (xlvi). In this chapter I consider the theoretical implications of including diary writing within a study of autobiographical writing, establish a critical approach necessary for analysing diaries as autobiographies, and use a reading of *The Shutter of Snow* in order to

illuminate my understanding of the collaborative dynamics at play in Coleman's writing.

'More empty space than solid parts': Are Diaries Autobiographies?

To consider a diary within a study of autobiography is not uncontroversial. In Philippe Lejeune's seminal *On Diary*, he writes that strictly 'it is nothing like an autobiography' (153), and that rather than a text or literary genre, a diary is 'first and foremost an activity' (153). Peter Heehs echoes this sentiment in his book *Writing the Self: Diaries, Memoirs, and the History of the Self* (2013), where he writes that diaries are distinct from memoirs and autobiographies. Instead, 'a diary is a document in which the writer records his or her experiences, thoughts and feelings shortly after they happen, in discreet entries, often dated' (6).

Where they differ from memoirs is in 'not being retrospective and in not having an explicit plot. They are written from day to day, with the present as a moving vantage point and without any knowledge of the future' (6). As an activity without a plot, a diary is indeed distinct from an autobiography. Yet it is a fascinating site from which to explore artistic self-definition, in particular the attempt to define an individual selfhood which reflects multiple subjectivities.

The extensive debates surrounding definitions of and attitudes towards the diary and how the diary relates to autobiography can, however, become a limitation and a distraction. Instead, Lejeune finds poetic conclusions in the elusive nature of trying to contain and control the activity of diary writing: 'a diary

is like lacework, a net of tighter or looser links that contain more empty space than solid parts. Everything depends on what sea you throw it into. By the time it reaches us, it is nothing but a mass of strings lying on the beach at low tide' (153). In order to untangle this mass of strings, he proposes distancing yourself from the controversies surrounding theories of diaries, and their relationship with autobiography, and to avoid the pitfalls that come with trying to defend the diary. He stresses the importance of not letting debates around definitions and genre impede the study of the diary, particularly as he notes that 'there has been very little exploration in this field as yet; almost everything still remains to be done' (165). In the case of Emily Coleman, a great deal remains to be done in terms of critical attention to her diaries, with very little published as a result of the publication of *Rough Draft* in 2012.

Nonetheless, when turning attention to diary writing it is important to have a level of awareness of the differences between diary and autobiography in order to understand the different approaches necessary for their analysis. For example, in his illuminating introductory essay to Lejeune's *On Diary*, Jeremy Popkin notes an important difference where 'unlike the autobiography, the diary does not borrow from the realm of literary imagination' (9). In addition, Julie Rak in her equally useful introductory essay, outlines how *On Diary* warns us that 'attempts to interpret diaries as one interprets literary texts or historical accounts of a life will contain what Lejeune says is too much "fiction", which he understands as too much focus on the organising principles of a text and not

enough focus on process' (20). Rak goes on to ask 'What to do with diaries then?' (20), particularly considering the fact that 'they are repetitive, rough, elliptical – in short, they are not for us' (20). In order to effectively analyse the diary, we must devise an alternative approach which takes into account these challenges, restrictions, and opportunities. Popkin notes that 'despite the fluidity of the diary form, all diarists face certain choices' (8), and by focussing on these choices - such as to what purpose Coleman wrote her diaries, what choices of tone and subject matter she made, and what defining features and rhetorical strategies she used - I will be able to interpret her diaries in such a way as to illuminate an understanding of her literary presentation of self.

Lejeune outlines some of the challenges that arise with researching diaries, including that a researcher is restricted to only those diaries which are published. Of those that are published or publishable, some are often heavily edited, inaccessible, or very lengthy. The editing, and sometimes rewriting, process that comes with publishing diaries can result in some significant changes, but while Popkin writes that 'the study of these transformations is often quite interesting' (10), this will not be the focus of this chapter, except to acknowledge that there has been a significant degree of 'shaping the diary' (xlvi) by Podneiks in the editing process. Of course, the published text does not include all 19,000 pages of Coleman's diaries written from 1929 to 1970, but rather a period spanning eight years from 1929 to 1937. Podneiks makes this choice so as to cover the period of Coleman's life 'during which she most fully

engaged with and pursued modernist art and life' (xiii). During this eight year period Coleman produced 1,300 pages, and the selection that is presented in *Rough Draft* has been 'heavily excised' (xiii)⁴⁸. Podneiks notes in her footnotes the sections that have been removed, and her editorial reasoning for doing so. Where this is relevant to my analysis, I will acknowledge this along with any limitations this may place on my conclusions.

It will also be relevant to my analysis to acknowledge the different critical approach required for analysing the diary genre. This largely stems from the fact that, as Popkin describes, 'before becoming a text, the private diary is a *practice*' (31), rather than a traditional narrative text. Therefore different analytical tools are required, including an understanding of what is unique about the diary form. One of the most unique aspects of the diary form is the way in which the text is written, or in the case of a diary 'kept', and because of this 'one has to learn to read between the lines' (31). Diaries are kept irregularly, and therefore to understand how far the ways in which they are kept is relevant to the analysis, we must ask questions such as, *was the diarist writing on the day of the action or reflecting about a previous occasion*. Diaries are also 'filled with implicitness' (31) and therefore often highly allusive, which can create multiple challenges for

⁴⁸ See Podneiks' introduction to *Rough Draft* for more on her editing process. She explains that she has 'tampered stylistically with the material transcribed in a number of ways' (xliv), which included adding apostrophes and quotation marks, to make reading easier, corrected spelling mistakes and typographical errors, as well as removing repetitive passages and the extensive quotation of passages from other texts, and adding a five part chronological structure.

the reader. Popkin writes that 'far from [diaries] shedding light upon a life, it is only with the help of a context that one is able to shed light on them' (31)⁴⁹.

Context becomes important for understanding Coleman, in terms of illuminating an understanding of the people and places of which she writes. An awareness of context also helps to unpick the metadiscourse evident across the text, and this will be an important focus in my analysis where repetition across the entries, perhaps not evident to the diarist at the time, are revealing about the development of her understanding and presentation of self.

Popkin makes an important distinction regarding diary writing, between writing that is analytical and writing that is personal. He describes analytical writing as using 'an approach that explains situations in such a way that they can be understood by oneself later, or by an outside reader' (71), and personal writing as using 'an approach that foregrounds the impulses of the soul, and creates a dialogue with them' (71). This distinction is helpful in my analysis of Coleman's diaries, as it separates the factual, plainly descriptive writing where she outlines her activities of the day, and those of her friends, from the more subtle, subliminal ideas and reflections in writing that is allusive, implicit and importantly the most illuminating in terms of her presentation of self. I will, therefore, focus on the 'personal' aspects of Coleman's writing. In her critique of Lejeune's theory of autobiography, Rak writes that 'it is not the experiences

⁴⁹ See Popkin's introduction for more on 'why the journals of writers or well-known figures are often a preferred object of study, their work or lives allowing one to make more sense of the text' (31).

themselves that matter to Lejeune so much as the rhetorical strategies which he (and other diary writers) uses to make sense of the experience-in-the-making' (20). It is the private process of diary writing that is the most interesting and relevant, and why Lejeune's work describes diary writing as a process and a practice, where 'the text itself is a mere by-product, a residue' (31). Rather than a narrative text, a diary 'is first and foremost a way of life, whose result is often obscure and does not reflect the life as an autobiographical narrative would do' (31). This serves to highlight the different critical approach necessary for the analysis of diary writing. As Rak writes, we need 'a different way to find and interpret texts, a different relationship to things like the materiality of diary writing itself, and an awareness of the relationship we have to the passage of time' (16).

Therefore, my analysis will attempt to read between the lines of Coleman's published diary, while approaching it as a practice rather than a narrative, including analysis of the ways in which it is kept. I will draw out the implicit and allusive aspects of her presentation of self, using context to establish any revealing metadiscourse but maintaining a focus on the personal rather than the analytical. Most significantly I will look at the rhetorical strategies used rather than the experiences presented within the diary. Using this methodology will identify that which is, as Lejeune describes, 'divisive or suspensive in this intermediate space, this airlock between the individual and the world, this "heart of hearts" where we invent a language for ourselves' (164). This airlock between Coleman's presentation of herself as individual and

collective is one she grapples with between the lines of her diary. Lejeune proposes a perspective where ‘the diary is both a retreat and a source of energy in each person’s dialectical relationship with the world, which he uses to construct himself as an individual’ (164). This, therefore, makes the diary an important, if not essential, site from which to explore the role that collective and relational identities play in the individuation process taking place in Coleman’s life writing.

‘Her face had become a nesting place for sparrows’: *The Shutter of Snow*

Alongside applying the approach outlined above to consider Coleman’s practice of diary writing, I turn to her only published novel *The Shutter of Snow* to examine the ways in which she presents the protagonist as entirely dependent on external subjectivities in order to fully realise her own. In order to fully open out the ways in which Coleman’s diaries are a practice rather than a narrative, it is necessary to acknowledge the parallels that can be found between Coleman’s use of collaboration as an aesthetic interpretive strategy in the narrative of her autobiographical novel, and the practice of her diary writing.

The Shutter of Snow was published in 1930, to mixed reviews and low sales.⁵⁰ The novel focusses on Marthe, who is in residence in an insane asylum

⁵⁰ One reviewer described it as ‘painfully dull toward the end because there is so much monotony’ (Menninger 85), and criticises Coleman for being ‘unable to avoid emphasising the unpleasant features of her hospital care’ (85) which will ‘mislead the uninformed’ (85) as she, like other writers of madness, ‘minimize

following the birth of her child; an experience similar to Coleman's own following the birth of her son.⁵¹ It has received very little critical attention, with an essay by Julie Vandivere in *Hayford Hall: Hangovers, Erotics, and Modernist Aesthetics*, edited by Julie Podneiks and Sandra Chait, remaining one of the few published close examinations of the text. Even this fails to have a concerted focus on Coleman as it has a comparative focus with Antonia White's work. In the introduction to the Virago publication of *The Shutter of Snow*, Carmen Callil and Mary Siepman, note the extraordinary quality of the text, and 'the poetic beauty of her prose' (iv) which 'expressed an understanding of the female condition, of the nature of madness and the reasons for it, delivered with a panache and skill well beyond the comprehension of the popular literary critics of the day' (iv).

There is little in the text in terms of a conventional plot, aside from descriptions of day to day episodes in the asylum, and Marthe's desire to be discharged,

their own disagreeableness, unruliness, unreasonableness' (85). On the contrary, Coleman writes explicitly about the protagonist's episodes of violence, theft and wailing through the night, alongside details about the care she receives in the asylum. See also an article by Amy Lee, "Emily Holmes Coleman" *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2005, pp. 116-138, which details how when Virago reissued the novel in 1981 the reaction was much more receptive [than the original publication in 1930], with critics 'increasingly drawn to an appreciation of the language and literary technique the novel used in the representation of the experience' (123), particularly the experience of the 'mad woman'. Lee attributes this to the ways in which narratives about mental illness have become more accepted as legitimate identities for literary exploration, including texts such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall Paper" (1892), Janet Frame's *Angel at my Table* (1990), and popular movies adapted from novels such as Ken Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) or Susanna Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted* (1994).

back into the care of her husband, Christopher. More apparent is Coleman's modernist interest in structure, which Vandivere argues she uses 'as a way to convey meaning' (61), and a reliance on the rhythms of language to present Marthe's subjectivities. She details the ways in which Marthe's subjectivity is presented 'in terms of wholeness or fragmentation' (50) and the narrative shows her 'trying to recuperate a sense of self amid disintegration' (50) within a social structure which idealises self-unity. I agree with her analysis that the novel reveals Marthe's negotiation of how to 'finally resolve the problem of achieving integrated selves' (50), and the 'waverings within dichotomies established by the spaces point to problematics within the efforts of the women to achieve subjectivities' (50), and I apply these observations to the ways in which Coleman reveals her efforts to integrate external subjectivities within her own within her context as a mother, and as someone suffering from mental illness.

In Vandivere's essay, she looks at Antonia White's *Beyond the Glass* (1954) and Coleman's *The Shutter of Snow*, and uses the term 'framed liminalities' to suggest the blurring of constructed dichotomies within the relationships between Coleman, Barnes, White and Guggenheim, and the work they produced at Hayford Hall in the summers of 1932 and 1933.⁵² She writes

⁵² In her essay Vandivere focuses on the work of Coleman and White, primarily because they are lesser known in comparison to Barnes and Guggenheim and have received less critical attention. Unlike Coleman, Barnes, H.D. and Stein, Antonia White was born in England and received a Catholic education, though like the writers I examine she experienced exile and otherness due to her art, as she was removed from her boarding school and rejected by her father due to her

that the relationships between these women 'were intense, sexually charged, emotionally intricate affairs that were, in turn, hurtful and inspiring, cruel and nurturing' (47), and that the dichotomies that were being blurred were 'reality and the imagination, literary and sexual convention and freedom, homosexuality and heterosexuality, life and art' (46). Vandivere ultimately concludes that it is in their writing that these relationships and framed liminalities become most central. She highlights the importance of these creative connections in an extract from Antonia White's diary: 'Every day I become more aware of the extraordinary interpenetration of people's lives. I think of the share Emily had in Djuna's book, of the share Emily will have in mine if I can write it, of the small share I have in hers' (qtd. in Vandivere 48). This vision of the impact of creative connections threads throughout *The Shutter of Snow* and her diaries. For Coleman, external subjectivities are relied upon almost entirely to enact her own vision of her autobiographical self.

As well as autobiographical similarities such as institutionalisation, sexual attraction to women, and difficulties with motherhood, Coleman and White's autobiographical novels, also 'epitomise the complex relationship among autobiography, biography, Modernism, and text' (Vandivere 49). They demonstrate that 'the biographical elements of the novelists' lives create a

literary ambitions. Her first novel *Frost in May* (1933), detailed this experience and received excellent reviews, and this including three later autobiographical novels detail her life from the age of 9 to 23.

textual subject that explores precisely what the meaning of subjectivity means in any context' (49). That is where an examination of Coleman's only published novel becomes relevant for the examination of her autobiographical presentation in her diaries, in the exploration of the meaning of subjectivity and the production of 'new self figurations and dissolutions' (49). The sites of framed liminalities in *Shutter of Snow*, are in the shuttered space between 'inside and outside, between permeability and containment, in the construction of female subjectivity' (49), particularly in her context as a mother. This, along with the clear negotiation of the boundaries between madness and sanity, and the way the individual navigates the external world, will be examined in this chapter.

Coleman uses a number of textual strategies to present the interaction between individual and collective perspectives, and one of these is her frequent switches of point of view. In the opening passage of the novel there are third person observations, such as 'There were two voices that were louder than the others' (1), or 'She cried out that she was cold' (1). These are then interrupted by the first person, 'My feet are cold' (1), before switching back to the third person again, 'Her throat was always hot, like old bread in the sun' (1). This immediately introduces the theme of disintegrated selves, and the challenges implicit in attempting to use language to achieve integration. Vandivere notes the ways in which Coleman uses expletives such as 'it' or 'there' followed by a form of *to be* in order to place the subject after the verb, and this places the subject in a secondary position, which makes the reader question the subject's narrative

authority. The reader finds themselves in a position where they are reading several of the sentences 'in the third person, but from the protagonist's point of view' (62). By using grammar in this way the confused narrator becomes 'vague and passive' (62) and the 'ambiguous subject is reinscribed in the grammar of the passage' (62). It also serves to dislocate the narrator so that both her individualism and her social context are lost within the text.

These textual strategies are modernist in their experimentation with different ways of presenting subjectivities. Her reconfiguration of language is a radical break with expected conventions, and this shows her to be reimagining ways of representing a self that is dislocated by madness. Other strategies include what Vandivere describes as the way 'Coleman continually pairs halves of sentences in ways that make no sense' (63). Some of these reflect a 'linkage between the sublime and the absurd' (63), such as 'God damn everything that cannot be made up into cheeses for Sunday lunches' (*Shutter* 79), but 'most relate to parts of the human body' (63), such as how 'her face had become a nesting place for sparrows' (*Shutter* 115). The sentence 'Down with her chin in the silk and sunk, and flowing up around her cheeks the dying' (3), contains elements of the spiritual sublime, along with parts of the human body. Coleman is 'unhooking the subject from the predicate in terms of logic and meaning' (Vandivere 63), and thereby demanding that the reader finds other methods of devising meaning from each sentence. In this case, the use of the rhythms and repetitions of labour to present childbirth as a kind of death. Vandivere writes

that ‘the unconventional turn in each of these sentences demonstrates that in language, something is *not* necessarily the something on which reason rests’ (63). She goes on to say that Coleman’s construction of sentences, which connect words from different realms and present fragmented personifications ‘raises and then elides the central modernist question of how subjectivity is constructed in relation to outside touchstones’ (63).

Therefore, *The Shutter of Snow* is modernist in its experimentation with how to engage collaboratively with the textual “I”, by fragmenting and dislocating it into plural and relational entities. Coleman subverts the basic conventions of prose, by breaking up narrative continuity, violating syntax, and in response to the modernist crisis of representation, Coleman is using collaborative models of creating autobiographical subjectivities to reclaim their representation through the negotiation of language and reference.

‘We’ll touch, like spirits’: Mother and son dynamics

The illness that Marthe suffers in *The Shutter of Snow* reflects a breakdown of the connection between mother and child. Her inability to grasp her own subjectivity or that of her child plunges her into madness. Coleman is writing autobiographically of her own experience of illness following the birth of her son, but she is also describing, in a more concentrated form, her on going difficulties throughout the mother-child relationship between herself and her son, John. In her diaries this relationship is presented in terms of a failure of connection. She

writes 'I feel the hopelessness of communicating to anyone I love, as usual; and am happiest when he [John] is sitting near me, or playing, occupied; which is the way I feel about everyone I love' (317). She desires both his presence and absence, and cannot resolve her contradictory feelings between the two.

Ultimately, and consciously, she chose her work and her own personal development over her child, as after her attempts to care for him saw her unable to prioritise him over her literary ambitions, she chose to leave him in the care of his father and a Russian nanny. She recounts an exchange with her lover Peter Hoare on this topic:

I said a woman can't help concentrating all her emotions on a child when she was thwarted from doing so with her husband.

I also said, "I've paid for giving him to Madame Donn" and Peter said "What do you mean, you've paid; you're very lucky. You don't want him all the time. You NEED a certain amount of liberty." I was glad to have that bubble exploded (199).

She writes of her son as receiving of her emotions only in lieu of a husband, as a strategy to secure a proposal from Peter, and implies suffering for 'giving him to Madame Donn' as a strategy to incite sympathy. When Peter refuses to be drawn by these manipulations and corrects her on the matter of her relationship with her son, Coleman feels relief rather than dismay. In writing of and therefore acknowledging her dishonesty, we are able to read between the lines to get a full understanding of the dynamics between her and her son. In other areas where she writes of John in her diary, she notes her love for him but also the

difficulties she faced in being around him. In these, she reflects on how he is of marginal importance in her life, such as in the line: 'Can't think he will ever be anything to me – so full of his own life and I of mine. We'll touch, like spirits' (217).

During periods when John was visiting her, Coleman gives more space in her diary to her reflections on him:

I slept with Peggy again, and Johnny came in, offended. "Why don't you sleep with me? I wake up and you aren't there. You belong to me." I said, "Do you think I have no other friend but you?" John: "I'm not your friend. I'm your result." I said, "What would you do if I married?" He said, "You can't; you're too old." I said, "What about Peter?" He said, "He doesn't want to." I said, "What would you do if I had a little baby?" Johnny said, "I'd sock him." He said, "You look so funny, with your grey hairs, and your nose is all twisted." I said, "What does my mouth look like?" He thought a minute then said, "A rugby balloon." He said, "Your teeth look like piano tusks." I said, "Damn it all, who do you think is beautiful?" He said, "Deaky." I got offended and said, "I am considered a good looking woman." Yesterday he said, "Your bottom looks like Norfolk and Suffolk." Everyone said, "What does he mean?" He said, "The map; where Harwich is." I said, "You realise that you are thought the image of me" (197).

In the careful recounting of this exchange, including the details of their words in a back-and-forth, similar to a play, Coleman is suggesting the performative theatricality of their conversations. They are shown to be provoking one another, in a desperation to be loved and admired, with neither allowing the other to be successful in their aims. Coleman is both despairing and proud of her son's admonishments and insults, and creates hypothetical scenarios in order to illicit his jealousy. The account reveals an uncertainty about John's role in Coleman's life; he is her 'result' and her 'image', but not her friend or her admirer.

Coleman's inability to resolve the dynamics of this relationship are what lead her to the conclusion that she 'can't think he will ever be anything to me' (217). She craves the creative connection, and the collaborative other, in order to fully realise her own relational subjectivity, but her son does not provide her with that possibility.

Therefore for Coleman the connection between mother and son is an essential but ultimately undesirable presence. She has an unresolved contradictory desire for connection and absence, simultaneously and equally. In the narrative of *The Shutter of Snow*, Marthe is unable to resolve her contradictory feelings towards her baby. He is presented as a disintegrated self, where Marthe cannot properly conceive of the baby's existence, never sure if the baby is dead or alive, or even whether or not he has been born at all. While the baby's subjectivity is under question, so is the mother's. Her baby is presented as something she cannot access: 'I cannot have my baby she said' (18), they 'took him away' (27). He is also presented as with her – 'But you idiot this is my baby and he has to go to sleep' (109) – and also as dead – 'my baby is dead and I could not give him sustenance' (116) – and as perhaps as having never existed at all – 'Why someone told me I had a baby. Of course I don't know, I haven't *seen* the baby' (157). This is reflective of the illness the protagonist suffers, but also provides a structure within the narrative where the reader tracks Marthe's presentation of the baby as a way of understanding her state of mind and her commentary on subjectivity. Her inability to know whether her baby is

alive or dead, present or absent signals a drastic failure of connection, one which drives her into psychosis.

Early in the novel Coleman narrates the episode where the baby was taken away from Marthe:

Her father had come in the door and she had cried to him. All of them standing around her bed, not this bed, pointing to the baby and to the wall. She had thrown the medicine glass at the wall and made a livid spot in it. They took away her little baby. The top of his head was soft and sunken. Down with her chin in the silk and sunk, and flowing up around her cheeks the dying. She had warmed him in her bed (3).

The conflation of the baby and the wall, marked with the medicine she had thrown at it, links the baby with her madness and the doctors' failed attempts to control her state of mind. She attempts to recall the baby, managing only to describe his fontanelle rather than anything specifically distinctive about her child. She cannot conceive of her baby, and therefore her baby is taken away from her. This causes her to lose control of the previously clear narrative of that paragraph. She is launched into a recollection of childbirth where she was instructed to put her chin down to her chest: 'Down with her chin in the silk and sunk, and flowing up around her cheeks the dying' (3). The repetitive use of 'k' sounds in silk, sunk, cheeks, both punctuates and pulls the sentence together as a whole. The two parts of this sentence contrast one another, with the use of only one syllable words in the first half, followed by the repetition four times of one then two syllable words in the second half. This creates a poetic effect, and reflects the rhythmic breathing necessary for childbirth. It also separates the first

half of the sentence which suggests her head sinking down into the silk of the bed, from the second half which suggests the dead rising up around her head. This separation of the sentence also perhaps signifies the distinction between labour (as sinking) and birth (as dying), which reinforces the narrative tension that oscillates between the baby's presence and absence.

Elsewhere in the novel there are passages relating to the baby that play with contradictions and suggest that it is not in language that logic and reason can be found. At the end of chapter four we read: 'Now the baby was crumpled into the red lights and the night voices called across the spaces of sleep' (32). The red lights, which are turned on in the ward at night, become Marthe's location for the baby as she contemplates sleep. In the context of the connection between Marthe and her baby, this is certainly the case. The baby, or the human realm, is consistently confused with the non-human realm, whether 'crumpled into the red lights' (32), or hidden in grave cloths or in blankets, or confused as being a makeshift doll made out of 'a towel and a ribbon' (18) being held by another one of the patients. The locale or subjectivity of the baby cannot be settled, and the early passage in the novel where the baby was taken away from Marthe, after the birth, where she tries to warm the baby in her bed, is repeated later in the text as 'She hid the ugly little baby under the blankets' (28). Indeed, Marthe imagines the baby in various locations: 'The baby was with him [her husband, Christopher] hidden close in the grave cloths' (9); '[Mary] was holding a doll. It was a towel and a ribbon. Marthe cried give him to me its my baby' (18);

'Now the baby was crumpled into the red lights and the night voices called across the spaces of sleep' (32); and, 'She reached for her sheepskin slipper and rocked it in her hands. He is sleeping in it and I will rock him' (109). She cannot effectively situate the baby, or pin him down to one place. The baby is variously dead and alive, here and gone, and at all times Marthe is unable to connect with the baby's existence.

In addition the baby is rarely described in conventional terms. We read that 'My baby had the cleanest and smallest finger nails I ever saw, they were like flakes of onion skin' (100), or when another patient dies she is likened to the baby: 'She's dead like my baby and her hands are crisp' (143). When Christopher brings a lock of the baby's hair to show Marthe and tells her that it is red, she flies into a rage shouting at him and insulting him. She says: 'You want my child, you want my life' (163). The baby's subjectivity is not constructed using conventional descriptors, and indeed when Christopher attempts to do so, Marthe's psychosis is triggered and she interprets this as a threat and a danger to her connection with her baby and indeed to her possession of her own sense of self. Neither the baby, nor Marthe's subjectivity can be constructed in relation to outside touchstones and therefore the narrative searches for alternative modes of representation.

This inability, and unwillingness, to connect causes her considerable distress, as when Marthe talks about her baby with another patient, Mary Soulier, who 'had had five puppies and they all had died' (8). Marthe is speaking

'in a gathering whirlwind' (9), and 'poured forth in bitterness and weeping' (9), as she 'held tight her ankles, and her legs and arms and hands wept with her neck' (9). This is where she describes the baby as with her husband 'hidden close in the grave cloths' (9). The blanket in which the baby is wrapped after birth, instead of signalling new life and creation, represents to Marthe the cloths in which a person is buried after death. This misassociation shows how the impossibility of connection signals death for Marthe. In this section Marthe describes him as 'The little white baby with quiet eyes that would not take of her milk' (9), again using symbols of death – being small, pale, quiet and malnourished – as descriptors of the baby with whom she cannot connect. This continues to disturb Marthe and 'They wept together and Marthe had wept all her tears. There were no more tears and she wept with clean stark eyes' (9). Her eyes, like the baby's, lose identity and meaning.

Seeing a mother and son in the waiting area of the hospital, Marthe reflects, 'The baby and the mother. White frozen bitterness. She went and closed her door' (Shutter, 174). This language, with its evocation of a landscape where no life can flourish, contrasts with traditional terminology related to the mother and child, and this is reflective of how Marthe associates babies with death rather than new life. This is a death of self, and like her diary extracts about her son, Coleman does not perceive of the connection between mother and child as being the creative influence that was conducive to her work and her development as a writer. This collaboration is one that has detrimental effects on

individualism to the extent where, in the novel, the mother descends into madness, and in the diaries, she presents an unresolved and contradictory desire for the simultaneous presence and absence of her son.

‘Each step on the feet of a newly born moth: Animals and Connection

Another formulation of the externalised other which appears in *The Shutter of Snow* can be found in the use of animal imagery. As mentioned above, the narrative includes one of the patients, ‘Little Mary Soulier’ (8) who ‘sat in the stiff chair and shook her hair and her eyes shut with laughter’ (8). The explanation for her presence in the asylum is that ‘She had had five puppies and they all had died. They wept the puppies in unison’ (8). In describing her babies as puppies, Coleman is introducing animal imagery to formulate varying levels of connection, and the misassociation between baby and dog highlights the madness associated with the illness the patients suffer. This is echoed later in the text when new patients arrive, Marthe describes the scene as ‘Other voices, new voices one young and high yelping a puppy’ (113).

In a passage where Marthe is lying in bed at night she imagines Christopher has come to her, but she cannot perceive him clearly. We read that ‘He had become acres tall’ (29), and that ‘He leaned above the bed an elongated ribbon of ink’ (29). The narrative shows attempts to solidify his presence, such as ‘Reach down to me she cried’ (29), ‘I can’t hear a word he says’ (29), and ‘she leaned across to see and wrinkled her forehead to see’ (29).

In response, she turns to animal imagery to try to properly see him, and switching from the first to the third person, she manages to grasp a vision of him: 'You see the dog is biting him. That's the little boys behind the barrel. Yes I see. Here he is holding onto his leg and shaking his fist' (29). But while this image of Christopher being bitten by a dog, and his reaction to it, solidifies his presence, it is only momentary and the narrative soon slips back into confusion as Marthe begins to question herself: 'Why does he shake his fist like a ruined father? The dog bit him don't you remember? But why in that one is the dog sitting with him? Can't you see it's not the same man?' (29). The vision is lost, and Christopher is once again absent. She again attempts to regain his presence – 'Come near to me you are so far away. She reached out with her oar and tried to poke him into her stream' (29) – but her attempts are futile and she further slips into her madness 'and all her life went mingling in concentric circles' (29-30).⁵³ Therefore here the image of the dog has served as a tool briefly

⁵³ Coleman's reference to concentric circles links back to the geometric imagery used by H.D. in the passage from *HERmione* quoted in chapter one: '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. Her and Fayne were flung, as it were, to the bottom of some strange element and looming up...there were rings on rings of circles as if they had fallen into a deep well and were looking up...“long since half kissed away” (774). H.D.'s vision of concentric intimacy is a collaborative erotic where the innate duality of a woman is reimagined as a moment of union where together they are flung toward an alternative imaginary. This therefore invites a reassessment of Coleman's use of the image of concentric circles where the narrator's use of animal imagery allows enables

solidify the presence of her husband, and therefore to momentarily focus the mind before it dissipates once more.

In previous chapters I have noted points in which animals appear in the autobiographical texts of Barnes and Stein, and examined the ways in which they impact upon the creation of collaborative individualisms. In the chapter on Barnes I looked at the ways in which her articles depict a close engagement with the subjectivity of animals to serve her autobiographical presentation of her self. In 'Djuna Barnes Probes the Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome Circus' I note the ways in which she disrupts strategies of representation to focus their gaze on her construction of self. She ends the article with 'finding myself quite alone, with nothing but my iniquitous past, I slowly and softly raised my hand – in salute!' (197). This depiction of union with animals is repeated in 'The Girl and the Gorilla' where Barnes uses connection as a structuring force in order to present and subvert her varying levels of individualism. In addition, in the chapter on Stein, I have explored the ways in which, in *Brewsie and Willie*, she uses the image of dogs barking at the wonder of the moon to show how now that 'the earth is all so covered with everybody' (42), the multitude of people

Marthe to regain the presence of her husband and therefore to achieve the collaborative union she so craved. For more on geometrics and modernism see Miranda B. Hickman's *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H.D., and Yeats*. University of Texas Press, 2005.

obscure the brightness of the individual. This concept is extended in *Everybody's Autobiography* where she notes at various points that 'it is funny about identity. You are you because your little dog knows you' (32), questioning how far the external 'knowing' of a dog impacts upon sense of self as an individual.

Therefore, Barnes and Stein, like Coleman, are writing about animals as a narrative tool to write about themselves. Tim Armstrong, in a chapter on 'Modernism's Others' in his 2005 cultural history of modernism, states at the end that 'a final 'other' one might ponder briefly is the animal' (149), and there has been a resurgence of interest in animals within modernist studies over the past decade.⁵⁴ While Armstrong may be slightly dismissive of the import of considering animals as an important other within modernist texts, the pages he applies to the topic are informative in outlining the cultural history of animals during this period. Describing the ways in which the presence of animals in the lives of humans declined rapidly during the period of modernism, in particular because trams and buses replaced horses in the city streets. Armstrong asks 'What does the vanishing of animals from our lives mean?' (150) and cites examples of the emergence of writing where 'the animal and the human are placed together at the origins of psychic life' (150).

⁵⁴ See Carrie Rohman. *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal*. Columbia University Press, 2009, as well as other seminal work about modernism and animals by Margot Norris, Kari Weil, and Derek Ryan.

Armstrong looks briefly at *Nightwood*, noting the descriptions of humans in terms of ‘dogs, elephants, hyenas, birds, horses, deer, swans’ (150), and the prevalence of the image of the beast which Armstrong reads as ‘understood as dirt, the decay of sexual division into desire and loss’ (150). However this can be seen as a misreading when taking into account that Bonnie Kime Scott noted that Barnes wrote to Coleman that she had considered using *Night Beast* as the title of *Nightwood*, and that she regretted, in a letter to Coleman, the “debased meaning now put on that nice word beast” (*Beasts* 41). The most well known passage of *Nightwood* which uses striking animal imagery is the final chapter, ‘The Possessed’, which shows Robin standing before an altar in a chapel, next to a dog who was rearing back, before she sinks to the floor, ending up on all fours enacting a strange union with the dog. Like Coleman’s use of the dog in *The Shutter of Snow* to enact a connection between the protagonist and her husband, here the dog serves to present and enact Robin’s state of mind. We read that she is ‘whimpering now too’ (152) with ‘her head turned completely sideways’ (153) while ‘dragging her forelocks in the dust’ (153). She has become like the dog - ‘She began to bark also, crawling after him – barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and touching’ (153) – and both crying, they give up their interactions and lying on the floor they rest, with the dog’s ‘head flat along her knees’ (153). This potent and troubling scene which concludes the text is a clear example of one the ways in which ‘Modernism can be portrayed as an encounter of self and other in which difference is effaced and reasserted: or

collapsed with problematic results' (Armstrong 151). Robin and the dog are variously one and separate, at odds and at peace. Nora is an observer of this scene, having just entered the chapel, and therefore the scene is read with her presence in mind. It is by observing this tortured interaction between Robin and the dog that she is given a final insight into Robin's agonised selfhood, and so perhaps gains an understanding of her own.

Therefore, the use of animals as an other within narrative is a tool by which these writers can negotiate varying levels of connection in order to consider their presentation of autobiographical subjectivities. As well as using dogs as a narrative tool, Coleman also shows Marthe thinking about moths and birds as a way to present her fluctuating states of mind. As she writes a letter to her father, the words on the page are described as 'pinning under her pencil like squirming moths. The moths had yellow tails and pulled desperately away from the pencil' (20). The moths are an impediment to her being able to communicate with her father, and this reflects her conflation of moths with babies in the line, 'She went up, each step on the feet of a newly born moth' (81), which indicates again that she cannot situate or properly conceive of her new born baby. Of another patient's losses she writes: 'They are all dead now she said, they have soft wings' (38). Frequently within the text one of the older patients repeats that 'Her son was the greatest ornithologist in the State of New York' (149), and this contrasts greatly with the bird and moth imagery in the rest of the novel. This patient's son is able to conceive of birds so accurately that he is able to be the

greatest ornithologist in the state, whereas Marthe cannot situate or present birds except within the confused imaginings of her psychosis. When playing the piano Marthe 'leaned her body to the keys and bent her head above them and from the wide spaces between her fingers burst forth yellow birds to the sun' (131). The birds represent her desire to reach out and connect with the outside world, outside the walls of the asylum, and beyond the snow covered landscape, to a place of light and warmth where connection and understanding can exist and thrive.

Therefore I read this portrayal of the dynamics between self and animal as other as contrary to the 'many accounts [that] portray modernism in terms of mastery rather than enslavement; an armouring of the self against a collapse into the other' (Armstrong 151). This is not an armouring of the self, but a willing and productive engagement with the multiple and generative potential of engaging productively with an other. Armstrong considers the effects of denying the other, concluding that 'rejection of the other and its incorporation work in tandem. If the self is constituted by a series of identifications which undercut its fantasies of autonomy, then the very denial of linkages exposes a narcissistic identification with some prior and supposedly "integral" object' (Armstrong 151). I, however, find that the other, including that of the animal, allows both autonomy and multiplicity, where individualisms are free to become collaborative and collective in their multiple connections.

The Others of Madness

The Shutter of Snow is not a narrative of an internal struggle with mental illness where the subject's perception of self has become so inward that it loses all points of reference with the external world. Instead, and somewhat radically, it is a narrative of the interactions between a patient and the others with whom she comes in contact in the asylum. In *Madness and Modernism*, Louis A. Sass writes that individuals suffering with mental psychosis 'seem to have a special affinity for modes of inwardness and withdrawal akin to that of the modern age' (93). There is, therefore, an alignment of madness with a withdrawal from the external world, something that is also found within theories of the crowd. As outlined in the introduction, the effect of the crowd or the multitude upon the individual, is such that one ceases to be able to think individually. This, like madness, reflects the self as part of but ultimately cut off from external objects and other people. However, Coleman chooses to present her protagonist in *The Shutter of Snow* differently. Marthe is not cut off, has not withdrawn, and is not rendered unable to interact with the outside world. In fact, the text has multiple characters from within the asylum including patients, nurses and doctors with whom she has conflicts, as well as those outside including her father and husband.

Throughout the text we read of Marthe's wish to be reunited with her husband, a reunion that does not materialise during the course of the narrative, though we are told on the penultimate page of the novel that 'Christopher would

come for her tomorrow' (218). This is brought somewhat into doubt with a recollection of the opening pages of the book where we read 'How long do you think it will be before I can see him? Tomorrow perhaps. It was always tomorrow. They always said tomorrow, no matter what the question was' (5). Like her connection with her child, the reunion is something that she both craves and fears. When Christopher did visit her there was often conflict. 'Christopher! she cried. Her voice was like steel. Get out of here, do you hear me? Get out of here, and don't you ever come back' (47). Valentine reads this as a disruption of conventional narrative development as well as 'a frustration of our expectations as readers of reunion and resolution' (137). Another theme of frustration she identifies is 'the constant collision between Marthe and the external systems of order being imposed on her' (137). However, I read these not as Marthe's frustrations but rather as her attempts to piece her selfhood back together by using the figures of the external systems as points of reference that will allow her the stability and presence to once again participate in the external social structures from which she is exiled in the asylum.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ For more on the ways in mental illness affects self-perception, see Vera Kalitzkus and Peter Twohig's chapter 'Strand by Strand: Untying the Knots of Mental and Physical Illness in the Correspondence and Diaries of Antonia White and Emily Holmes Coleman' in *The Tapestry of Health, Illness and Disease*. Rodopi, 2009, pp. 43-55. See also Sophie Blanch's 'Writing Self/Delusion: Subjectivity and Scriptology in Emily Holmes Coleman's *The Shutter of Snow*' in *Depression and Narrative: Telling the Dark*. State University of New York Press, 2008.

'I want to find out what is in me': Diary Writing as Self-Discovery

Coleman's diaries can be read as an attempt to resolve her sense of exile from herself, where she writes as part of a quest for self-understanding. There were periods when Coleman broke off from writing her diary, on occasion to reflect upon the kind of diary she wished to write. After a break of three months, from December 1932 to March 1933, she came back to her diary, writing: 'I don't want to write a diary of events, partly because it's not interesting – but if I should write the kind of diary I like – it wouldn't be interesting either. I want to find out what is in me' (166). This disconnect between writing for a public audience and writing as a form of self-discovery, and even self-creation, recurs in the text. Lejeune writes that diaries touch 'on the equilibrium of the personality and our social bonds' (152). This equilibrium is something Coleman is perpetually trying to understand and establish.

Coleman wrote, in March 1936, that 'Nothing seems real to me until I've written it down. I don't exist at all until I read what I have done. I don't know what I have done. I feel dazed and without a rudder' (242). Her very existence and her connection with reality are dependent both on her writing her diary and reading it back to herself. This is repeated in September 1937, when writing about her son: 'When I was writing last night about him he seemed suddenly to live. Nothing lives, for me, unless I've seen it written, or write about it. Life is the rough draft of art. There are several rough drafts, then the completed thing in a

sentence. One more proof, for me, that the imagination is the reality, and fact the illusion' (348). For Coleman, her diary does not simply record the events of her life, but instead actually creates her life and that of those around her. It is something that she undertakes out of psychological and social necessity, even in times of difficulty and depression. In March 1936 she reflects that she 'cannot get myself down to even writing letters, or reading – have not written in this for one week, and would let it go easily now if I didn't force myself to keep on writing a diary. It is very good for me, keeps my mind clear' (250). This elevated status and prioritisation of diary writing reveals its importance for her self-creation and understanding of her social context.

At the same time, Coleman is aware of the public nature of her diary. An entry in September 1932 reports an occasion when her friends Peggy Guggenheim, Djuna Barnes and John Holms 'clamoured for the diary' (109), and that Guggenheim in particular 'wanted me to read the diary' (109). Coleman read the pages written in Paris in 1929, and 'thought it would not go off well' (109). However, the reaction was such that, 'they sat and roared, and screamed, and howled with laughter, they doubled up and shrieked, until I was worn and Peggy had to go to the lavatory, because it had made her bowels work. I did not read all of it, only the comic parts' (109-10). Coleman writes at length about their reactions, repeating how comic her friends had found her entries: 'I have never seen people laugh so much' (110); 'I knew it was really funny' (119); 'I laughed so hard myself that I ached sitting in my chair' (110); Guggenheim would 'throw

up her knitting needles and open her mouth and show all her teeth and scream' (110); 'John sat doubled up on the lounge, and he would hug himself with his arms and roll about the couch' (110); 'Djuna sat and laughed as if it pained her face' (110); and, 'I thought they would split their sides' (110). These depictions suggest that her audience doesn't just find it amusing, but that they have physical bodily reactions to Coleman's humour. As a reader, this repetitious insistence that the diary is deeply comic comes as somewhat of a surprise, as very little that is easily understood to be comic is discovered prior, or later, in the text, and Coleman expresses no interest in comedy, or any attempts to achieve comedic writing. She explains that 'the funniest parts could not be quoted out of their context; it was the character which was created in the diary, such a funny one. Like Shelley gone completely mad' (110). Creating a distinction between the character created in the diary and herself, distances and protects her from the reception of her friends, and the implications of their reactions. She acknowledges that 'if Peggy had written a diary then we'd have heard a different story' (111). Coleman composed her diary for public reception as well as a means for self-discovery, with the acute awareness that the resultant self she created was both character and reality.

She provides only one example aimed to back up her claims of the comic behaviour of this autobiographical character she creates of herself: 'this poor girl, whom I had made love to, hanging about, miserable, and I "cheering" her by telling her for God's sake to get in another state of mind, and offering her some

of my books' (110). While this is not obviously funny, she finds the comedy in her misplaced attempts to resolve the romantic situation in which she found herself. Her laughter is self-depreciating, and the laughter directed towards her is personal. She writes, 'I knew it [the diary] was really funny, and should be published. I said it was extreme honesty which enabled me to read a diary like that in front of Djuna, honesty given to me by grace' (119). Coleman is not only raising the question of the distinction between character and reality, but also between honesty, or fact, and the fallibility of self-knowledge, or whether or not one's work is really comic, or indeed whether or not it is worthy of publication. In this way she is performing a modernist destabilisation of her position as omniscient diary keeper, and instead self-consciously presenting herself as unreliable and skewed in her perceptions.

While Coleman describes herself as writing always with honesty, she presents this honesty as a willingness to be self-critical, rather than as having a privileged access to any kind of overriding truth. It is precisely her ability to reveal herself with honesty that allows her to present an accurate portrayal of her flaws. One of the flaws she describes, in the first volume of her diary in 1928 which she destroyed, is 'Shoddy American womanhood' (151). She writes that 'it made me sick. I took out a little poem I wrote in New York, which rather moved me, and one or two others, and the Proust quotations, and went down and fed the entire thick manuscript to the flames in the house furnace. It gave me a slight pang' (151). Even though her friend John Holms had told her 'I shouldn't

have thrown away my diary, that one should keep all records' (151), she 'couldn't keep it' (151). Therefore, her self-presentation is mixed in terms of her own self-perception, as comic and shoddy, but Coleman is always striving for her self-critique to be honest and self-aware. In Maurice Blanchot's study of diary writing he concludes, 'thus sincerity represents, for the diary, the requirement it must attain but not surpass. No one has to be more sincere than the diarist, and sincerity is that transparency that allows him not to cast a shadow on the contained existence of each day to which he limits the task of writing' (183). This definition appears to be a more accurate description of the 'honesty' that Coleman is making claims to and insisting upon.

Although she does not go on to destroy any further diaries, she continues to be critical of her self, her writing, and the diaries themselves, in her pursuit of sincerity: 'I've been very disgusted by reading the diary I wrote in October and November 1932. I'd like to burn it except it would be healthier to keep it to remind me of what I can be like – and probably am like three-quarters of the time. Since I don't write anything but diaries it's the only way I can see myself' (171). As well as helping her to understand herself, Coleman also states that one of the reasons it's important for her to keep a diary as it plays a similar and as effective a role as her intellectual connections: 'Very good for me to keep a diary now, relieves the strain on Djuna and keeps me occupied, when I was wandering around restlessly from the kitchen to here putting down a few lines of

poetry now and then' (218). However, Coleman also records moments where she feels that her diary writing is a detriment to her life and other work:

I shan't keep a journal any more. It is an awful nuisance. I can't keep one casually, and keeping a full one means writing half the day – and thinking perpetually about what you are going to say in it. It makes me think, and makes me observe, but I am tired of such an intense devotion to it. It means I can't get anything else done (182).

This devotion is tiring and all consuming, and it can also mean a painful confrontation with the more difficult periods in her life: 'I don't want to keep this diary any more – the things that are going to happen I dread writing down any more. The diary keeps things clear to me. I hate to write down the dreadful facts which are going to happen' (246). In a letter to Barnes on 18th January 1937, she admits that her diary, while sustaining and producing the reality of her subjectivity, also prevents her from fully living her life:

I can't stop this letter without telling you a word about me, but honestly I don't even write my diary any more because I am so sick of statements about myself and my life. I want only to live, be allowed to live. This seems to be vouchsafed me at the moment. I am happy but intensely nervous. I don't trust anything, don't believe anything, don't count on any future. I am alive and not brooding however which I suppose is better than dead and screaming. I shall write some poetry soon (341).

In lieu of her diary, Coleman finds she is more able to turn to her other favoured genre of poetry.

Coleman is writing for a public audience as well as writing as a form of self-discovery, and self-creation, to the extent where her very existence and her connection with reality are dependent on the writing and reading of her diary. It does not simply record the events of her life, but instead actually creates her life

and that of those around her and therefore is an activity that stems from psychological and social necessity. Her devotion to her diary writing is all consuming, resulting in rich and complex diary entries which reveal a struggle to define an individual selfhood which reflects the multiple identities at play within her autobiographical presentation of self.

‘I want always, with people, to be alone’: Connection and Solitude

While firmly part of her social circle, Coleman records moments where she longs for solitude, particularly in a romantic context: ‘I have never been unhappy except through a man; when I am alone, I am happy under any circumstances’ (347). She toys with the necessity of having a romantic other, and whether or not her writing is sufficiently sustaining. She continues to explore the theme of honesty, or living as true a life as one is capable of living, and portrays this as including an other, and work, in the form of writing: ‘I wish this day I could begin an honest life – a life with one person in it, and my work. I wish I would wake up in the morning with some purpose in my heart, and with no desire for “love,” except that connected with Peter’ (343). Lamenting her desire for romantic love, Coleman is searching for an alternative form of connection. In lieu of this she turns to solitude: ‘Now I sit here in this room. I have taken out my books and put them up before me. I want nothing of life but solitude. I cannot hold myself until that time when I shall go back down to my little town and out into its country with the stallion sky’ (9). Blanchot writes of diary writing as ‘the recourse against

solitude that it assures' (185), and Coleman toys with the varying levels of solitude and connection that her diaries provide. Blanchot's vision of the way in which 'the ambition to eternalise the good moments and even to make the whole of life a solid mass that one can hold close, firmly embraced' (186), is illuminating about Coleman's desire to find a way for writing about others to perform acts of self-definition and self-creation. For Blanchot 'the hope, by uniting the insignificance of life with the nonexistence of the work, to raise null life up to the beautiful surprise of art, and formless art to the unique truth of life' (186) is the ultimate aim of the diarist. Diaries are 'an undertaking of redemption: one writes to save writing, to save one's life by writing, to save one's little self [...] or to save one's great self by giving it scope' (186). This is evident in Coleman's efforts to present herself within her diaries as a unique individual but equally firmly situated within her social context.

Coleman recognises that as a writer community and connection are essential for her art. In one diary entry she writes: 'I often feel that life (amongst people) is like working in a laboratory; solitude is the preparation for that. It's so hard, to go into the world again, and fight; it's so heavenly to be alone, close with God. I know I'll never know anything if I don't live in the world. I am not a saint. I am an artist and the world is my stuff – unfortunately' (179). She accepts the necessity of community and of finding a connection. In the following passage Coleman touches on the consequences of attempting to achieve a connection, in this case with the poet Barker, whom she helped creatively and financially:

Being a woman I am anxious to please. But even when he is reading poetry to me, the most heavenly moments I have known with a human person, I feel away – I wish he would stop. I want to read it alone. I sit there and smile and smile and am a villain, with smiling face. I want his affection, and friendship. But to gain it, I have to submerge myself, and it kills me. I want always, with people, to be alone, unless sex is going on; or unless poetry is being read (I sometimes get quite free then); or unless someone is being really witty. Of course I liked being with Eliot because of the excitement and the vanity, etc. For a woman who wants always to be alone I seem to see a good many people (272).

This passage reveals the contradictory feelings she felt towards her changing desires for solitude and connection. The repetition of 'smile' and 'smiling' highlights the falseness of this emotion and how it does not correspond with her feeling 'away'. She ascribes this partially to a gendered issue, 'being a woman I am anxious to please', where she is forced to 'submerge' herself. The inauthenticity of the performance of listening to, and experiencing poetry is equated with death. Coleman strives for an honest life, but her writing reveals her inability to reconcile her competing desires for connection and solitude.

Coleman's diaries can be read as a lifelong search to find an other, suitable to produce the autobiographical subjectivity that was sufficiently honest, or sincere. She is searching for an adequate truth, one she felt was only obtainable through connection with an other. However, the type of connection she required was one that allowed her autonomy, and an influence that did not compromise her honesty. This is not something that Coleman achieved, despite frequent attempts including with Djuna Barnes, John Holms, Peggy Guggenheim, Barker, Antonia White, and romantic connections with Judith [no

known surname], Peter Hoare, and Bianchetti. The following analysis will detail the ways in which Coleman's diary reveals attempts at performing collaborative connections, and the ultimate failure of these attempts, which resulted in Coleman not being able to create an honest subjectivity within her texts.

'What does she think of my mind?': Djuna Barnes

Coleman first met Barnes in August 1932, while visiting Peggy Guggenheim at the Hayford Hall estate in Devonshire. Barnes was at the estate in order to work on the manuscript of her novel *Nightwood*, and Coleman was responsible for the eventual publication of the book by T.S. Eliot.⁵⁶ Podnieks writes that 'within the heavily sexualised, liquored, and literary atmosphere of the place, Barnes and Coleman were at first reluctant to become friends and supporters of each other's works' (93). I read this reluctance as Coleman's struggle to understand Djuna, and an inability to comprehend the influence she wants Djuna to have on her self-perception and her writing. There is a trajectory in their relationship which can be read in terms of Coleman's creation of her autobiographical self, as perceived in relation to Barnes.

Initially Coleman describes Barnes in terms of her appearance and physicality. In the first entry in which Djuna appears, Coleman writes of 'Djuna

⁵⁶ See Fuchs, Miriam. "The Triadic Association of Emily Holmes Coleman, T.S. Eliot, and Djuna Barnes," for a full account of the rhetorical strategies used by Coleman to persuade Eliot to publish *Nightwood*, as well as details of her private reflections of the process in her diaries.

with scarlet lips and perched hat' (94), and 'Djuna talks through her nose like a sea-horn' (94). She writes that she burst out and said to Holms that 'I can't stand Djuna's stupidity' (95). Holms patiently responded 'trying to make me see them [Barnes and Guggenheim] as they exist, not in a dream' (95). Coleman is found to be struggling to see, describe and understand Barnes, and, perhaps more importantly, she is equally struggling to understand how Barnes perceives of her. During one of their dinners, 'Peggy said, "Djuna thinks you're both [Coleman and Holms] mad," and that set me off. "I don't care what Djuna thinks." Got into a fearful nervous state, then suddenly saw myself, excited and trembling, and knew that in any minute I might take up a glass and crash it' (97). It is upon hearing of Djuna's perception of Coleman, that she is able to suddenly see herself and understand her own state of mind. When Djuna tries to retire to bed, Coleman attempts to provoke her to continue their literary discussion, about Dostoyevsky, saying 'You're a writer, aren't you? Don't you like to talk about books?' (97), but 'this did not produce the effect I desired' (97), and Djuna left anyway. They also echo her letters to Eliot, where she describes Coleman's writing as 'quite worthless' (qtd. in Fuchs 30), and containing 'emotional falseness' (30), which was a surprising approach considering the letters were endeavours to get *Nightwood* published by Eliot at Faber and Faber.

This sets up the dynamic between Barnes and Coleman and the importance Coleman places on Barnes for her own self-creation within her diaries. Coleman records how later that evening she asks Holms 'what does

Djuna think of me?’ (98), and ‘what does she think of my mind?’ (98). Of all the discussions held that evening, Barnes chooses to record this dynamic in her entry that night. She is exploring through her writing the ways in which Barnes’ views impact her own self-perception, and in acknowledging Barnes’ inability to write about herself, Coleman turns the lens upon her own challenges in creating her autobiographical self within her diaries.

In addition Coleman writes at length about the comments she provided to Barnes about her writing. Much of it is critical, with initial comments including ‘you have something to say, and don’t say it’ (99), and ‘*Ryder* had no courage, you were afraid’ (99-100). Coleman laments ‘the fact that she won’t write about herself’ (116), and that ‘she won’t admit the least thing’ (117). These comments become repetitious over the course of her Hayford Hall entries: ‘I told Djuna that since I had come to know her I thought far more of her than of anything she had written; and could not understand why she hadn’t the guts to write about herself’ (119).

Later that year in Paris, after an evening with Barnes, Holms and Guggenheim, Coleman reflects: ‘how to take Djuna is beyond me. She can’t feel anything without being in, or thinking of a crowd – John says this is not entirely so. I don’t feel anything when someone like Djuna goes on – I just can’t. Every word she says is dramatic, said for a reply. She can’t help it’ (156). Coleman is self-consciously interrupting conventional strategies of representation. In response to her sense that Barnes’ motivation for her behaviour is that of

reception, Coleman refuses to present her as anything other than false within her own diaries, and thereby inclines the reader to think the same. Coleman repeats that 'Djuna cares so much what people think' (156), and this prevents the intellectual and emotional honesty necessary for them to have a productive collaborative connection.

Later, in London in 1936, we read of a progression in their relationship, while Coleman was assisting Barnes with getting *Nightwood* published by Eliot. Barnes' biographer, Herring, writes that 'if one were to award laurels for the greatest contribution made to the artistic career of Djuna Barnes, it would have to go to Emily Coleman' (10). This contribution came at some cost, and with little recognition or thanks. Coleman's commitment to her role as a facilitator and benefactor for writers allows her to accept this cost, but moments in the diary reveal her frustrations: 'I'll get nothing but shit for having slaved for this book [*Nightwood*] – of that I'm mortally sure' (303). Nonetheless, her relationship with Djuna reaches a point where it is both stimulating, and comprehensible. It begins to make some sense to Coleman: 'She was confused, loves me, is dazed by me, doesn't understand, wants to know me – I love her and in time we will make a good team. There's everything in her I admire, even brains if you can dig them out, and I will make sacrifices to know her' (303).

Barnes increases in importance to Coleman, particularly for the stimulation that she provides her: 'In the back of the car with Djuna I told her she was a joy to me, that it was wonderful to be in a party and be stimulated myself;

since John died I had to give all the stimulation wherever I was' (292). Coleman is increasing in self-awareness and self-understanding, but ultimately the connection with Barnes does not provide Coleman with the other that she needs to create a sustaining and productive autobiographical subjectivity. Herring writes that Barnes and Coleman 'felt a closeness akin to love but were often at daggers drawn, for together they constituted an explosive chemical mixture that was stimulating but dangerous' (190). In addition to the volatile nature of their relationship, it ultimately fails in helping Coleman to truly understand, create or live her autobiographical subjectivities; she writes that she loves Djuna but that 'when she is there I can't live in myself' (308).

'A book of wisdom and deep findings': John Farrar Holms

The intellectual stimulation provided by John Farrar Holms goes some way towards helping Coleman to 'live in myself' (308). Holms (1897-1934) was a lover of Peggy Guggenheim, and a literary critic for the *New Statesman* and *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, and had ambitions to be a writer. Coleman's connection with Holms is the closest she comes to finding that other with whom she could collaborate in order to allow her to understand and create her autobiographical subjectivity. This was not a romantic relationship; she writes that 'his presence does not thrill me like one I love, it is like seeing a long-wanted book on the shelf, a book of wisdom and deep findings. It is like going to a sibyl who has once told you all the truth' (17-18). Instead, he is described in

terms of how he influenced her intellectually, which Coleman privileges over romance.

Early on in their relationship, Coleman writes that they: ‘came to know companionship that comes through common understanding. I know him now, I know his heart. There is no one whom I have ever known who has so formed my life’ (11). Podneiks writes that this feeling is mutual, as whereas Holms was in a romantic relationship with Peggy Guggenheim, ‘he chose Coleman to be his intellectual [partner]’ (8). Coleman continues that ‘there is no other person with whom I can say my say but Agamemnon [Holms]. He is the only human being to whom I can tell the truth. And it is because he knows me for what I am, and is not in love with me’ (11). This relationality is presented as vital for Coleman’s self-creation, to the point where he has in fact ‘formed’ her. This word is repeated in the following sentence: ‘Agamemnon, through his genius, has formed my genius. My genius is myself’ (11). It is only through him, that she is able to attempt to become herself within her writing.

These steps towards self-creation, through the medium of an other, while being productive and sustaining, also have consequences for Coleman. As Podneiks writes, ‘in order to achieve this subject-self, it was crucial that she achieve autonomy. She was aware of the fact that she was often unhealthily under the influence of Holms, and the diary documents her struggles to break free of his opinions, and think and write for herself’ (111). In a discussion with Holms about her poem ‘Lysias’, Coleman records that she said to him “‘The

trouble is”, I said, “that I cannot find the medium between what is in my unconscious mind and what I am saturated with from other minds. As soon as I write consciously it sounds like someone else” (18). This saturation is something that she tries to escape. Holms provides her with an illuminating answer to her question ““why have I such a passion now to read philosophy?”” (18). He said ‘Because your chaos is so great that you are desperately reaching out for anything that will give you an illusion of order. People who think in groups may be very intelligent – as the people of Bloomsbury are – but they are not important. The only people of importance are those who think alone’ (18). Coleman’s search for the order and stability that comes from understanding the thoughts of ‘other minds’ comes at the expense of her ability to think alone.

At times Coleman celebrates that ‘the whole diary breathes my passion for what I got from him [Holms]’ (111), but she also is aware that she has become ‘conscious of how much he [Holms] influences me, and I try to keep my end up by contradicting everything. [...] I felt very much torn. I have believed lately that I must get away from John. He’s the only person in the world who believes in my genius’ (156). This contradiction, or feeling of being torn, is repeated throughout the diaries, where Coleman craves Holms’ influence, but also feels the necessity of escaping it: ‘I said I was a medium, and resented being so; and continually absorbed by what he thought’ (161). However, Coleman is never able to rid herself of her connection with Holms. Even after his untimely death as a result of an accident in 1934, she writes of him at various

intervals. For example, she writes that she cannot believe in his death as 'he is still living in me, and I think of him whenever I am alone' (177), and that 'he's not dead to me. Every word he ever said I remember. I never forget a single thing he said' (211).

'She does not know me, and I cannot explain': Judith

A connection of which Coleman was more easily able to rid herself, was her romantic relationship with Judith, whose surname she does not record. She was with Coleman in St Tropez in 1929, and appears early on in *Rough Draft*.

Coleman notes: 'My old diary (1928-29) is not honest. Not a word about the violent homosexual feelings I had all that summer, and the winter too, whenever I was alone' (9). Coleman's connection with Judith is described primarily in bodily terms: 'She I made love to, her body is pear-like and full. I found her body perfect, so I poured passion into her. I was a flame on which oil is spent' (9). She repeats later that she 'loved Judith physically' (42), and that she loved 'her with my body' (42).

However, this physical love was not enough to sustain the type of intellectual connection Coleman desired. She writes 'I wish I had never seen [Judith]. Her sweet sensitive face attracted me, her lovely body condensed my homosexual feelings, which had been growing less and less vague' (54). This surface attraction was short lived, and by 1930 Coleman writes that 'Judith is with me and I am not the same. Last summer her body stirred me, now I am

cold.' (54). Coleman attributes this to the fact that 'I do not want anyone to depend upon me, because I am only for myself' (9). In the absence of the kind of connection Coleman felt was vital to her work, Coleman resorts back to her desire for solitude.

She attributes the reason for her wishing she had never seen Judith to a lack of mental connection. Coleman finds herself 'bored through and through' (17), because 'she does not know me, and I cannot explain' (54). She reveals a lack of respect for Judith's intellectual abilities: 'My opinions silence her' (9); 'She chatters like a child learning to talk' (9); 'she says everything in an ordinary way' (9), she 'was bored with her afterwards' (244); and, 'she is not sensitive in the right ways' (42). In response Coleman feels 'indifference' (9) and annoyance, writing 'I turn my face to the wall and strain my hands (9), and later, 'she chatters and I clench my hands' (42), and 'I cannot listen to this chattering' (9).

Coleman reflects upon her homosexuality, and concludes: 'now I see that I am a two-fold planet. I sing before men and crunch women in my fingers' (9). Utilising heteronormative structures she positions Judith as female, and herself as male: 'She is sweet like a little breeze, I am afraid to dominate her but I cannot help it' (9), whereas 'I think of myself, with a man, as wholly feminine' (9). Reflecting upon this years later, her conclusion remains: 'In the Lesbian thing I behaved exactly like a man. I wanted the woman terribly sexually, took her, was bored with her afterwards' (244). This would reflect contemporaneous thinking about homosexuality in terms of gender usurpation, particularly by theorists,

such as Havelock Ellis, whose 1897 text *Sexual Inversion* was the first English medical textbook on homosexuality, and sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing who wrote *Psycopathia Sexualis* (1886). Both writers proposed that homosexuality was an inborn reversal of gender traits, and Coleman uses this language as a way of understanding and describing her desires.

In Coleman's descriptions of her homosexuality, there is an ambivalence to any implications this might have on her identity formation. She writes: 'They began at first in dreams. You cannot avoid these things, I cannot' (54). So, because she 'had got so that I could think of nothing but women' (54), she 'resolved to settle this' and she 'was going to do something about it' (54). Finding that she 'was more excited about Judith sexually than I had been over any man' (54), she becomes 'frightened' (54). But after asking herself 'Can it be I am homosexual?' (54), she decides 'Whatever I am, that shall I be' (54). When she starts her relationship with Judith she writes that 'it turned out that it was very beautiful, it was exactly what I wanted and what I had imagined' (54).

While Coleman writes that one of the 'only genuine sexual feelings I have ever had were the Lesbian affair I had in 1929 (and what about that? how much it showed!)' (54), she finds that 'instead of liking men less I have wanted them more' (54). In these deliberations, Coleman shows an understanding of her sexuality, but also questions her differing attitudes towards men and women 'I thought I was a Lesbian. But I kept on liking men, looking up to them, wanting their attention (vanity – but why did I not want women's attention?). It is not as

simple as that.' (244). She does not try to simplify her various desires, but instead continues on in her recounting of her desire for a connection, whether with a man or a woman, romantic or intellectual. In the case of Judith, as with Holms and Barnes, her influence was not enough to provide the productive collaborative autobiographical subjectivity Coleman was searching for within her text.

Conclusion

Coleman is rarely presented as a singular subjectivity within her diaries. Just as the narrative of *The Shutter of Snow* presents Marthe through the lens of her varying connections with her son, husband and others in the asylum, in her diaries Coleman tells the story of her own life through the lens of those with whom she strove to develop formative relationships. She charts the dynamics between herself and these others, seeking an equilibrium: 'with every atom of my conscious being I knew there was a harmony, and that we can be one with it' (211). It is only through this harmony that Coleman could hope to find the autobiographical agency that she sought, and the authority that she required for self-understanding.

For Coleman, her diary was not simply a means to record the events of her life, but instead to experiment with ways of understanding and presenting her multiple connections and subjectivities. Her rich and complex diary entries reveal a struggle to define an individual selfhood which reflects the multiple

identities at play within her autobiographical presentation of self. While Coleman's attempts at self-definition within her diary reveal her textual enactments between the subject and the other, she does not appear to come to any resolution in the form of a creative other, or an understanding of the multitude that allows the development of a meaningful collaboration. Her lifelong experimentation with various means of establishing a connection result in a tone of frustration throughout her writing. With Barnes, Holmes and her son, Coleman obtains momentary glimpses of the collaborative union that she so craved, but each time her desire for the harmony of a true creative alliance is thwarted.

In 1944, Coleman converted to Catholicism and devoted the remaining thirty years of her life to the church. This period of her life is not included in the extracts published in *Rough Draft* as it covers the years 1929-1937, and yet she did continue with her diary writing, as well as her fiction and correspondence. In lieu of seeing these unpublished papers, no conclusions may be drawn, and so I am left to hypothesise that within her diaries during this period we might read of a similar search for a collaborative union with god. Whether or not this search finally gave her the creative alliance that she so craved would be interesting to determine. In *The Shutter of Snow*, part of Marthe's psychosis is that she believes that she is Jesus Christ. Rather than as arising as a result of madness, this could be viewed as a misplaced attempt at a collaborative connection. Towards the end of the novel Marthe determines that 'Now she knew that all that was needed was for her to have done every piece of work that was to be done

there, and when she had completed every one and answered all the questions correctly she would go home. It would be known then, God would be known' (171). She is working through her understanding of exactly what steps she needs to take in order to achieve her ultimate goal: true collaboration with an other so that she might finally be equipped to know herself.

Conclusion: Collaborative Voices and Aesthetic Renewal

In this investigation of how far collaboration operates as an aesthetic interpretative category in the autobiographical writing of H.D., Barnes, Stein and Coleman, I find that it plays a significant role in the creation of collective individualisms. Their writing reflects the collective spirit of the collaborative forums in which they lived and worked, and the contemporary interest in the position of the individual within the context of the crowd, and therefore we cannot read collaboration as merely a social coincidence of the times. By examining collaborative models of autobiographical subject formation, multiple attempts at a reconciliation of the individual with the whole are revealed. By configuring individuals as collective entities these writers were able to find and establish alternative forms of autobiographical self-definition which are multiple in their construction. Their writings strain against any totalising views of individualism, rejecting notions of complete autonomous subjects, and instead utilise collaboration as a formative tenet that is shifting and disordered, and which is radically unsettling of conventions. At times entirely undemocratic and at others a participatory dynamic that fuels a productive interchange of ideas, collaboration operates as a tool to present their autobiographical subjectivities through the prism of another.

The textually enacted interactions between the subject and the other result in the emergence of various autobiographical selves, and I have examined

the role collective and relational identities play in the individuation process taking place in these autobiographies. The others that I have identified include a female, romantic, creative other (in the case of the depiction of H.D. and Bryher in their autobiographical novels), unknown individuals (in the case of Barnes' interviews), the social context (in the case of Barnes' articles), the multitude (in the case of Stein's autobiographies), the search for a creative other (in Coleman's diaries), and the mother-son dynamic and the theme of animals (in Coleman's autobiographical novel). This is a wide spectrum of others, imagined in as expansive a way as possible to take in as full a configuration of relationality as possible. However, even with this breadth of focus, the nature of relationality means that there is always scope to go further in terms of conceiving of the other, and this invites future investigation of the wide impact of the other on selfhoods.

One of Coleman's diary entries reveals the multiple ways these writers sought to collaboratively present themselves through the prism of an other. It is the entirety of the diary extract for Thursday 2nd August 1934, and I quote it in full to allow an accurate consideration of the effect of the piece. Coleman was staying at Guggenheim's new country estate, Warblington Castle in Hampstead, along with her son, who had recently arrived from France. In the extract Coleman attempts to review her own weaknesses, and it is only after nine of these attempts that she reveals that she has been imagining these weaknesses through the perspectives of her social circle:

I thought: I'm so fond of comments on other people's weaknesses; let's have a few on myself. I tried several. (1) Emily in a loud voice, roaring and giggling, her mouth open to show her back teeth, turning with eyes ashine the conversation upon herself; taking the reigns, looking apprehensively about, bounds forward on her hobby. (2) Little Emily, barging about in the obscure sea of the intellect, having stepped off proudly from the shore; sees a raft containing the sacred words; mounts it and puts to the wind. (3) Sitting in a trance-like voice explaining to Peggy how to meet the English; to Phyliss the moral values of what she has done; to Sonia, her fallacies; looking shocked and dazed at their defections. (4) Emily picking her nose with the left small finger of her right hand, scratching her leg with the other, bellows poetical revelations. (5) Looking fondly at her son, sees the resemblance, smirks contentment; when the conversation turns on him, sparkles with a more than human smugness. (6) Emily kissing her son with loud smacks urges him to greater and greater heights of daring. (7) With bulbous female pretensions covering her flat breasts, sees man looking at her leg, falls into ecstasy.

I now feel I'm getting into art. (8) Emily, the light of God coming into her eyes, explains what Holms has meant. (9) Emily, frowning in contempt of those who are beyond the soul, announces Holms' intent; screaming because she is opposed, she falls back desperately upon his sentences; failing, she trembles, shudders, and smiles a change of front.

This I did by imagining different people thinking of me. i.e. As follows: (1) Tony, (2) Peter, (3) Peggy, (4) Djuna, (5) Peggy, (6) Peggy, (7) John, (8)⁵⁷, (9) Hugh Kingsmill.⁵⁸ (200)

This is a unique and rich diary entry which reveals the extent to which Coleman viewed her diary as not only a site from which she could enact the self-definition and self-understanding that she so desired, but also the ways in which she used her diary as an experimental site from which to explore and devise a modernist

⁵⁷ Coleman has blackened out the name here.

⁵⁸ Podnieks' footnote at the end of this extract gives details of Hugh Kingsmill Lunn (1889-1949) describing him as an English anthologist, biographer, novelist and literary critic. He was also a writer and literary editor of the *New Statesman*, to which his friend John Holms had contributed.

literary technique through which she could present her subjectivities. It is a paranoid account that suggests the trauma she feels when considering the views of others. The formulaic sentences follow largely the same structure, describing simultaneous actions, and while they are separated they have many similarities which highlight her perceived weaknesses. One of these is volume, with descriptions of a loud voice, roaring, bellowing, and screaming. There is also a theme of movement, with bounding forward, mounting, and barging about, and a great deal of physicality, with eyes ashine, showing her back teeth, picking her nose, and covering her breasts. There is also the use of dramatic emotions, with words such as apprehension, trembling, shuddering, frowning, shocked, dazed, and falling into ecstasy. This presentation of Coleman as loud, energetic, physical and emotional reveals how she feels she is perceived by others, and they are terms that are entirely contrary to the expected conventions of femininity. She is also vulgar, vain, patronising, smug, and narcissistic. This passage is an innovation for Coleman, and an exploration of the ways in which she used her diary to experiment stylistically and psychologically. It is also revealing of her hierarchy of opinion, with three entries in the imagined voice of Guggenheim, and none in the imagined voice of her son. This unflinching examination of herself was something that Coleman was not able to achieve except through the imagined voices of her contemporaries, and it reveals collaborative voices that result in dispersed but vivid selfhoods.

The passage is impressive for its astute imaginings of the voices of others, revealing Coleman's awareness of the views of those to whom she was closest. In particular, the entry in the imagined voice of Barnes - 'Emily picking her nose with the left small finger of her right hand, scratching her leg with the other, bellows poetical revelations' (200) - echoes closely Barnes' use of the grotesque to create portraits of women, often of those she knew personally, in her texts *The Book of Repulsive Women* and *The Ladies Almanack*. It also echoes Coleman's physical descriptions of Barnes, discussed in chapter four, such as that 'Djuna talks through her nose like a sea-horn' (94), which is equally vulgar and breaking of traditional stereotypes of femininity. Similar to Coleman's attempts in this diary entry, in the chapter on Barnes, I outlined the ways in which Barnes privileges producing a portrait of herself in her interviews rather than the interviewees, by imagining herself through the lens of others.

There are also numerous parallels with the way Stein used the voice of Toklas in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, which could be described as a novel length version of the same exercise Coleman attempts in this diary entry. Throughout this autobiography Stein uses Toklas' voice to describe herself, almost always with her full name, from descriptions of her character - 'Gertrude Stein who has an explosive temper' (15) - to trivial notes on her preferences - 'Gertrude Stein has a weakness for breakable objects' (18) - and her creative process - 'Gertrude Stein meditated and made sentences' (56). Of course Stein's colonisation of Toklas' voice is an entirely undemocratic form of

collaboration; however, Bryher notes in her autobiography *The Heart to Artemis*, that while Toklas 'had subordinated her own gifts to looking after her friend [Stein]' (250) at the same time 'Her own personality was intact' (250). While *Everybody's Autobiography* does not follow the same strategy of ventriloquising the voice of Toklas, Stein is careful to record the opinions that those in her social circle had of her, always taking great interest in her public persona. She also reflects in this text about the reaction of people who were written about in the publication of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and determines that writers, as opposed to painters, 'did not really mind anything any one said about them' (21), because 'writers know that writing is writing' (21). However, she also makes the contradictory observation that: 'Besides writers have an endless curiosity about themselves and anything that has been written about them helps to help them know something about themselves or about what anybody else says about them' (21). Stein is making a claim for a specific form of egotism in writers where they do not 'mind' what is written about them, but instead find these perspectives helpful towards their goal of self-knowledge. Certainly in her writing she shows herself to be expert in creating collaborative voices through which she can explore and reveal the multiple facets of her autobiographical subjectivities, without ever sacrificing her individualism in the process.

H.D. and Bryher, rather than displaying the same interest in the views of others, keep their collaborative focus on one another. As outlined in chapter one, where Bryher engages collaboratively with the voice of H.D. it is when she

evokes the atmosphere of H.D.'s texts to reference the tone in her autobiographical novel *West* by writing, 'This is the world here of H.D.'s *Helmsman*' (156) and then producing an imitation of this poem in order to codify their shared vision of unity and collaborative experience. This is repeated where she writes 'For beauty of phrase and psychological insight there is no poet more interesting than H.D. Flower leaf and salt water and a mind like a bird, diving everywhere' (156), yet again referencing the collaborative unity that they shared. Writing of how, at the end of *Two Selves*, 'A voice all wind and gull notes said: "I was waiting for you to come"' (289), Bryher is evoking, again, H.D.'s poetic Imagist style. Just as H.D. was waiting for Bryher, so Bryher was waiting for H.D., and it is through their collaborative merging that their autobiographical selves may be fully realised in the collaborative bond of their voices, their poetry and their eroticised subjectivities that are interacting and merging.

H.D., Barnes, Stein and Coleman were looking for more than inspiration with their collaborations; they were each seeking out creative others who could provide subjectivities with whom they could interact as part of a process of self-creation, self-reflection and individualisation. Their autobiographical writings are experiments in establishing, formulating, and ultimately understanding the significance of their own lived experience. Like Coleman's diary entry quoted above, they are attempting to open up unknown aspects of their selfhoods through the voices of others, as part of an exercise in self-discovery and self-realisation. Using modernist strategies of displacement and distortion within their

narratives, they each strove to articulate and recover autobiographical subjectivities that are multiple and inherently relational. As a result they uncover and restore unconscious, creative visions of self that allow the enactment of aesthetic renewal and heightened sensibility within their collective individualisms.

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