

Material Minds and Modern Fiction: The Psychology of Sexual Difference in West, Stein, and Woolf

Author: Linda Marie Martin

Persistent link: <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/bc-ir:107625>

This work is posted on [eScholarship@BC](#),
Boston College University Libraries.

Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2017

Copyright is held by the author, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise noted.

MATERIAL MINDS AND MODERN FICTION: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN WEST, STEIN, AND WOOLF

Linda Marie Martin

A dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of
the department of English
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
Graduate School

September 2017

**MATERIAL MINDS AND MODERN FICTION:
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE IN WEST, STEIN, AND WOOLF**

Linda Marie Martin

Advisor: Marjorie Howes, Ph.D.

Material Minds and Modern Fiction examines how modern women writers adapt discourses from experimental psychology in their fiction to confront the politicized issue of psychological sexual difference. Debates regarding the concept of the “gendered brain” were fundamental to the early twentieth-century women’s movement in Great Britain and the United States: defenders of the anti-suffrage and antifeminist position used the supposedly inherent differences between men and women’s brains to justify the denial of rights, whereas equality feminists insisted on the innate sameness of the human mind to bolster their claim to equal sociopolitical access. My dissertation attests that Rebecca West, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf draw on experimental-psychological theory in their literary works in a way that unsettles the premises of this debate, developing literary discourses that acknowledge psychological disparities between men and women without conceding to gender essentialism. Emerging at the end of the nineteenth century, experimental psychology was a disciplinary approach to psychological study that theorized cognition as a physiological process to be studied using the empiricist methodology of the natural sciences. The material mind—the idea that the human mind is no more or less than the human brain—was a foundational concept in the field.

Employing an interdisciplinary method, my dissertation shows that experimental-psychological theory enabled modern women authors to approach the issue of gendered

brains from a materialist perspective that maintained the equality-feminist claim to parity. West, Stein, and Woolf draw on diverse strands of experimental-psychological thought to craft distinctive aesthetic strategies that position sexual difference as the product of inequitable environmental exposures or social conditioning rather than an immutable feature of psychic life. My project testifies to the prominence of experimental-psychological theory in the modern era as well as the diversity of psychological schools that fall within its rubric. A recovery project of sorts, my chapters position the theories offered by modern experimental-psychological researchers as inextricably bound to expressions of feminism in modern fiction, serving as adaptable discourses for women writers seeking to use their literary medium to deconstruct the ideology of gender essentialism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	v
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Need for Riotous Living: Rebecca West's Feminist Behaviorism	21
Chapter Two: The Making of Men and Women: Gertrude Stein, Hugo Münsterberg, and the Discourse of Work	95
Chapter Three: Changing This Unalterable Nature: Virginia Woolf and the Evolution of Sexual Difference	151
Bibliography	213

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am immensely grateful to the community of the English Department at Boston College, which has become my intellectual home. I would like to express my deepest thanks to my advisor Marjorie Howes, who is unflaggingly generous with her time and whose insightful input, sensible advice, and warm mentorship have been invaluable to me. I would like to thank Alan Richardson, who has enthusiastically nurtured my academic career from my earliest days at Boston College and continually challenged me to grow and improve as a scholar, and Rob Lehman, who has supported me through my major exam and dissertation and enriched this project with his thoughtful and perceptive comments. I also wish to thank Mary Crane, Vanessa Ryan, Maia McAleavey, and Kevin Ohi for graciously serving as exam committee members and teaching mentors.

I am extremely appreciative of the financial support, including doctoral and dissertation fellowships, granted by Boston College, as well as the opportunities that the university has provided for teaching and pursuing individual research.

I extend a special thanks to my fellow graduate students in the English Department, whose friendships I dearly cherish, and to my Illinois-based friends and family—especially my sister Cathi and my parents, Mary and Jeff—for their many restorative conversations and for gamely serving as a long-distance support team. Thank

you to my husband Garrett Rapp for your unconditional love, encouragement, humor, and patience.

I dedicate this project to Professor Wes Chapman, whose passion for the profession and devotion to his students continue to inspire my academic journey.

INTRODUCTION

In the third chapter of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, the narrator returns home from the British Museum in an attitude of disappointment. While there, she had hoped to find a formidable collection of literary works written by women but was confronted instead with a discouraging array of empty shelves. Woolf wonders, somewhat impishly, "why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet."¹ Refusing the notion that women are simply intrinsically incapable of great art, she offers a theory:

The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in [the woman's] case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing? Here the psychologists of Newnham and Girton might come to our help, I thought, looking again at the blank spaces on the shelves. For surely it is time that the effect of discouragement upon the mind of the artist should be measured, as I have seen a dairy company measure the effect of ordinary milk and Grade A milk upon the body of the rat. They set two rats in cages side by side, and of the two one was furtive, timid and small, and the other was glossy, bold and big. Now what food do we feed women as artists upon?²

In keeping with *A Room's* preoccupation with "grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in," Woolf pursues the connection between a woman's cognitive capacities and "the conditions of her life," framing women's historical lack of

¹ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929; repr., Orlando: Harcourt, 1981), 41.

² *Ibid.*, 52–3.

artistic output as the product of systemically hostile circumstances.³ More specifically, she presents this connection as a viable subject of psychological study. Just as researchers “measure the effect of ordinary milk and Grade A milk upon the body of the rat,” Woolf suggests that the “psychologists of Newnham and Girton” measure “the effect of discouragement upon the mind of the artist,” positing the brain as an organ that can, like the rat’s body, be fed or starved. While phrases like “lab rat” and “guinea pig” are used idiomatically today to refer to experimental subjects in all fields, in the mid-1920s the use of rats for experimentation was associated almost exclusively with the behaviorist John B. Watson and his widely published psychological research, which used rats to illustrate the determining effects of environmental conditions on behavioral patterns.⁴ By likening experimental rats to human subjects, Woolf replicates what John Greenwood calls the “standard behaviorist generalization from animal to human behavior” and implicitly endorses it as a methodological practice, aligning the premises of behaviorist theory with her feminist interpretation of English literary history.⁵ Presenting the gendered achievement gap in literature as a problem ripe for behaviorist study, Woolf shores up her assertion that psychological sexual difference is the product of patriarchal sociocultural influences rather than an innate disparity in men and women’s natures.

³ Ibid., 42, 51.

⁴ As Kerry W. Buckley attests, the white rat was first used experimentally in the English-speaking world in 1892 by Adolf Meyer, a psychiatrist and Watson’s colleague at Johns Hopkins. Watson soon adopted rats for his own research, producing “the first systematic studies of rat behavior.” The huge amount of press Watson received for his research, both positive and negative—admiring articles abounded, as did ones in which Watson was depicted “as a cynical, aloof, detached ‘rat scientist’ with sinister and thinly veiled sadistic motives”—helped make the lab rat a “ubiquitous” feature of modern experimentation. See Buckley, *Mechanical Man: John Broadus Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism* (New York: Guilford, 1989), 42, 53.

⁵ John D. Greenwood, *A Conceptual History of Psychology: Exploring the Tangled Web*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 365. Analyses of the psychological stance of *A Room* more commonly read the text in relation to psychoanalysis, yet as Douglas Mao has observed, *A Room* is “at least as interesting a negotiation with behaviourism as it is an engagement with Freud.” Mao, “Rebecca West and the Origins of *A Room of One’s Own*,” *Modernist Cultures* 9, no. 2 (2014): 201.

Woolf's psychological approach to the gendered history of literary accomplishment both emerged out of and participated in a women's movement that was grappling ideologically with the subject of sexual difference and, more particularly, with the issue of the gendered brain. The idea that a woman's brain inherently differs from that of a man—what Henry Maudsley in 1874 termed “sex in mind”⁶—was a cultural supposition that achieved hegemonic status in the nineteenth century due to the proliferation of Victorian mental sciences, including phrenology, craniology, and nervous pathology, which theorized the brain in ways that validated sociocultural preconceptions about sexual difference.⁷ In Great Britain and the United States, debates about the legitimacy of “the female brain” resurfaced and gained urgency in the modern era as they became implicated in the discourses surrounding women's suffrage. The essentialist understanding of men and women's mental capacities was one of the core ideological justifications for the anti-suffrage and antifeminist position. Politicians and pamphleteers seeking to stymie reform efforts capitalized on publications by medical professionals that upheld Victorian-era theories attesting to the psychological inferiority of women. For instance, in his 1913 screed *The Unexpurgated Case Against Woman Suffrage*, prominent physician Sir Almroth Wright builds his anti-suffrage case on a gendered, faculty-based model of mental processing that Rachel Malane identifies as “the foundation of all

⁶ See Henry Maudsley, “Sex in Mind and Education,” *Fortnightly Review* 15 (1874): 466–83.

⁷ Rachel Malane has found that Victorian mental scientists “theorized about the human mind through the lens of gender difference, and in doing so both produced and reproduced categories to distinguish between male and female mental function.” Malane, *Sex in Mind: The Gendered Brain in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Mental Sciences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 55. Malane's study offers a detailed analysis of the mutually reinforcing relationship between the gendered brain and Victorian mind sciences in relation to literary practice. See also Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) for a history of sex in mind prior to the Victorian era, and Kimberly A. Hamblin, *From Eve to Evolution: Darwin, Science, and Women's Rights in Gilded Age America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014), for an analysis of late nineteenth-century debates about psychological sexual difference in the United States.

mainstream Victorian psychology,” premised on the “dichotomy of emotion and reason.”⁸ He argues that while men are able to cogitate on issues dispassionately, the rational and emotional faculties in women’s brains are “over-intimately linked,” prompting them to experience “neural distress” and “physiological strain” when forced to confront intellectual matters. Wright consequently concludes that women are constitutionally unsuited for political engagement or professional responsibility.⁹

Modern suffragists and women’s rights advocates responded to anti-feminist rhetoric with a variety of strategic appeals. Some found it expedient to cede to rather than combat essentialist ideology, pursuing what historian Susan Stanley Holton calls an “essentialist case for women’s enfranchisement” that reframed women’s differences as social and political assets.¹⁰ Suffragist leader Millicent Garrett Fawcett, for example, argued that the “claim of women to representation depends to a large extent on these differences,” since women “bring something to the service of the state different to that which can be brought by men.”¹¹ The majority of women’s rights advocates, however, viewed establishing “the principle of sexual equality”—premised on the innate sameness of men and women’s minds in terms of ability, aptitude, rationality, ambition, and intelligence—as a critical step to achieving not only suffrage but also equal employment

⁸ Malane, *Sex in Mind*, 22.

⁹ Almroth E. Wright, *The Unexpurgated Case against Women’s Suffrage* (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1913), 89.

¹⁰ Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women’s Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 13. Holton’s book as a whole finds that this more conservative strain of feminist rhetoric is often left out of historical accounts of women’s suffrage, particularly in Britain. While equality-feminist ideology served as the dominant position of the women’s movement, Holton argues that it is important not to discount the presence and influence of feminists who advocated from a position of difference.

¹¹ Millicent Garrett Fawcett, “The Appeal Against Female Suffrage: a Reply,” *The Nineteenth Century* 26 (1899): 96.

opportunities and educational access.¹² Equality feminists routinely countered anti-suffragist rhetoric by citing modern psychological and anatomical research that contradicted the essentialist position. Exemplifying this strategy is Helen Hamilton Gardener's 1888 address to the International Council of Women, which she devoted to contesting the notion of "sex in brain" at length. In her speech, the American suffragist criticizes the methodology of physicians proclaiming psychological sexual difference as flawed and biased, suggesting that, even if "the microscope and scales really do show the differences to exist in adults," they might be "due to difference of opportunity and environment" rather than essentialist difference. Gardner proposes that, compared to men, women's brains may be "equally capable but restricted" by sociocultural practices. She concludes her remarks by quoting the "celebrated New York brain specialist" Dr. E.C. Spitzka, who in a letter to Gardener affirmed that "No such difference has ever been demonstrated" between male and female brains.¹³

Like Woolf's proposal to measure "the effect of discouragement upon the mind of the artist" in *A Room of One's Own*, Gardener's speech invites her audience to consider how "the microscope and scales" might explicate the issue of sex in mind by registering the effects of gendered differences in "opportunity and environment." Though writing four decades apart, both Woolf and Gardener carry out a common discursive practice, disputing essentialism by rhetorically externalizing and denaturalizing gender, reframing psychological sexual difference as a measurable result of environmental variables. Even further, their texts illuminate the way in which equality-feminist ideology in the modern era is discursively bound to the methodology and theory of experimental psychology, the

¹² Holton, *Feminism*, 59.

¹³ Helen Hamilton Gardener, remarks, in *Report of the International Council of Women* (Boston: Rufus Darby Printers, 1888), 374, 381.

disciplinary approach to psychological study that emerged in the modern period and rapidly became an established academic field in universities across Europe and the United States.

Scholars of literary modernism often equate psychological modernity with psychoanalysis and other depth psychologies,¹⁴ yet experimental psychology was a parallel and equally potent sociocultural force in shaping modern-era conceptualizations of mental life. As George M. Johnson has observed, depth psychology and experimental psychology hail from distinct intellectual traditions, as the former grew out of theorizations of psychic structures and unconscious processes while the latter drew on “developments in associationist philosophy, biology, and physiology.”¹⁵ Historians of psychology typically trace the origins of experimental psychology to either the 1879 establishment of Wilhelm Wundt’s laboratory at the University of Leipzig or the 1890 publication of William James’s *The Principles of Psychology*, both of which initiated a widely influential disciplinary tradition of theorizing human cognition as a physiological

¹⁴ In the introduction to *The Mind of Modernism*, Mark Micale testifies to “the need to move beyond Freud” in modernist studies, observing that an “astonishing share of the scholarship about this subject continues to take the form of the influence studies of psychoanalysis in which Freud—and occasionally Jung—are presented as the sole exemplars of psychological modernism.” Ironically, Micale proposes that the solution is to recognize the “many emerging models of mind that comprised the coming of early dynamic psychiatry”—i.e., other depth psychologies. Micale’s collection, in this way, simultaneously criticizes and exemplifies the blinkered, psychoanalytic-focused approach to modern-era psychology. Micale, “The Modernist Mind: A Map,” in *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880–1940*, ed. Mark Micale (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 7. See also Paul Peppis, *Sciences of Modernism: Ethnography, Sexology, and Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and John Rodden, *Between Self and Society: Inner Worlds and Outer Limits in the British Psychological Novel* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016) for two recent examples of studies that equate psychological modernism with depth psychology.

¹⁵ George M. Johnson, *Dynamic Psychology in Modernist British Fiction* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 2. David Hothersall similarly separates the “history of clinical psychology and the contributions of Sigmund Freud” from the history of experimental psychology, which he characterizes as deriving from a blend of associationism, physiology, and early neurophysiology. Like most historians of psychology, Hothersall frames the Departments of Psychology in today’s universities as extensions of the experimental-psychological tradition. Hothersall, *History of Psychology*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 249.

process to be studied using the empiricist methodology of the natural sciences.¹⁶ As James declares in *Principles*, “To the psychologist, then, the minds he studies are *objects*, in a world of other objects.”¹⁷ Though individual theorists in the field pursued diverging areas of research and varied definitions of what constitutes empirical data, resulting in the establishment of numerous differentiated schools, modern experimental psychologists collectively relied on the study of observable evidence—human behavioral responses to various environmental conditions—to clarify the nature of the brain. Experimental psychology, in this way, was constitutively concerned with studying human-environmental engagement. James defends this methodological emphasis in his chapter on “The Stream of Consciousness,” averring, “Experience is remoulding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date,” as “our brain changes... with every pulse of change” in our surroundings.¹⁸ In James’s view, the mission of the psychologist is to clarify, via rigorous experimental study, the innate features and functions of the human brain amidst such circumstantial variations.

While experimental-psychological theory was once thought to be too steeped in scientism to be of much use to a generation of literary modernists more interested in

¹⁶ See for example Hothersall, *History of Psychology* or George Mandler, *A History of Modern Experimental Psychology: From James and Wundt to Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007). Though these and other histories of the field position James as a pioneer of experimental psychology and champion of radical empiricism—a perspective on his career I embrace here—his writings on religion and pragmatism and his enduring interest in psychical research have also made James a leading figure for scholars studying the vitalist/spiritualist tradition in psychological and literary modernity. See for example Johnson, *Dynamic Psychology* and Omri Moses, *Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

¹⁷ William James, *The Principles of Psychology, Volume 1* (1890, repr. New York: Dover, 1950), 183, italics in original.

¹⁸ James, *Principles of Psychology*, 234.

plumbing the enigmatic depths of the unconscious psyche,¹⁹ a number of recent publications within modernist studies have revised this view.²⁰ Scholars like Judith Ryan, Tim Armstrong, Craig A. Gordon, and Douglas Mao have demonstrated how extensively literary modernists drew on experimental-psychological discourses in their works, particularly as a means of contemplating the ideological implications—both the potentialities and liabilities—of a porous relationship between the individual mind and the outside world. Mao proposes that psychological theorizations of “human beings [as] organisms molded unceasingly by their environments” challenged the presumed boundary between interiority and exteriority and accordingly transformed modern literary explorations of subjectivity.²¹ His *Fateful Beauty* finds modern authors engaging contemporary psychological theories of juvenile development in their representations of aesthetic experience, their works pondering how artistic objects bear on the “developing being” and intervene for good or for ill in the psycho-physiological process of “material determination.”²²

In studying literary texts as cultural products that encode the discursive interdependence of the scientific, political, and aesthetic domains, Mao models a critical practice that my project seeks to develop. *Material Minds and Modern Fiction* takes this

¹⁹ Some critics still feel this way. John Rodden’s recent study of psychology and literary modernism insists, despite critical work attesting to the contrary, that “Novelists from Smollett to Lawrence have... refus[ed] to portray the deeds of human beings as largely the product of material or psychological conditioning.” Rodden, *Between Self and Society*, 11.

²⁰ Key texts include Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Steven Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001); Joan Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism: The Fact of Feeling from Jonathan Edwards to Gertrude Stein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Craig A. Gordon, *Literary Modernism, Bioscience, and Community in Early 20th Century Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2007); and Douglas Mao, *Fateful Beauty: Aesthetic Environments, Juvenile Development, and Literature, 1860–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

²¹ Mao, *Fateful Beauty*, 65.

²² Ibid.

burgeoning critical tradition in a new direction by illuminating the particular network of intersections in modern literature between experimental-psychological and feminist discourses. The premises and theories of experimental psychology, I suggest, offered authors in the early twentieth century a discursive medium through which to ideologically navigate the politically charged issue of psychological sexual difference, a way of conceptualizing obvious and consistent disparities between men and women that did not entail conceding to gender essentialism. As the quoted excerpt from *A Room of One's Own* evinces, the experimental-psychological emphasis on observable data—in Woolf's parlance, “grossly material things”—bolsters the equality-feminist premise that the gendered brain emerges as a product of “the conditions of life.”²³ Accordingly, the authors included in this study—Rebecca West, Gertrude Stein, and Virginia Woolf—utilize experimental-psychological theory as a means of developing a feminist discursive practice: they strategically and selectively adapt psychological concepts to underwrite a model of mind in their fiction that posits sexual difference as a function of inequitable environmental exposures or social conditioning rather than an immutable feature of psychic life. Capitalizing on William James's suggestion that “Experience is remoulding us every moment,” these writers deploy fictional representations of modern life to examine and critique the systematically gendered process by which such molding occurs.²⁴

²³ Woolf, *A Room*, 42, 47.

²⁴ In this way, West, Stein, and Woolf “valorize[] exteriority” in a way that resonates suggestively, if unexpectedly, with Jessica Burstein's model of “cold modernism,” a strand of modern aesthetics that, in Burstein's formulation, posits the body “as the start and the finish of all explanation” and the environment as “determinate, even constitutive.” Burstein associates cold modernism with figures like Wyndham Lewis and Mina Loy while categorizing Woolf and Stein as “hot modernists” who presume an essentially vitalist conception of psychological interiority. My project complicates Burstein's categories, insofar as I suggest that these writers accept materialist and determinist interpretations of the human mind even as they retain an interest in the individual. Burstein, *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (University Park, PA:

Here, let us pause briefly on the word *feminist*. In a 1913 article for *The Clarion*, Rebecca West quipped, “I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute.”²⁵ Woolf may be alluding to this notorious *bon mot* in *A Room of One’s Own* when her narrator recalls a male acquaintance “taking up some book by Rebecca West” and promptly labeling her “an arrant feminist,” an epithet presumably applied because “Miss West... [made] a possibly true if uncomplimentary statement about the other sex.”²⁶ To the extent that these lines reflect on *feminism* as a label, West and Woolf mutually convey an uneasy mix of sarcasm, defiance, and resignation. Both writers associate feminism with a productive resistance to gendered behavioral modes derived from patriarchal norms (e.g., behaving in “differentiate[d]” ways and daring to make “true if uncomplimentary” assertions), yet they simultaneously express an awareness of the way in which such labels can be co-opted and become liabilities for those they were designed to serve.²⁷ The wariness with which these authors approach *feminist* has informed my decision to omit the term from the title of my project. Although I find West, Stein, and Woolf writing from an ideological stance broadly consistent with modern-era equality feminism, and though my chapters periodically refer to their approach within literary texts as feminist, I am not interested in proscribing or defending any singular vision of feminism. My analysis draws out the ways in which their nonfiction and literary prose profoundly and

Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 13.

²⁵ Rebecca West, “Mr Chesterton in Hysterics: A Study in Prejudice,” in *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West, 1911–1917*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Viking, 1982), 219.

²⁶ Woolf, *A Room*, 35.

²⁷ As I discuss in the third chapter, Woolf articulates the latter concern explicitly in *Three Guineas* when she calls for the word *feminist* to be retired from the English language entirely.

persistently engage with the phenomenon of psychological sexual difference. I accept as a matter of course that the works in this study may appropriately be considered feminist because they evince an interest in utilizing psychological theory to dispute essentialist logic and examine the systematized sociocultural mechanisms—i.e., patriarchal sociocultural and legal practices—that originate and perpetuate the gendering of mind.

Methodologically, my project advances a discourse-focused approach that broadly bears out Toril Moi's insistence in *Sexual/Textual Politics* that we must "locat[e] the politics of [women's] writing *precisely in [their] textual practice*." In other words, I accept Moi's premise that an author's stylistic choices necessarily—and, in my view, intentionally—disclose a political stance, and my chapters seek to clarify the relationship between women writers' literary strategies and their ideological postures.²⁸ At the same time, my analytical position also incorporates Rita Felski's crucial counterpoint to Moi, that "the political meaning in women's writing cannot be theorized... by appealing to an inherent relationship between gender and a specific linguistic or literary form, but can only be addressed by relating the diverse forms of women's writing to the cultural and ideological processes shaping [their work]."²⁹ Consistent with Felski's critique, my project does not seek to define a feminist *aesthetic*, insofar as that would entail delineating a consistent and shared set of stylistic features deemed inherently feminist. My project does, however, seek to describe a feminist *discursive practice*, comprised of the particularized yet analogous way in which West, Stein, and Woolf draw on

²⁸Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1985), 16, italics in original.

²⁹Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 48.

experimental-psychological discourse to navigate the issue of sexual difference in their works.

In establishing experimental psychology as a theoretical framework inextricable from modern literary explorations of sexual difference, I moreover seek to open up a literary-critical conversation that has historically—and in keeping with the trend in modernist studies more broadly—read the interrelationship between psychology, feminism, and modern literature almost exclusively in relation to psychoanalytic theory. That Freudian psychoanalysis played a significant role in shaping early twentieth-century feminist rhetoric, especially in the interwar period, is a premise routinely advanced by historians of the women's movement, who typically present Freud as an ideological antagonist to the cause. Historian Susan Kingsley Kent, for instance, contends that as Freudian thought spread to the English-speaking world, it effectively “psychologized” and re-legitimized the ideology of separate spheres.³⁰ Freud's studies of psychosexual development in the 1910s and '20s, derived from his clinical practice, renewed the embattled notion of psychological sexual difference by lending it modern-era scientific credibility. As suggested by the proclamation “Anatomy is destiny,” Freud held that men and women's distinct genital structures give rise to inherently different psychic structures. He wrote in 1924 that “the feminist demand for equal rights for the sexes does not take us far, for the morphological distinction” between men and women “is bound to find expression in differences of psychical development.”³¹ Freud's essentialist claims—

³⁰ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 109. See also Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Kent, *Gender and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye, eds., *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918–1945* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

³¹ Sigmund Freud, “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex,” in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989), 665.

grounded in a depth-psychological framework premised on the existence of a repressive unconscious—sidestepped the contemporary debates surrounding comparative experiences or brain tissue by locating sexual difference in the metaphysical psyche. On these grounds, Kent rather bluntly characterizes psychoanalysis as “antithetical to feminism,” noting that the popularization of Freudian thought dovetailed with a conservative, maternalist turn in the women’s movement that retreated from equality-feminist goals.³²

Informed by Lacanian revisions of psychoanalysis as well as the mid- to late twentieth-century feminist-psychoanalytical approaches pioneered by Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva, modernist literary critics have for the most part denied the hostile ideological relationship between psychoanalysis and modern-era feminism presumed by historians. These scholars argue alternatively that women writers discerned a subversive potential in Freud’s theorizations of masculinity and femininity that they exploited in their literary works.³³ Lyndsey Stonebridge asserts that “women writers associated with the modernist vanguard”—particularly May Sinclair and H.D.—“seized

³² Kent, *Sex and Suffrage*, 225. I will say more about this conservative, postwar “New Feminist” movement in Britain in the first chapter.

³³ The literature on this topic is vast; see in particular Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*; Teresa Brennan, ed., *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Dianne Chisholm, *H.D.’s Freudian Poetics: Psychoanalysis in Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Christine Froula, *Modernism’s Body: Sex, Culture, and Joyce* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). The fact that a majority of these studies approach the subject of psychoanalysis and modern-era feminism using a psychoanalytic theoretical lens deserves more scrutiny than it has received. Critics overwhelmingly find modern authors presciently embracing the same revisions of Freudian thought—such as the Lacanian distinction between the phallus and the biological penis or the Kristevan emphasis on women’s estrangement from language—that they themselves embrace. While parsing the methodology of these psychoanalytic readings of modern feminism is outside the scope of this project, my chapters offer a contrast to this practice by reading modern fiction only in relation to psychological theories contemporary to the texts.

upon psychoanalysis for its potential as a critique of gender and sexuality.”³⁴ Critics like Stonebridge have thus reframed Freud and other contemporary depth psychologists as unwitting allies of a feminism that celebrates essentialist difference and alludes to an alternative aesthetic, social, and political order grounded in women’s distinctive biological and psychic experience. Moi posits that modern-era psychoanalytic theory established a framework that women writers then utilized “to consider [their] discourse as one ruled by its own logic, to accept the logic of another scene,” and consequently to “unsettle and disturb the smooth positivist logic of the man of science” and of patriarchy more broadly.³⁵

Material Minds and Modern Fiction functions as an alternative to, rather than a repudiation of, this body of psychoanalytic readings of modern-era feminism. In keeping with a modernist studies that has come to understand psychological modernism as a wide-ranging and diverse cultural domain that embraces myriad and often contradictory approaches, my project articulates a similar need to look beyond psychoanalysis in our examinations of modern feminist engagements with psychological discourse. In foregrounding the role of experimental-psychological theory in modern literary representations of the gendered brain, I seek to illuminate an overlooked area of feminist-literary engagement—specifically, the ways in which a number of women writers *appropriated* what Moi calls the “smooth positivist logic of the man of science” in their literary works, in order to counter the ideology of essentialist sexual difference.

³⁴ Lyndsey Stonebridge, *The Destructive Element: British Psychoanalysis and Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 9.

³⁵ Toril Moi, “Patriarchal Thought and the Drive for Knowledge,” in *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Teresa Brennan (New York: Routledge, 1989), 197.

By positing a correlative ideological relationship between experimental-psychological theory and feminist deconstructions of psychological gender essentialism, I implicitly resist the proposition—conveyed in statements like Moi’s—that empiricism or scientism are epistemological postures intrinsically unsuited to feminist use. While critiques decrying empiricist thought as inherently sexist are often valid and compelling, we must acknowledge that modern women writers were nevertheless amenable to using the master’s methodological tools to dismantle the master’s house.³⁶ As Elizabeth Grosz writes of feminist utilizations of Darwinian thought: “My project here is not the critical endeavor of seeking out errors, biases, or mistakes in Darwinism, but rather, to see what of Darwin, and the philosophical figures that follow him, may be of use to a feminist politics of transformation.”³⁷ I argue that modern women writers themselves approached the work of experimental psychologists from a comparably critical perspective. In *A Room of One’s Own*, for example, Woolf pointedly suggests that the gendered brains of artists be studied by the female psychologists working out of the women’s colleges Newnham and Girton, a seemingly offhanded comment that squarely situates empiricist methodology as a viable and even efficacious tool for women seeking to resist the ideological structures of patriarchy. West, Stein, and Woolf, in this way, engage with experimental-psychological discourse in a spirit of what Mark Micale calls “imaginative and original adaptation.” Their fiction discloses an interest in exploring how

³⁶ This is an inversion of Audre Lorde’s famous proclamation, “*For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house*,” which refers specifically to the tendency in “white american feminist theory [to] not deal with the differences” between women “and the resulting difference in our oppressions,” a practice that she associates with patriarchy itself. Though Lorde’s address was given in 1979 in the context of second-wave American feminism, the fact that the three writers in my project—all well-educated white women—adopt discursive practices that dispute essentialist difference and adapt empiricist methodologies is in keeping with Lorde’s critique. Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), 112, italics in original.

³⁷ Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 72.

experimental-psychological theory might “contribute to their own creative”—and political—“agendas,”³⁸ enabling the development of a feminist discursive practice premised on explicating the notion of the gendered brain.

The following chapters examine the inventive and highly individualized ways in which women writers elaborate this discursive practice in their essays and novels. The first chapter, “The Need for Riotous Living: Rebecca West’s Feminist Behaviorism,” focuses on the persistent emphasis on environments and materiality in West’s early prose and connects this aesthetic strategy to both her professed equality feminism and her interest in behaviorist psychology. West’s published nonfiction between 1910 and 1930—including her political essays for *The Freewoman*, *The New Freewoman*, and *The Clarion* as well as her 1928 essay on aesthetics, “The Strange Necessity”—function as a sort of primer to her ideological stance in this period, documenting her affinity for Ivan Pavlov and revealing the ways in which West draws on the behaviorist, reflex-based model of psychological development to justify a feminist stance premised on women’s material liberation. Articulating a materialist understanding of psycho-physiological development, West proposes in her essays that the phenomenon of sex in mind emerges as a function of the limitations placed on women’s physical experiences, and she correspondingly suggests that the struggle for women’s rights hinges on the elimination of legal and sociocultural restrictions on their environmental exposures.

Having identified the behaviorist-feminist logic of West’s nonfiction prose, the remainder of the chapter turns to her early novels *The Return of the Soldier* and *The Judge*; in these texts, West utilizes detailed representations of environmental conditioning to further develop the feminist implications of her behaviorist model of mind. I argue that

³⁸ Micale, “The Modernist Mind,” 16.

The Return of the Soldier, a novella focusing on the experiences of three women caring for a shell-shocked soldier, confronts the self-perpetuating nature of the mechanisms of environmental conditioning, illuminating the ways in which women are psychologically habituated into sustaining their own sociocultural subordination. In *The Judge*, West considers the way in which this dynamic may be altered by maternity and motherhood, subjects made timely by Britain's New Feminist movement, whose platform discursively positioned maternity as a justification of women's innate psychological difference and subaltern sociocultural status. West's novel counters this position by drawing on behaviorist premises to elaborate an alternative, equality-feminist approach to maternity that points to the antipatriarchal potential inherent in a mother's capacity to dictate the conditions of childhood development.

The second chapter, "The Making of Men and Women: Gertrude Stein, Hugo Münsterberg, and the Discourse of Work" attends to the industrial-psychological theories of Hugo Münsterberg—a largely forgotten experimental psychologist who mentored Stein during her undergraduate years at Radcliffe College—and attests to their importance to Stein's early literary project and ideological stance. The first part of the chapter examines two essays Stein composed between 1900–1902 focused on women and education, putting them into conversation with Münsterberg's *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency* to highlight the correspondences in their thought. A discursive analysis reveals that Stein's essays share Münsterberg's interest in *work* as a psychological phenomenon, with both writers framing it as a dynamic variable that mediates the relationship between the individual and the environment. Even further, Stein's essays adapt Münsterberg's industrial-psychological framework to develop an original "discourse of work," which

she uses to theorize not only worker-workplace relationships but human-environment interactions more broadly, illuminating the way in which human psychology develops within limited sociocultural—and significantly, gendered—contexts. Turning to *The Making of Americans, Being a History of a Family's Progress*, the latter half of the chapter proposes that Stein's epic novel ponders what it means for individual psychological development, particularly for women, when access to work is distributed unevenly and on the basis of sex. Though critics generally read the novel as engaging with the psychological theories of either William James or Otto Weininger, the distinctive way in which Stein's text utilizes the concept of the psychological "type" suggests a Münsterbergian understanding of psychology and behavior. In *The Making of Americans*, Stein utilizes her discourse of work to delineate the process by which psychological sexual difference is created and sustained through patriarchal sociocultural practices that delimit the "ways of being" a woman.

Finally, "Changing This Unalterable Nature: Virginia Woolf and the Evolution of Sexual Difference" takes up Woolf's late-career turn to feminist cultural criticism in *Three Guineas* and *The Years*, two texts not typically read as among those in which Woolf engages with contemporary psychological theory. My chapter revises this critical presumption, as I contend that these works substantively draw on the discourses of evolutionary social psychology, an approach to experimental psychology embraced by Julian Huxley, William McDougall, and Wilfred Trotter that merged the externalizing nature of social-psychological thought with contemporary hypotheses regarding progressive human evolution. The first part of the chapter, focused on *Three Guineas*, finds Woolf utilizing evolutionary social-psychological theory to address the interrelated

problems of patriarchy and fascism, problems she ultimately frames as deriving from psychological sexual difference. In analyzing the discursive strategies Woolf employs to describe gendered traits and to render her climactic “dream of peace,” we discover that Woolf leverages the concept of progressive evolution to explicate the emergence of gendered brains and to envision a pacifistic utopian future comprising individuals genetically evolved to transcend sexual difference. Turning to *The Years*, I then argue that Woolf’s historical novel, while commonly read as simply a fictionalized account of *Three Guineas*’ argument, takes this feminist-pacifist vision in a different direction. In *The Years*, Woolf draws on evolutionary social-psychological discourses to ponder the complicity of language in sustaining sexual difference and thus the scourges of patriarchy and war, ultimately presenting the failure of language itself as a crucial evolutionary step to achieving her feminist vision of a peaceful social order.

Collectively, the author studies of *Material Minds and Modern Fiction* testify to the prominence of experimental-psychological theory in the modern era as well as the diversity of the approaches that fall within its rubric. A recovery project of sorts, these chapters position the theories offered by modern experimental-psychological schools as constitutive to expressions of feminism in modern fiction, insofar as these discourses presented a dynamic framework invaluable to women writers seeking to use their literary medium to deconstruct the ideology of psychological gender essentialism. In his *History of Modern Experimental Psychology*, George Mandler reflects that fields like experimental psychology are “as much [a] part of the contemporary culture as its clothes, rituals, foods, music, art, ethnic prejudices, and so forth. Social science—like many other social activities—is a symptom of the embedding culture and society,” just as “the

phenomena” addressed by social science “are themselves embedded in the culture.”³⁹

While scholars of literary modernism have long understood psychoanalysis as one such emergent and embedded cultural product of modernity, we have only in recent years begun to recognize experimental psychology—despite its undisputed prominence within the discipline of psychology itself—as a significant field and a discourse similarly intrinsic to the modern age. By drawing on experimental-psychological thought to theorize sexual difference, West, Stein, and Woolf engage in not only a feminist but also a thoroughly modern discursive practice, in keeping with the vibrant interdisciplinarity of early twentieth-century cultural production. In attesting to the importance of experimental psychology to literary representations of sexual difference, my project contributes to the ongoing effort to map the myriad and overlapping discursive networks comprising the modern cultural landscape.

³⁹ Mandler, *History*, xviii.

THE NEED FOR RIOTOUS LIVING: REBECCA WEST'S FEMINIST BEHAVIORISM

In a 1913 article for *The Clarion*, Rebecca West published a scathing review of Dr. John Lionel Tayler's *The Nature of Woman*. Favorably received by *The New York Times*, Tayler's book—a “study of sex” and “womanly character” informed by the doctor's expertise in the medicinal and biological sciences, but intended for “those unused to biological thought”¹—evokes vehement and unmitigated scorn from West, who was at that time an active suffragette. Disliking the volume so thoroughly that she declares reading it bad for her health, West forcefully objects to Tayler's emphasis on *womanliness*, which serves as the book's central subject of inquiry and eventual rationale for anti-suffragism. West declares that, contrary to Tayler's belief, “[t]here is no evidence for the assumption that womanliness is a psychological condition antipathetic to manliness,” citing “the biological researches of the Mendelians” and the cellular origins of life as proof that “there is no femaleness that has any effect upon the organism beyond deciding the disposition of the reproductive tissue and the resulting modifications of the physical structure.”² West avers that there is no such thing as naturalized gender-specific cognitive capacities or traits, and, if categories like *manliness* and *womanliness* exist at

¹ J. Lionel Tayler, *The Nature of Woman* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1913), 5.

² Rebecca West, “The Nature of Woman: Every Home a Little Earlswood,” in *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West, 1911–1917*, ed. Jane Marcus (London: Viking, 1982), 162–3.

all, they do so only as a function of disparate socialization: when it comes to men and women, “[t]here seems no difference of mentality. There is no study mastered by men that women cannot master, and no virtue honourable to men that dishonours women.” If women “have not been geniuses,” West writes, it is because “domestic life admits only lesser [achievements].”³

In her review, West presents her conviction that men and women’s brains are marked by no inherent sex-based differences as a verifiable fact borne from her knowledge of biological science and physiological psychology—knowledge that she claims to command in a more accurate and clear-sighted way than Dr. Tayler, whose views are, for West, clouded by sexist sentiment to the point where they become “comic quackery.” What legitimate scientist, she wonders, cites Biblical scripture as evidence and “consult[s] his own intuition rather than any more serious authority”?⁴ That West—then only twenty years old—would challenge a licensed physician and professor of biology on his scientific rigor is less surprising than it would first appear. In her nonfiction writings published between 1910 and 1930, West frequently refers to contemporary biological and psychological findings, often to substantiate her belief in gender equality and dispute claims of difference in men and women’s aptitudes and natures.

Few scholars have noted West’s persistent employment of scientific discourse in her early essays, perhaps because she rarely directly names individual researchers or texts. Yet we know that in the early years of West’s career, she was a diligent, if informal, student of science and of psychology in particular. There are scant records that

³ Ibid., 163.

⁴ Ibid., 164, 166.

testify to West's reading and research history in those days, but what documents exist provide definitive evidence that West by 1928 claimed to have studied John B. Watson, William James, William McDougall, Alfred Adler, and a number of prominent psychoanalysts.⁵ In West's feminist articles and essays from that period—published variously in *The Freewoman*, *The New Freewoman*, *The Clarion*, and other periodicals, and compiled in Jane Marcus's collection *The Young Rebecca*—West consistently articulates a specific, empirically grounded understanding of human psychology and behavior, one that corresponds with contemporary scientific research and positions the mind as decisively shaped by environmental stimuli rather than inborn, sex-based traits. The words *adaptation*, *development*, *environment*, and *experience*—terms that discursively allude to the particular strand of turn-of-the-century psychological theory associated with the behaviorist school—recur with suggestive regularity in West's feminist prose. If women appear “fit for nothing but domestic service,” she argues in a 1911 article on female workers, it is because they have only been exposed to domestic environments and training, with domestic training “elbow[ing] out of the school curriculum all subjects likely to develop the minds of the girl scholars, and thus leave them, irrespective of the individual gifts, fit for nothing but domestic service.”⁶ Writing in 1912, West criticizes the impulse to view women as having inherent, sex-based dispositions, positing that all traits, be they virtuous or base, are “largely accidents of environment.”⁷ She argues in another piece that women's artistic output has historically

⁵ See Rebecca West and G.E. Hutchinson, “On ‘The Return of the Soldier,’” *The Yale University Library Gazette* 57, no. 1 (1982): 66–69.

⁶ Rebecca West, “The Position of Women in Indian Life,” in *The Young Rebecca*, 13.

⁷ Rebecca West, Correspondence between Mrs Hobson and Miss West, in *The Young Rebecca*, 39.

suffered as a result of “the limitation of experience,” given that artistic imagination is a quality that develops as a result “of intellectual and emotional experience.”⁸

West’s intellectual engagement with scientific discourse, moreover, was not limited to her feminist prose. Her most overt and extensive application of scientific thought appears in her 1928 essay on aesthetics and reception, “The Strange Necessity.” In the essay, West aims to explain why human beings seek out art and the role art plays in human experience. Echoing the sentiments of Clive Bell’s *Art*, West insists that artwork inspires in the beholder a distinctive aesthetic emotion—“I recognize the emotion as certainly as one recognizes the colour green”⁹—yet she feels puzzled that such a specific emotion can be elicited by a vast variety of art objects, for “there is no reason why objects so utterly different... should have anything like the same effect” (56). West also finds aesthetic emotion to be a “strange necessity”: humans have an “appetite” for aesthetic emotion no less essential to the organism than food and drink (58). West’s essay engages a twofold, ambitious project: to explicate the common “bridge” that connects diverse art objects and explains artistic variety, as well as to discover the peculiar function that aesthetic emotion serves for humanity. Tellingly, West identifies the text capable of illuminating this mystery as Ivan Pavlov’s *Conditioned Reflexes*, the lauded behaviorist study of bells and salivating dogs published in English in 1927.¹⁰ Pavlov, in

⁸ Rebecca West, Letter to the Editor of *The Freewoman*, in *The Young Rebecca*, 48.

⁹ Rebecca West, “The Strange Necessity,” in *The Strange Necessity: Essays and Reviews* (1928; repr., London: Virago, 1987), 55; hereafter cited in text as *SN*.

¹⁰ In the volume, Pavlov describes the experimental process by which he discovered that reflexes can be conditioned, meaning that the stimulus/reflex relationship might be manipulated such that a reflex might be elicited by a previously neutral (i.e., non-reflex producing) stimulus. Famously, Pavlov found that by repeatedly pairing the presentation of food with the sound of a bell (a neutral stimulus), a dog could eventually be made to salivate solely at the sound of the bell even without the presence of the food—a discovery that fueled the behaviorist premise that activity is determined by environmental engagement and the accrual of experience. See Ivan P. Pavlov, *Conditioned Reflexes: An Investigation of the Physiological Activity of the Cerebral Cortex* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927).

West's reading, encourages individuals to understand art as an adaptation tool, providing stimuli that help humans better navigate their environments. Recalling the language of her feminist prose, she suggests that consuming visual or literary art serves an eminently practical function: encountering art "is imperative if I am to get on with my biological job of adapting myself to my environment," for "a human being that cuts itself off from art blunders round the world hitting against things as a decorticated dog blunders round in a laboratory" (181). "The Strange Necessity," in this way, functions as a sort of capstone document for West's early period, in that it foregrounds and makes manifest the scientific content that more implicitly guides the essays from the 1910s and '20s, the way in which she consciously and habitually engages with psychological thought—specifically the growing fields of physiological and behaviorist psychology—in both her feminist and literary-critical essays. Behaviorist psychology, in other words, becomes its own kind of "bridge" in West's early career, one that connects her criticism, feminism, and her fiction.

This chapter examines the implications of this cross-disciplinary engagement in West's early oeuvre, illuminating how her behaviorist psychological principles shape her feminist convictions, her aesthetics, and, accordingly, her literary prose. The first section, focused on "The Strange Necessity," reviews the behaviorist psychological research that influenced West's materialist understanding of mind, drawing out the connections between these three domains—scientific, aesthetic, and political—in West's thought. I then turn to West's fiction to explore how she utilizes contemporary psychological discourses in *The Return of the Soldier* and *The Judge*. In these texts, West draws on discourses from behaviorist psychology to develop her formal aesthetics and intervene in

contemporary debates about women's right to equal political, educational, and professional access. West manipulates the presentation of her characters and their relationships to their environment to disrupt the ideology of essentialist gender difference that saw women as inherently suited to domestic or "womanly" spaces, and to dramatize the necessity for providing women and men with equal freedom of experience and movement.

"Art is science, only more scientific": Behaviorism and "The Strange Necessity"

The Strange Necessity—West's first collection of literary essays and reviews, named after the almost 50,000-word essay that comprises the majority of the volume—has never been widely read or studied. Debra Rae Cohen notes that upon publication, the essay "confused and upset most reviewers," who balked at its "idiosyncratic melding of feminine and 'highbrow' pursuits" and "its assault conventional categories of analysis."¹¹ Arnold Bennett and Edward Garnett were among those who disparaged the piece, while T.S. Eliot registered his disapproval perhaps most forcefully by ignoring it altogether. In many ways, the contemporary dismissal of *Necessity* presaged the widespread scholarly neglect of West's literary career more generally: as Bernard Schweizer politely notes, compared to contemporaries like Eliot and Virginia Woolf, West was "not quite as smoothly canonized."¹² Indeed, Bonnie Kime Scott finds that to the extent that West has been "appreciated and anthologized," it is mostly in recognition of her outspoken

¹¹ Debra Rae Cohen, "Sheepish Modernism: Rebecca West, the Adam Brothers, and the Taxonomies of Criticism," in *Rebecca West Today: Contemporary Critical Approaches*, ed. Bernard Schweizer (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 144.

¹² Bernard Schweizer, introduction to Schweizer, *Rebecca West Today*, 21.

feminist opinions rather than “within the context of modernism.”¹³ Laura Heffernan blames the obscurity of West’s literary works, *Necessity* included, on the “gradual consecration of modernism” as a movement defined by Eliotian impersonality: West’s personal, practical, and politically informed approach to fiction and criticism has been left out of a “modernist canon of formally complex, ‘objective’ (not first person), and typically male-authored literary works.”¹⁴

While more attention is now being paid within modernist studies to West’s literary works—a phenomenon that Schweizer calls a “long-overdue and sustained revival”¹⁵—most critical assessments of “The Strange Necessity” continue to position the essay in relation to West’s feminist convictions, rather than in the context of her literary aesthetics or practice. The essay is often read as a sister piece to Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, published one year later.¹⁶ The pairing of these texts is understandable: as Scott attests, Woolf’s essay shares West’s “playful attitude toward male monuments,” signaling a common feminist rejection of masculine “formal rules.”¹⁷ Yet the coupling is also somewhat curious, given that “Necessity,” unlike *A Room*, does not present itself as a feminist document but rather pursues a generalized theory of aesthetics. If a feminist political stance emerges from the text (and I agree one does), it must do so implicitly and by way of West’s expressed scientific-aesthetic argument, the elucidation of which is the

¹³ Bonnie Kime Scott, “Refiguring the Binary, Breaking the Cycle: Rebecca West as Feminist Modernist,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 37, no. 2 (1991): 169.

¹⁴ Laura Heffernan, “Reading Modernism’s Cultural Field: Rebecca West’s *The Strange Necessity* and the Aesthetic ‘System of Relations,’” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 27, no. 2 (2008): 309.

¹⁵ Schweizer, Introduction, 21.

¹⁶ See for example Bonnie Kime Scott, *Refiguring Modernism: The Women of 1928* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Helen Southworth, *The Intersecting Realities and Fictions of Virginia Woolf and Colette* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004); Douglas Mao, “Rebecca West and the Origins of *A Room of One’s Own*,” *Modernist Cultures* 9, no. 2 (2014); and Heffernan, “Reading Modernism’s Cultural Field.”

¹⁷ Scott, *Refiguring*, 147.

primary focus of the essay. West's feminist stance is bound up in, and thus inseparable from, her aesthetic theory. The criticism has not yet sufficiently explored the way in which West's politics inhere in the piece's theoretical propositions and textual strategies.

In a 1958 letter to Richard Ellmann, West compares her style in "The Strange Necessity" to that of Remy de Gourmont, noting that she deliberately adopted "a personal and almost fictional framework" that was at the time out of fashion with literary theorists.¹⁸ Employing a tactic that Woolf would later emulate in *A Room*, "Necessity" plunges readers into the first-person perspective of a narrator modeled after West herself, and the content of the essay unfolds out of this narrator's stream of thought. At the start of the essay, with the door of Sylvia Beach's bookshop closing behind her, the narrator pauses to consider the book of poetry she just purchased, later revealed to be James Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach*. Deciding to read at random one of the poems contained in the volume ("Alone"), the narrator immediately declares the work to be "exceedingly bad," full of "words as blank as the back of a spoon" (14). Yet the narrator acknowledges that the poem, despite its badness, gives her pleasure. She recalls that Joyce's *Ulysses* similarly yielded an "intense happy emotion" (58) when she read it, despite the fact that she found the book marred by "ineptitude" (57).¹⁹ Catching the scent of an intriguing aesthetic problem, the narrator further remembers that she felt the same aesthetic joy when encountering a black lace dress at the dressmaker's shop, as well as a painting by Ingres at the Louvre. Each one of these very different artistic specimens—from a lauded but unpleasant experimental novel to a simple and beautiful dress—produced in her the

¹⁸ Rebecca West, Letter to Richard Ellmann, 7 November 1958, in *Selected Letters of Rebecca West*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 327.

¹⁹ For more on West's unflattering readings of Joyce, see Francesca Frigerio, "Under West(ern) Eyes: Rebecca West Reads Joyce," *Journal of Modern Literature* 26, no. 1 (2002): 66–72, and Scott, *Refiguring Modernism*.

same, distinct aesthetic emotion that “satisfied the soul” in a particular way. The narrator seeks to know “what forces lie behind these experiences,” and to “come to understand its conception of necessity,” to explicate the peculiar feeling that such aesthetic satisfaction is *needed* for one’s very survival (53).

As noted earlier, West moves from what initially seems an eminently spiritual problem—the aesthetic emotion that satisfies the soul—to a decidedly *non*-spiritual solution, one that relies heavily on Ivan Pavlov’s *Conditioned Reflexes*. Particularly, West recruits Pavlov’s concept of the “investigatory reflex,” which she introduces by quoting Pavlov at length, from a passage taken from the first chapter of *Reflexes*:

I call it the “What-is-it?” reflex. It is this reflex which brings about the immediate response in man and animals to the slightest changes in the world around them, so that they immediately orientate their appropriate receptor organ in accordance with the perceptible quality in the agent bringing about the change, making full investigation of it. The biological significance of this reflex is obvious. If the animal were not provided with such a reflex its life would hang at every moment by a thread... (qtd. in *SN* 74)

In *Reflexes*, Pavlov goes on to emphasize the manipulable nature of the investigatory reflex, noting how repetition and other controlled environmental factors can condition or inhibit an organism’s response. In “Necessity,” West makes the term her own: building on Pavlov’s definition, she essentially uses the concept of this reflex to transform the Paterian thirst for experience into an innate neurological need.²⁰ West interprets the investigatory reflex to mean that discovering as much as one can about the world “is the constant aim of the individual, pursued with more or less effectiveness according to his

²⁰ This aspect of West’s aesthetic theory mirrors the contemporary cognitive-literary theories of Ellen Spolsky, who cites neurobiological research in support of the notion that the human brain “hungers” for information and experience in a way that is neurologically comparable to the hunger for food. While West extrapolates from her premise that humans have a cognitive craving for novel stimuli, Spolsky theorizes that we gravitate towards difficult (“representatively hungry”) topics. See Spolsky, “Narrative as Nourishment,” in *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, ed. Frederick Luis Aldama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

innate qualities and the luck he has in his environment, from the first moment he emerges into consciousness to the moment when he leaves it” (61). This universal, insatiable curiosity helps the “human organism”—West’s preferred term for the individual—determine how to adapt most advantageously to its environment. Those who feed their investigatory reflex new stimuli are more likely to develop “a victorious relationship with reality,” as the exposure leads them to better discern false or misleading information that might “imperil the organism” (82). “We have strong grounds for suspecting,” West concludes, “that art is at least in part a way of collecting information about the universe,” aiding the organism in its never-ending quest to satisfy its investigatory reflex (89).²¹ In this way, West offers an explanation for both the desire to consume artistic objects as well as the distinctive aesthetic emotion elicited by the encounter. An encounter with art, put simply, “helps one to go on living,” with aesthetic emotion functioning as a reward for the organism’s curious explorations. The aesthetic emotion—which West repeatedly equates with “joy”—exists because it is biologically useful, an indication of the fact that “I have been helped to go on living” (197).

Setting aside for a moment West’s particular use of Pavlov’s research to justify the desire for art, by turning to Pavlov’s work on reflexes for her aesthetic rationale, West aligns herself with an approach to psychology synonymous at that time with the behaviorist school. Indeed, West’s reliance on the word *reflex* alone places her within a

²¹ In positing that a reflex can be sated or satisfied, West gets a little loose with Pavlov’s research. Per Pavlov’s definition, *reflex* refers to a predetermined physiological response, “a *necessary* reaction to some external stimulus, the connection between the stimulus and the response being made through a definite nervous path.” In West’s creative usage, the investigatory reflex functions less like a mechanical response and more like an instinct or drive—a pressing need, like hunger, requiring fulfillment. Pavlov specifically expresses his reservation with terms like *drive* or *instinct* because they are too broad: he comments that “often a large number of individual reflexes” assemble under the label of *instinct*. Pavlov, *Conditioned Reflexes*, 4, 11, italics in original. West, in short, ascribes a complexity and urgency to the investigatory reflex that Pavlov would likely dispute.

rather specific discursive context. The term *reflex*, used in the physiological sense to refer to an automatic nervous reaction, can be traced back to René Descartes and his 1637 “Discourse on Method,” which postulated animal behavior to be entirely explicable in terms of physical phenomena, through involuntary stimulus-reflex responses. Though Descartes exempted human beings from his mechanistic theory, physicians began researching the nervous reflexive response in humans, first in France and then across Europe: the *OED* cites 1833 as the first year *reflex* was used in English to refer to the human musculoskeletal system, in a report by English physiologist Marshall Hall.²² The discovery of the neuron in the late nineteenth century paved the way for the theory of reflex action to be applied to the human brain. Whereas human cognitive processes had previously been theorized in metaphysical or vitalist terms, historians of psychology attest that by 1900 experimental psychologists readily defined and discussed the brain in the materialist terms of the stimulus-reflex model, positing “that the cause of psychical or psychological events is in the environment” and that “external sensory stimulation produces all acts, conscious and unconscious, through the summation of excitatory and inhibitory activity in the brain.”²³ George W. Crile, surgeon and co-founder of the Cleveland Clinic, serves as a case in point of this view: as he boisterously writes in a 1913 article for the journal *Science*, “I shall maintain... that environment has been the actual *creator* of man; that the old division between body, soul, and spirit is non-existent; that man is a unified mechanism responding in every part to the adequate stimuli given it from without by the environment of the present and from within by the environment of

²² *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “reflex, n.,” www.oed.com (accessed June 15, 2017).

²³ Alfred H. Fuchs and Rand B. Evans, “Psychology as a Science,” in *Handbook of Psychology: Volume 1: History of Psychology*, 2nd ed., eds. Donald K. Freedheim and Irving B. Weiner (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013), 20.

the past.” When it comes to complex and seemingly spiritual human emotions like “love, hate, poetic fancy, or moral inhibition,” Crile does not temper his claim; these, too, are “reflexes... products of adaptation,” which “occur automatically in response to adequate stimuli in the environment.”²⁴

Behaviorism was the first discrete psychological school to embrace the radical-materialist approach. Researchers like Pavlov and B.F. Skinner were among those who became famous for their behaviorist work, while the founding father and public face of the school was John B. Watson, who introduced behaviorism to the world with his 1913 “Behaviorist Manifesto.” Kerry Buckley attests that Watson achieved impressive international recognition for behaviorism, both among “general readers” as well as within “scientific circles,” by producing “an enormous output of books, magazine articles, newspaper stories, and radio broadcasts.”²⁵ Psychologists who adopted the behaviorist label would come to disagree about the finer points of the school, resulting in behaviorist subtypes that deviated from Watson’s original formula, but his manifesto nevertheless functions as a useful outline. Watson’s behaviorism was motivated by the desire to position psychology as “a purely objective experimental branch of natural science,” and he adopted the materialism and strict empirical approach of physiology. As Watson writes in his manifesto, “[I] take as a starting point, first, the observable fact that organisms, man and animal alike, do adjust themselves to their environment by means of hereditary and habit equipments.”²⁶ Behaviorists shared physiologists’ belief in the

²⁴ George W. Crile, “A Mechanistic View of Psychology,” *Science* 29 (1913): 284.

²⁵ Kerry W. Buckley, *Mechanical Man: John Broadus Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism* (New York: Guilford, 1989), 148.

²⁶ John B. Watson, “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It,” *Psychological Review* 20, no. 2 (1913): 158, 167. Watson enjoyed referring to this piece as his “Behaviorist Manifesto” and the essay has subsequently become better known by that name.

primacy of environmental stimuli and neurobiological reflexive response; the overarching aim of behaviorism was to sort out the cause-and-effect relationship between organism and environment, as it is revealed through the organism's observable behaviors. Watson states in *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* that "the goal of psychological study is the *ascertaining of such data and laws that, given the stimulus, psychology can predict what the response will be; or, on the other hand, given the response, it can specify the nature of the effective stimulus.*"²⁷

In "The Strange Necessity," West criticizes Watson by name for being, in her view, a somewhat facile researcher, remarking that he endorses a too "simplified" view of human activity (59). At the same time, West goes on to embrace the most controversial aspect of Watson's behaviorism: his radical materialist stance. By the 1920s, many prominent psychologists were calling for revised modes of behaviorism that dialed back Watson's strict materialism in favor of modified approaches. Mary Whiton Calkins—who served as the first female president of the American Psychological Association—argued in 1921 that not all human experience was a matter "only of bodily reactions" and consequently that behaviorism's methods must be adjusted to accept data that can be gathered "only by inference from consciousness."²⁸ Yet in her essay West insists that no such concessions are necessary. She asserts without qualification that the "basis of all behaviour is, of course, the simple reflexes, the inborn instinctive reactions of the nervous system, such as the salivation which happens in a dog's mouth after the introduction of food" (73). While Calkins considers human consciousness too complex to be defined as a

²⁷ John B. Watson, *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1919), 10, italics in original.

²⁸ Mary Whiton Calkins, "The Truly Psychological Behaviorism," *Psychological Review* 28, no. 1 (1921): 8–9.

strictly bodily phenomenon, West is willing to accept that it, too, has a physical grounding, calling consciousness “the yeasty ferment caused by the working of so many [reflexive] responses to life” (74). West praises *Conditioned Reflexes*—“that now famous book”—as a stunning breakthrough in physiology and a “victory of comprehension over the universe” (73).

Indeed, when we look more closely at “Necessity” in context we see that West does not merely import Pavlov’s singular concept of the investigatory reflex as a convenient means of explaining aesthetic emotion; rather, her aesthetic theory hinges on a broader acceptance of behaviorism and its materialist methodology. By looking for a biological and evolutionary justification for art, West reveals that she shares the behaviorist belief that all human activity can ultimately be explicated physiologically. West goes so far as to position art as a division of science, proclaiming that “art is science, only more scientific” (98), since art carries with it the ability to record data that science has not yet developed the technology to capture. By creating art, human organisms have created a “justifiable technique... to deal with material that cannot be put into a test-tube or isolated in a laboratory and made to salivate” (99).

We cannot know whether West’s beliefs about the function and experience of aesthetic emotion prompted her to seek out a behaviorist understanding of the human organism, or if her interest in behaviorist thought shaped the development of her aesthetic theory. Whatever the direction of influence, what is clear is that these two discourses—scientific and aesthetic—are for West inextricably intertwined. Moreover, West’s scientific-aesthetic stance connects in meaningful ways to her outspoken feminism. Indeed, to clarify the ideological dimension of West’s employment of Pavlovian thought,

it will be useful to contrast “Necessity” to a comparable contemporary work of literary criticism, *Aspects of the Novel*, written by West’s professional acquaintance E.M. Forster. Published just a year prior to *Necessity*, *Aspects* offers another example of a critical work that draws on scientific thought, but for very different purposes and to almost antithetical ideological ends.

Aspects of the Novel—a text that, unlike *Necessity*, enjoyed extensive acclaim and popularity upon publication—is a collection of lectures in which Forster seeks to define the characteristic qualities of the novel as a form. A crucial part of the methodology of *Aspects* is Forster’s ahistorical approach, established in the introduction when he asks readers to imagine every English novelist who has ever lived “as seated together in a room, a circular room, a sort of British Museum reading-room—all writing their novels simultaneously.”²⁹ Though each author in Forster’s study derives from a different historical moment and is endowed with different gifts and concerns, he insists that in order to study the novel fairly, “we must not contemplate the stream of time” (14). Forster immediately turns to contemporary science to justify this stance, citing evolutionary theory: modern critics, he says, cannot consider “whether the human mind alters from generation to generation,” because they know that while “[f]our thousand, fourteen thousand years might give us pause, . . . four hundred years is nothing in the life of our race, and does not allow room for any measurable change” (21). Forster, in other words, leverages the concept of effective evolutionary time to define the human at the level of species, enabling him to regard all people as more or less identical, all authors as “more or less the same” (21). In this way, Forster simplifies his critical task: aberrations in novelistic practice may be written off as historical or socio-cultural contingencies,

²⁹ E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1927), 9; hereafter cited in text.

inconsequential in evolutionary terms, whereas the most familiar aspects of novels may reasonably be assumed to be the most essential, the natural byproducts of the *homo sapien* brain.

Just as behaviorism functions in a mutually reinforcing relationship with West's aesthetic theories, Forster's presumption of neurobiological sameness pervades his conclusions throughout *Aspects*. In "Story," for example, Forster offers an evolutionary explanation for the claim that "story" is the "fundamental aspect without which [the novel] could not exist." He contends that the notion of story "goes back to neolithic times, perhaps to paleolithic," when primitive artists would keep primitive audiences "gaping round the campfire," helping everyone remain awake and capable of resisting nighttime predators like the "mammoth or the woolly rhinoceros" (26). Because the concept of "story" itself has primal origins, it "appeals to what is primitive in us"—a presumption that Forster then uses to rationalize "why we are so unreasonable over the stories we like" (40). When it comes to our desire for an entertaining story, we have not yet "come out of the cave" (41).

Forster's text offers an instructive contrast to West's, for the two writers differently utilize similar source material to support nearly antithetical critical conclusions and opposing ideological stances. Both writers seek evolutionary explanations for artistic production and are centrally concerned with the idea of human adaptation, yet Forster recruits a broad, core concept from evolutionary theory—the scale of evolutionary time—while West grapples with the more specific physiological-psychological concept of the reflex. In Forster's case, using evolutionary thought to establish *species* as the proper register for studying human activity, *Aspects* ideologically

shores up the notion of “human nature” as a given and universal category. Forster’s literary-critical project requires this position: he maintains that the novel can only be analyzed in an organized and methodical way if individual variation is minimized down to zero, enabling him to regard human nature as both standard and immutable. An ideological byproduct of this critical approach is a credulous definition of what it means to be human: Forster readily generalizes about human beings writ large as essentially moral, rational, curious, and civilized from a patriarchal and culturally English standpoint, ingenuously “impos[ing] one particular set of male Eurocentric values on to the rest of the world” in the process.³⁰

If Forster isolates the concept of neurobiological development at the level of species to justify generalizations about both human nature and novels, West does the opposite, homing in on Pavlov’s reflex studies as a means of emphasizing contingency at the level of the individual organism and explaining the variety of artistic objects. Where Forster dismisses individual variation as a distraction that blinds us to humanity’s—and the novel’s—“common state” (21), West’s essay dismisses humanity’s common neurological hardware as both uninteresting and beside the point. Until a brain comes into contact with its environment, she suggests, it is merely “an organ” (175). While every individual is born possessing a species-generalized *homo sapien* brain—one innately endowed with common reflexes like the investigatory reflex and an assortment of genetic predispositions—each person is tasked upon birth with “pick[ing] out of the whole complexity of the environment those units which are of significance, and to integrate

³⁰ Robin Headlam Wells and Johnjoe McFadden, introduction to *Human Nature: Fact and Fiction: Literature, Science, and Human Nature*, eds. Wells and McFadden (London: Continuum, 2006), 2. Chapter three, which focuses on Woolf’s feminist engagement with evolutionary social-psychology, will examine another example of an author putting evolutionary discourse to divergent ideological purposes.

those units” in a way that is “profitable to the individual” (175). West’s basic point is that each organism, due to the singularity of its circumstances, will execute this selection process differently. West therefore preserves the concept of human uniqueness but qualifies it as a condition of environmental circumstance; in doing so, she evinces a strong allegiance to not only Watson’s radical materialism but also George W. Crile’s dictum that “environment has been the actual *creator* of man.”³¹ Like the physiologists who serve as her intellectual forebears, West avers that individuals differ meaningfully only as a result of “the inevitable unique circumstances of [each] life” (101). All “psychical uniqueness” can be attributed “solely to the uniqueness of our circumstances and of an element in ourselves that chooses which of our psychical mechanisms we shall use, and not to uniqueness in our outfit of psychical mechanisms” (176).

West’s behaviorist methodology in “Necessity” therefore stresses environmental engagement and promotes, as Douglas Mao has observed, “a rough acceptance of determinism.”³² This emphasis on environment emerges not only out of West’s explicit argument, but also out of the formal and stylistic choices of the text, the most significant of which are the peripatetic narrator and her fictionalized setting. At the start of “Necessity,” West spends an extended period of time—well over fifty pages—establishing the narrator’s voice and personality as she roams a Parisian arrondissement before the narration discards this conceit in order to focus more squarely on the aesthetic theory. The start of the essay effectively reads as fiction: “I shut the bookshop door behind me and walked slowly down the street that leads from the Odéon to the Boulevard St. Germain in the best of all cities, reading in the little volume which had there been sold

³¹ Crile, “Mechanistic,” 284.

³² Mao, “Rebecca West and the Origins,” 205.

to me..." (13). Over the next several pages, West embeds the reader further into the setting by employing descriptions that engage the visual, kinesthetic, and aural senses: the narrator describes "the clean French light" and how her "eye lit on a dove" (13), reflects on men who "sit at little tables with heads bent sideways and downwards as if they all had stiff necks" (15), and remembers hearing the "languid cry" of a crowd murmuring "'Ohs!' and 'Ahs!'" while watching a sporting event (15–6). As the essay goes on, the narrator refers to her personal history to advance her theoretical points: she alludes, for example, to a recent decision to delay a trip to Versailles so that she "might have time to see the Ingres" (58) in order to substantiate a point about the necessity of aesthetic emotion. West, in other words, not only extols the significance of environment in the content of her argument, but also enacts this concept in the essay's formal strategies. The utilization of such a descriptively vivid narrator to communicate an otherwise abstract argument works in concert with West's contention that all behaviors and cognitions are contingent on the material elements that enable their expression.

Well into the essay, after the framing device of the narrator has largely faded, West continues to stress the importance of the material environment through the persistent use of spatial metaphors. Introducing her reflex-based model of mind, West likens a newborn baby to a "shipwrecked sailor," reasoning that both are spatially unmoored and have "nothing... to which he can cling" (61) until experience and engagement work to build up his external reality. The elation of artistic emotion is compared to "a wild exhilaration such as one might feel after whirling in a dance, that used to come on me when I climbed to a certain low peak of the Estorel Mountains" (189). When describing the artistic process, seeking to explain how artistic variety and

creativity can exist in a seemingly deterministic universe, West instructs readers to “consider the soul as a house” with “innumerable rooms: One for each character-trait that can be based on each possible reaction to the fundamental instincts that the soul’s material surroundings and the state of culture at the time produce” (103). In an argument that overtly and repeatedly emphasizes environmental adaptation—West uses the word *experience* over forty times in the essay, *environment* and *stimuli* over a dozen times apiece—such metaphors and comparisons work to more subtly reinforce the notion that discussions of human mind and behavior necessarily implicate setting.

In this way, both the explicit argument and implicit textual strategies of “Necessity” work to forward not merely an aesthetic theory but also a specific ideological framework. West grounds her theory of aesthetic emotion in “Necessity” in a behaviorist stance, positioning humans as biological organisms—neurobiologically common save for some genetic predispositions—that are shaped into unique individuals through environmental engagement. Ideologically, West’s value system can be characterized as Pater by way of Pavlov: the attainment of experiences—particularly valuable artistic experiences—is an organism’s highest priority, for the organism flourishes best when it is able to freely encounter a diverse and extensive range of exterior conditions, better “adapting [it]self to [its] environment” with every interaction (181).³³

In West’s feminist essays, this same ideological stance, derived from a behaviorist understanding of mind, functions as a justification for her appeals for women’s rights. Indeed, West’s political journalism dating from 1911 shows a remarkable consistency

³³ My contention that West’s outlook is somewhat Paterian is shared by Douglas Mao, *Fateful Beauty: Aesthetic Environments, Juvenile Development, and Literature 1860–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) and Vincent Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

with the ideological principles and discursive patterns of 1928's "Necessity." West's journalism draws out the feminist implications of her behaviorist stance, as she articulates the fundamental injustice of placing legal or cultural limitations upon women that predetermine the experiences and environments they may encounter. In her essays throughout the 1910s and '20s, West's discursive strategies work to advance her conviction that any perceived gender-specific deficiencies or traits derive from restraints on environmental exposure and experience: women appear to be intellectually inferior, politically disengaged, and domestically inclined because they are constrained to environmental and experiential conditions that prompt intellectual inferiority, political disengagement, and domesticity.

One way that West's political writings communicate this position is through a consistent rejection of essentialist concepts: she writes in 1912 that she "find[s] it impossible to argue with a person who holds the doctrine of original sin"³⁴—an essentialist doctrine of female frailty—and in 1913 that she "would never attempt to prove that all women are angels and all men devils."³⁵ She likewise frames the ideology of separate spheres as inherently constraining and thus unacceptable: when essentialist conceptions of womanhood are written into legal policy, it can only result in a predetermining of women's circumstances that deny them the ability—granted to men—to "alter their environment" and "adapt themselves to life."³⁶

Interestingly, even as West disputes essentialism, her journalistic writings do not emphasize the *sameness* of men and women so much as they insist on the particularity of the *individual*. In her articles, West dismantles essentializing labels only to rebuild them

³⁴ West, Correspondence between Mrs Hobson, 39.

³⁵ Rebecca West, "Cause of Women's Restlessness," in *The Young Rebecca*, 377.

³⁶ Rebecca West, 1926 article for *Time and Tide*, quoted in *The Young Rebecca*, 6.

as objectively descriptive terms contingent on applicable external circumstance. In 1912, for example, in an article in *The Freewoman* on the subject of “Spinsters and Art,” West declares that “spinsters” have an “ill effect on literature,” as they produce subpar novels rife with sentimental plots and unrealistic characters; she provocatively concludes with the question, “So what is the good of all these spinsters?”³⁷ The article elicited a number of reader complaints, prompting West to compose a follow-up letter to the editor in which she clarified that in her use of the term, *spinster* is gender-neutral: “spinsterhood is not necessarily a feminine quality. It is simply the limitation of experience to one’s own sex, and consequently the regard of the other sex from an idealist point of view.” Consistent with the experience-based theory of human psychological development and aesthetics expressed in “The Strange Necessity,” West describes how it is the spinster’s definitional lack of environmental exposure that limits his or her abilities as an artist: “If, when the infant of five shows signs of poetic gifts, you shut her up in a prison cell, her epics will be of poor and monotonous quality. For want of emotional experience Jane Austen’s imagination never developed virility.”³⁸ While acknowledging that women are far more likely to be doomed to spinsterhood than men, West avers that the faults associated with spinster writers—such as idealized characters and sentimentality—are faults not innately associated with women but apply to any author who is likewise experientially limited. She elsewhere employs the same rhetorical maneuver on the word *chivalrous*. West strips *chivalrous* of its masculine associations by applying it exclusively

³⁷ Rebecca West, “Spinsters and Art,” in *The Young Rebecca*, 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

to women—to herself in one article, to a female literary character in another—and employing it to designate generalized, rather than specifically masculine, magnanimity.³⁹

West's behaviorist stance similarly emerges in her articles discussing the home. A common setting for both impoverished domestics and idle housewives, the home serves in West's essays as a decisive material site. While many suffragist essays and speeches indict the home as a women's prison, West's essays evince an unusual emphasis on the physical conditions of the home and the effects on the brain confined to such a setting, to the extent that she often blurs the boundary between the home and the mind inhabiting it. An obedient upper-middle-class woman confined within an ideal well-kept home, West sardonically writes in 1912, will "produce a cathedral full of beautiful thoughts" that manifest physiologically in the form of "a smooth brow, that has never known the sweat of labour; the lax mouth, flaccid for want of discipline; eyes that blink because they have never seen anything worth looking at."⁴⁰ In a piece debating reform efforts aimed at the domestic practices of the poor, West focuses on the misconception "that there are varieties of women separate and immutable—the slattern, the housewife, the muddler, the manager—as distinct from one another as the lion from the cockatoo." She insists instead that the enforced domestic setting dictates the nature of the woman: if a woman is a "slattern," it is because her house is one in which "the walls and wood ... are rotten with bugs" and "the water supply ... is down three flights of stairs."⁴¹ In one of her more famous essays, "A New Woman's Movement: The Need for Riotous Living," West similarly connects the dull and meek character of poor girls to the drabness of their domiciles:

³⁹ See Rebecca West, "Woman Adrift," in *The Young Rebecca*, 28–31.

⁴⁰ Rebecca West, "The Gospel According to Mrs Humphry Ward," in *The Young Rebecca*, 17.

⁴¹ West, Correspondence between Mrs Hobson, 39, 40.

I went to see a village home for little girls.... It was a very ugly place. Little mud-coloured brick villas, flanked by spiky evergreens that looked dusty with boredom.... There was not a fleshly vanity in the place. There were no pictures on the walls; no lost ladies of old years to kindle the imagination with their beauty, no vision of other countries of the past.... And the austerity of the furniture passes description; in its gauntness it reminded one of the ribs of a London 'bus horse.⁴²

Adult working women are likewise “invited by men to lead, as the price of their respect, a grey life on unexuberant decorum and contempt of all the good frivolities of the earth,” doomed by “enforced asceticism” into resembling “some undecorative kind of vegetable” with comparable intelligence and verve. Emphatically tying women’s personal cognitive fortunes to their physical surroundings, West calls for “a militant movement for more riotous living.” She positions better food, brighter colors, and the ability to “stay out till two in the morning” as crucial feminist demands.⁴³

In assessing West’s nonfiction essays and articles from the 1910s and ’20s, then, what we find is an interpenetrating and mutually reinforcing logic that unites her expressed scientific, aesthetic, and political convictions. Working from a behaviorist conception of the human brain, West’s discursive strategies consistently emphasize the environmental conditions that, in her view, effectively determine an individual’s traits and aptitudes, giving rise to an aesthetic theory predicated on variety and adaptation and a feminist stance focused on eliminating restrictions on women’s experiential exposures. The next two sections of this chapter explore how West employs this behaviorist discourse—which we now know to be inextricably implicated in her conceptualizations of art and gender politics—in her fiction from the same period. In *The Return of the Soldier* and *The Judge*, West treats her art as a science, using her fictional planes to

⁴² Rebecca West, “A New Woman’s Movement: The Need for Riotous Living,” in *The Young Rebecca*, 131.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 132–3, 134.

elucidate the patriarchal systems in practice and experimentally explore the possibility of more egalitarian modes of living.

The Shattered Spheres of *The Return of the Soldier*

The Return of the Soldier inhabits a somewhat peculiar place within modernist literary criticism. As noted earlier, West is not generally considered part of the mainstream modernist canon; the effort, begun just two decades ago, to attract more widespread attention to and appreciation for her literary works within modernist and mid-century literary studies is still underway. Yet *The Return of the Soldier* is the exception to this generalization: compared to the dozen or so works that West published during her seven-decades-long career, most of which remain obscure, *Return* receives a significant amount of critical attention. The novel's unusual acclaim can be attributed to its status as a novel of the First World War. *Return*—which West began writing in 1916 and published in 1918—is one of only a few works of British fiction, written and published while the conflict was underway, that offers a woman's perspective on the war's effects. Critics have attested to how *Return* takes on the “immediate problems posed to both soldiers and civilians by the traumas and disruptions of war” and “illuminate[s] those problems and their consequences”⁴⁴; how it illustrates “the England of the Great War,” a time when “masculinity for the first time becomes traumatized, individually and as a social construct”⁴⁵; and how it captures the contemporary understanding of wartime

⁴⁴ Laura Cowan, “The Fine Frenzy of Artistic Vision: Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* as a Feminist Analysis of World War I,” *Centennial Review* 42, no. 2 (1998): 286.

⁴⁵ Misha Kavka, “Men in (Shell-)Shock: Masculinity, Trauma, and Psychoanalysis in Rebecca West's *The*

trauma, cure, and treatment. While critics differ in their interpretations of specific characters, stylistic features, and plot points, there is little deviation in the critical literature from the notion that *Return* draws its value in relation to the way the text inscribes the myriad traumas of the Great War.⁴⁶

My analysis, by contrast, does not read *Return* through the lens of its status as a “war novel.” Rather, I position the text as a node in West’s broader oeuvre, a work which offers a singular examination of a particular set of aesthetic and political interests that West then carries over into other literary projects. In this way, my analysis participates in a recent movement within West studies that seeks to develop “a holistic view of West that rejects the notion of her work as consisting of isolated specialties.”⁴⁷ Indeed, as Carl Rollyson has argued, critics—including those who read West and *Return* in the context of the Great War—have a tendency to “chop West up into categories,” a pattern he finds detrimental to a writer “whose work cuts across so many different genres.”⁴⁸ Responding to Rollyson’s critique, West scholars have endeavored to correct this “vital gap” by recognizing “the vast and richly diversified body of West’s literary production,” mostly

Return of the Soldier,” *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 22, no. 1 (1998): 152.

⁴⁶ In addition to the analyses already cited, see Debra Rae Cohen, *Remapping the Home Front: Locating Citizenship in British Women’s Great War Fiction* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002); Vincent Sherry, *The Great War and the Language of Modernism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004); Steve Pinkerton, “Trauma and Cure in Rebecca West’s ‘The Return of the Soldier,’” *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no. 1 (2008): 1–12; Nicole Rizzuto, “Toward an Ethics of Witnessing: Traumatic Testimony in Rebecca West’s *The Return of the Soldier*,” *College Literature* 39, no. 4 (2012): 7–33; Wyatt Bonikowski, *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination: The Death Drive in Post-World War I British Fiction* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013); Rebecah Pulsifer, “Reading Kitty’s Trauma in Rebecca West’s *The Return of the Soldier*,” *Studies in the Novel* 45, no. 1 (2013): 37–55; Elizabeth Covington, “*The Return of the Soldier* and Re-Appropriated Memories,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 37, no. 3 (2014): 56–73; and Paul Peppis, *The Sciences of Modernism: Ethnography, Sexology, and Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁴⁷ Schweizer, “Introduction,” 29.

⁴⁸ Carl Rollyson, *The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West* (Bethesda, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1998), 1, 5.

by attending to her numerous other published works.⁴⁹ In situating my analysis of *Return* in the context of West's larger aesthetic and political project, I view this chapter as a part—a necessarily limited part—of this effort to map, comprehensively and with increasing detail, West's long and varied career.

Relatedly, my approach to *Return* is unlike that of most existing analyses, in that I read West's literary works in relation to the contemporary scientific and psychological discourses on which she draws, looking to these discourses to unlock the ideological position and political energies of her novels. More often, scholars read *Return* through the lenses of psychoanalytic theory or psychoanalytic-inflected trauma theory, applying theory-specific valuations and definitions of terms that may or may not correspond with how West was inclined to use them. One critic, for example, argues that there is “a parallel movement in the development of Freud's theories of traumatic neurosis and the death drive... and the metaphors of penetration and shattering around which West structures Jenny's narrative.”⁵⁰ Another posits that the novel presents the relationship between “Jenny and Chris as between analyst and analysand.”⁵¹ Misha Kavka summarizes the logic of this methodological approach: since the novel's subjects include “war neurosis, male trauma, and the psychology of cure, it was read—then as now—as an early psychoanalytic novel.”⁵²

Notably, West herself weighed in on the question of whether her novel should be read as a “psychoanalytic novel.” In a 1928 letter to the editor of *The Observer*, West insists that “the story [of *Return*] was complete in my mind in the middle of 1915... and

⁴⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁰ Wyatt Bonikowski, “The Return of the Soldier Brings Death Home,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 3 (2005): 514.

⁵¹ Rizzuto, “Towards an Ethics,” 14.

⁵² Kavka, “Men in (Shell-)Shock,” 151.

at that time not one per cent of London's intellectuals or any other class of the community had heard of psycho-analysis."⁵³ Claiming that the inspiration for her novel derived before the war, from a story she once heard about a man who "fell down a staircase on his head" and whose subsequent amnesia "gave great pain to his wife," she forcefully attests that "my novel has fundamentally nothing to do with psychoanalysis. I introduced a psycho-analyst as an unimportant device." "There are, I suppose," West continues, "half-a-dozen ways that I could have rounded that particular corner and left the book otherwise exactly as it is."⁵⁴ For the most part, scholars have opted to disregard or dispute West's statements. Kavka even uses Freudian psychoanalytic theory to dismiss West's dismissal of psychoanalysis, arguing that West's letter is rife with "repetitive negative rhetoric and multiple justifications" that "paradoxically play into Freud's hands" and reveal "her overdetermined relationship to Freud's work." Observing that West consented to psychotherapy in 1927, Kavka concludes that "West's disavowal of psychoanalytic influence is a retroactive construction" due to "her intense engagement with psychoanalysis in the late 1920s."⁵⁵

Whether undergoing a partial course in psychotherapy denotes an intense engagement with psychoanalysis is debatable, particularly since we know that in 1928 West openly promoted a reflex-based theory of behavior and praised Pavlov's work as a "victory of comprehension over the universe" (SN 73). But the more pressing issue is that, in insisting on positioning psychoanalysis as the sole psychological discourse relevant to *Return*, critics neglect to consider what the text might offer, interpretively speaking, if we turn our attention to alternate discourses and theories influencing West's

⁵³ West and Hutchinson, "On 'The Return,'" 67.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 67, 68.

⁵⁵ Kavka, "Men in (Shell-)Shock," 157, 158.

thought at the time. My decision to read *The Return of the Soldier* as something other than a psychoanalytic novel, a novel of war, or a novel of trauma (although it may also be these things), in this way goes hand in hand with the methodological practice of reading West's work in relation to her broader oeuvre, of looking to West's own letters, essays, and other works of fiction to provide the necessary language of analysis for *Return*.

Return is a short novel—sometimes classified as a novella—set in 1916, in which a shell-shocked soldier named Chris Baldry returns on disability leave to his magnificent ancestral home at Baldry Court, where he is welcomed by his dutiful though snobbish wife Kitty and meek cousin (and narrator of the novel) Jenny. The last fifteen years erased by amnesia, Chris cannot remember his marriage, the launching of his career, or the numerous renovations that have been made to his family's estate. Chris fixates on his last memory, which features his youthful love from the summer of 1901, Margaret. Though she is no longer beautiful and is married to a bland, lower-middle class man, Margaret consents to visit Baldry Court and, much to Kitty's dismay, reestablishes a spiritual connection with Chris. Kitty, Margaret, and Jenny divide over the best way to care for Chris, but ultimately, with the help of a psychoanalyst named Dr. Anderson—who suggests curing Chris by presenting him with an object belonging to his son, Oliver, who died while still an infant some years before—the women restore Chris's memory. The novel ends as the soldier prepares to make his second "return," "to that flooded trench in Flanders... to that No Man's Land where bullets fall like rain on the rotting faces of the dead."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918; repr., New York: Penguin, 1998), 90; hereafter cited in text as *RS*.

In *Return*, West manipulates her language to explore the power of environments and investigate the concept of environmental control. Her novel foregrounds characters' engagement with their environments, emphasizing the disadvantages associated with the inability to alter one's environmental conditions. *Return* exposes the gender politics inherent in this dynamic, as West reveals how contemporary domestic arrangements benefit men at women's expense, as well as women's own complicity in perpetuating this system. In this way, *Return* explores the political implications of the theories West would flesh out in aesthetic terms in "The Strange Necessity," dramatizing the gendered consequences of a society in which the power of environmental control is granted both politically and culturally to men.

The Return of the Soldier focuses on settings—particularly domestic settings—almost to the point of excess: Douglas Mao characterizes the novel as "devot[ed] to interiors" and "dominated by the motif of protective enclosures."⁵⁷ Indeed, though the plot of the novel turns on the drama of an injured soldier, *Return* betrays its interest in women and domestic spaces by beginning not on a ravaged battlefield but in a nursery, where Kitty and Jenny sit and worry over Chris's wellbeing. The novel opens with an extended description of this nursery, which has been "kept in all respects as though there were still a child in the house" (*RS* 3). It is "the first lavish day of spring," and Jenny considers that though the baby Oliver is long deceased, one would never know it from the room, which is "so full of whiteness and clear colours, so enduringly gay and familiar" (3). She continues:

...the sunlight was pouring through the tall arched windows and the flowered curtains so brightly that in the old days a fat fist would certainly have been raised to point out the new translucent glories of the rosebuds.... It fell on the rocking-

⁵⁷ Mao, *Fateful Beauty*, 181, 186.

horse which had been Chris' idea of an appropriate present for his year-old son and showed what a fine fellow he was and how tremendously dappled; it picked out Mary and her little lamb on the chintz ottoman. And along the mantelpiece, under the loved print of the snarling tiger, in attitudes that were at once angular and relaxed—as though they were ready for play at their master's pleasure but found it hard to keep from drowsing in this warm weather—sat the Teddy Bear and the chimpanzee.... Everything was there, except Oliver. (3–4)

In this descriptive opening paragraph, Jenny focuses on the tragic-ironic beauty of an unused nursery on a lovely day; yet West manipulates Jenny's language to more particularly characterize this carefully preserved space. The windows are positioned such that, had Oliver been present, "a fat fist would certainly have been raised" (3); the word *certainly* connotes a reflexive response, as if there is no doubt of the behavior the stimulus of the light would prompt in Oliver. When Jenny mentions the rocking-horse, she takes pains to specify that it is a contribution Chris made to the room; as the light falls on the horse, it "showed what a fine fellow he was" (3). The ambiguity of the pronoun *he*—which could refer to Oliver, Chris, or the rocking-horse itself—prompts a semantic blending of the three, as if the quality of being a "fine fellow" necessitates an interaction with the rocking-horse. All the toys are "ready for play at their master's pleasure" (3), a phrase that specifies Oliver's enduring ownership of and control over the room's furnishings, despite his permanent absence. A moment later, Kitty laments that Chris insisted the room be "kept a nursery [even though] there's no chance" of having another child (4). Taken together, these details establish the nursery as a space strictly under men's control, furnished and preserved by Chris and spiritually possessed by Oliver. Moreover, West ties the space of the nursery to Oliver's intended path of development: it is a place where Oliver "certainly" would have made fists, would have become a "master" and a "fine fellow."

The nursery passage introduces an initial truth about the world of the novel, which is that while women are the primary occupiers and maintainers of the home, they nevertheless do not *control* the home and are not meant to benefit from its contents. Chris's literal ownership of Baldry Court—the estate's patrilineal name is frequently invoked—combined with his ability to pursue professions and manage finances earns him the right to have the conditions of the house crafted to his needs. Even Kitty's renovations of the home—a product of her “decorating genius” (56)—are appreciated only for their success in promoting Chris's wellbeing. In another early passage, Jenny thinks, “I was sure that we were preserved from the reproach of luxury because we had made a fine place for Chris.... Here we had made happiness inevitable for him” (6). Like *certainly*, the word *inevitable* carries a deterministic flavor. West emphasizes that the environment decisively shapes its inhabitants, even as she makes plain that it is only *designed* to favorably shape one inhabitant: Chris. Jenny remembers how before he left for the front, Chris spent his final day “star[ing] out on the lawn,” “looking into many rooms,” “look[ing] at the horses,” “star[ing] down into the clumps of dark-leaved rhododendra,” until, moments before he departed, “he set a hard set stare on the over-arching house” (7). Chris's repetitive “looking” and “staring”—his tendency to “look[] possessively about him” (67)—announces his mastery over the property, which Jenny refers to as “*his* home” (7, my italics). While Kitty and Jenny care for and take pride in the house, West affirms that it is not a space crafted in recognition of their presence or needs: that the conditions of the house make “happiness inevitable *for him*” leaves open the question of how the environment shapes *them*.

Indeed, though Kitty and Jenny's life is a privileged and comfortable one, their cloistral environment, in West's rendering, has apparent adverse effects. They live what West in a *Freewoman* essay calls the typical "life of loafedom" led by "sheltered women."⁵⁸ Conditioned within a rarefied environment designed to be a man's respite—a ballast for an outside world where Chris is "weighted" by many obligations (*RS* 26)—Kitty and Jenny experience little in the way of stimulation or novelty. They seem, to borrow another phrase from West's essay, the kind of blank women who "have never seen anything worth looking at."⁵⁹ Their dialogue is sparse and banal ("He was so happy here"; "He could not have been happier" [7]) and mostly about Chris. Their internal lives are similarly bland: when musing about the past, Jenny describes not her own personal history, but Chris's: he had a happy childhood; he was "not like other men" (7); he had aspirations tempered by a "crowded life" (8). Jenny summarizes the situation with unwitting aptness when she comments that she and Kitty "were not, perhaps, specially contemptible women, because nothing could ever really become a part of our life until it had been referred to Chris' attention" (8). This setting molds Kitty and Jenny into models of conventional femininity. Jenny ruminates proudly that she and Kitty conform with "Chris' conception of women...: unflushed with appetite or passion, even noble passion; our small heads bent intently on the white flowers of luxury" (57). West presents these women as bound by the "male-adaptation to life,"⁶⁰ contained within an environment that drastically limits their exposures and experiences, that is attuned only to soothing Chris.

When the women learn of Chris's shell shock, and he returns to the estate in chapter two, this highly conventional domestic arrangement is unexpectedly disrupted.

⁵⁸ West, "The Gospel," 17.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ West, 1936 article for *Time and Tide*, 6.

Chris's amnesia changes his relationship with the house, compromising his status as master. Chris's condition does not dispossess him of his legal ownership of Baldry Court, yet his mental state reverts to a point so far in the past that he is no longer adapted to the house's meticulously crafted environment and thus no longer recognizes the home as *his*—a phenomenon that West again renders in terms of vision and sight. When Chris enters the house for the first time since his injury, his authoritative “staring” at the grounds has been replaced by a hesitant and suspicious series of looks and glances. His eyes “harden[.]” (24) as he notes how Jenny has aged. Feeling awkward, Chris futilely “look[s] round for some graciousness to make the scene less wounding” (25); he “watche[s]... baffled and oppressed” as Kitty moves away from him (25). Chris “look[s] up the staircase” to dress for dinner (25), but his glance is misguided; the layout of the house has changed since his last memory, and Jenny must keep him from blundering into the wrong room. Chris's confusion erases his authority so thoroughly that Jenny repeatedly compares him to a caged beast. Noticing that he stands “slightly bent, as though he had been maimed” (24), Jenny contemplates that the home would now seem to him “more like a prison” (26), and as he stumbles down a set of renovated steps she likens him to “an animal pursued into a strange place by night” (27). She realizes that his “circumstances [are] his prison bars,” and watches as Chris “move[s] his shoulders uneasily, as if under a yoke” (29).⁶¹

⁶¹ The bestial language used to describe Chris in these passages bears many similarities to the animalistic language the narrator George employs when describing his wife Evadne in West's 1914 short story, “Indissoluble Matrimony.” In both cases, West's use of such metaphors carries an ironic bite: in the story, George's language functions to reveal his underlying racist and sexist attitudes towards Evadne, and we can similarly read Jenny's descriptions of Chris as highlighting the tendency to treat physically or mentally ill individuals as subhuman. In *Return*, West posits that the disruption of male authority via disability might present an opportunity for women to expand their access to experiences and environments, yet the overtness with which she has Jenny using such metaphors implies West's awareness of their problematic nature. See West, “Indissoluble Matrimony,” in *The Young Rebecca*, 267–289.

The conditions of Chris's amnesia, in other words, remove his ability to function as governing master of his estate, a property defined by and organized in relation to his mastery. Jenny immediately discerns a climatic change in the house that reflects this displacement: on the evening of Chris's return, she finds that "the furniture, very visible through the soft evening opacity with the observant brightness of old well-polished wood, seemed terribly aware. Strangeness had come into the house" (25). *Strangeness* is a potent term here, referring to Jenny's sympathy to Chris's feelings of foreignness yet also denoting a changed attitude towards Chris himself, who is now a stranger in his own home. As Mao concisely attests, Chris's amnesia "break[s] into the tranquility of Baldry Court"; the meticulously maintained environment of the house is "compromised" by his injury.⁶²

Mao proposes that the shattering of Baldry Court's order is a "lamentable" turn of events. His reading of *Return* finds West seeking to draw attention to the fact that any seemingly perfect setting is bound to be compromised, to convey that "[the] failure to admit the dangerousness of the world is the most dangerous of mistakes."⁶³ While West indeed attaches an element of sorrow to the upheaval of Baldry Court—which devastates both Kitty and Jenny, and which Jenny describes as "normal life dissolved to tears" (29)—West herself was not one to mourn the disruption of England's "stable institutions."⁶⁴ A young suffragette prone to embracing the tenets of behaviorism, West at this time viewed English society as a patriarchal system that "*automatically* compels women to be oppressed by men,"⁶⁵ one that allows women to develop only a limited

⁶² Mao, *Fateful Beauty*, 186,

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁶⁵ Rebecca West, "An Orgy of Disorder and Cruelty," in *The Young Rebecca*, 100, my italics.

range of capabilities, behaviors, and traits due to the rigid restrictions on their permitted habitats and experiences. In the first chapter of *Return*, West calls attention to how the physical environment of the home, conventionally arranged as a man's sanctuary, works to suppress women's abilities and intellects into such stereotyped channels. When Chris's amnesia unsettles this arrangement, rather than bemoaning the fact that such instability is possible, West uses this dynamic scenario to dig even deeper into the mechanisms of women's oppression. Chris's condition presents the women of the novel a rare opportunity: with his role in the home destabilized, Kitty and Jenny might conceivably instantiate a different arrangement, reform the conditions of the house in recognition of their own needs in a way that helps to develop their intellects and agency.⁶⁶ Yet West dramatizes how such opportunities are likely to come to nothing, as the women instead fall into conditioned behavioral patterns that sustain, rather than resist, the patriarchal power structure. The truly lamentable aspect of the novel is not the upsetting of Baldry Court's tranquility, but the fact that—with the women's help—the old tranquility is ultimately restored.

Kitty's initial response to the altered conditions at Baldry Court is a useful jumping off point for this reading, for at first glance it appears as though Kitty *does* move to gain some control over the environment of the house. On the night of Chris' return, having confirmed his inability to recognize her, Kitty takes immediate action:

...[Kitty] came in, but she moved past me, remote in preoccupation, and I was silent when I saw that she was dressed in all respects like a bride. The gown she wore on her wedding-day ten years ago had been cut and embroidered as this

⁶⁶ This would be consistent with what Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar posit in *No Man's Land*, that a number of wartime women writers perceived that "the soldier's sacrifice... seemed to signal a cultural wound or fissure through which radically new social modes might enter." Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century: Volume 2: Sexchanges* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 309.

white satin was.... Around her throat were her pearls, and... I saw that her right hand was stiff with rings and her left hand bare save for her wedding ring. ...With her lower lip thrust out, as if she were considering a menu, she lowered her head and looked down at herself. She frowned to see that the high-lights on the satin shone scarlet from the fire, that her flesh glowed like a rose, and she changed her seat for a high-backed chair beneath the furthest candle sconce. There were green curtains close by, and now the lights on her satin gown were green like cleft ice. ...So she waited for him. (26)

The language here is clinical, Kitty's actions calculated, as she arranges herself and prepares to face Chris. Laura Cowan interprets this moment as a blunder—she assumes Kitty is attempting to entice Chris, but since Kitty is “preoccup[ied] with her own looks” rather than attentive to his needs, she fails⁶⁷—yet Kitty's aim is not to allure. Her decision to resemble “cleft ice” rather than a glowing rose is explicitly intentional, as is her choice to sit in a monarchical “high-backed chair” and to starkly highlight her wedding ring, the most visible symbol of the binding contract of marriage. Kitty seeks not to reignite Chris's passion, but to assert authority, to establish her legal claim on Chris's person and to remind him of his marital obligations (and thus the impropriety of pining over Margaret). This scene is the first instance in the novel of a woman manipulating the materials of her environment and doing so for her *own* ends, in an effort to promote her *own* happiness, rather than Chris's. It is, in short, a power move.

Yet it is also a feeble and ineffectual power move, one that demonstrates, rather than challenges, the behavioral limitations placed on “sheltered women.” West's purposeful diction communicates the sense of boldness with which Jenny regards Kitty's behavior—the scene reads like a preparation for an ambush—but Kitty's aims are wholly proper, the gesture itself inherently passive: Chris is, as always, her primary focus; her goal is to force him to recognize the legal fact of their marriage; and the passage ends

⁶⁷ Cowan, “The Fine Frenzy,” 293.

with Kitty “wait[ing]” for him. It is notable, too, that Kitty manipulates her clothing, hair, and bodily positioning, but does not tamper with anything beyond her physical person. She does not presume to move so much as a chair: disapproving of how the seat by the fire makes her look, Kitty does not rearrange furniture but instead “change[s] her seat.” These gestures indicate that Kitty still regards herself as more object than subject, part of the household environment intended to condition and reinforce *Chris’s* mind and behavior rather than an active participant within the habitat. Kitty’s self-assertion is weak because it is constrained by her conditioned assumption of subordination; unsurprisingly, her gambit fails. When Chris enters, he compliments Kitty politely, then his “gaze shift[s] to the shadows in the corners of the room” (27). Soon after, he expresses his wish to bring Margaret to the home, a wish Kitty grants unhappily, but without argument. Although Chris’s amnesia suspends his control over the environment of Baldry Court, and although Kitty fervently wishes to assume some control, she appears to lack the ability to respond to this opportunity in a proactive, agentic fashion. Following her failed attempt to influence Chris with her wardrobe, Kitty recedes even further into objecthood: suffering, she “lay[s] about like a broken doll” (61) and “become[s] a decorative presence in his home” (65).

Within the critical literature, Kitty is typically interpreted as the villain of *Return*.⁶⁸ Shallow and lacking in empathy, Kitty is regarded as a woman who refuses to react to Chris’s amnesiac state with “concern or compassion” and instead “responds with selfish resentment.” Her antithesis is Margaret, who possesses “a generosity that is the

⁶⁸ See for example Margaret Stetz, “Drinking ‘The Wine of Truth’: Philosophical Change in West’s *The Return of the Soldier*,” *Arizona Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1987): 63–78; Cowan, “The Fine Frenzy”; Kafka, “Men in (Shell-)Shock”; and Rizzuto, “Towards an Ethics.” An exception is Rebecah Pulsifer, who recently challenged this reading by positing that Kitty is “Chris’s traumatized equivalent.” Pulsifer, “Reading Kitty’s Trauma,” 38.

opposite of Kitty's acquisitiveness."⁶⁹ Such interpretations of Kitty's character, however, centralize and prioritize Chris: Kitty is perceived to be hateful because she refuses to accede to Chris's amnesiac fiction—his desire to ignore the legal reality of his marriage and dwell in the memory of his long-lost love—and makes her displeasure known. Margaret, conversely, is accepted as the novel's spiritual heroine due to her willingness to make Chris's desires and comfort her highest priority. Jenny's narration condones this perspective: her own devotion to Chris is consistently and blatantly reiterated in the novel, and she routinely praises Margaret for her beautiful "generosity" (RS 70) and dismisses Kitty as "a faceless figure with flounces" (46). Although Jenny herself is a character with distinct biases—her unwavering love for "our splendid Chris" (81) distorts her presentations of Margaret and Kitty, who raise or fall in Jenny's estimation according to how well they appear to be attending to Chris's needs—Jenny's "representations of Kitty" tend to be taken, as Rebecah Pulsifer notes, "at face value."⁷⁰

By putting Chris's emotional welfare at the center of their readings of *Return*, critics ironically replicate the same behaviors that West seeks to expose as pernicious in her novel. For if we read this novel not as a story of a soldier's trauma but as a gender-conscious exploration of domestic environments, we see how *Return* dramatizes how learned behavioral patterns work, as West wrote in a 1912 essay, to keep women "mastered by the idea of duty and self-sacrifice" and prevent them from "attack[ing] the social system."⁷¹ When Kitty expresses a willingness to object to the expectation that she place Chris's desires above her own, not only is her protest restrained and ineffective, but it makes her detestable to Jenny, who chastises Kitty for being unhappy and "forgett[ing]

⁶⁹ Cowan, "The Fine Frenzy," 293, 294.

⁷⁰ Pulsifer, "Reading Kitty's Trauma," 41.

⁷¹ Rebecca West, "Women and Wages," in *The Young Rebecca*, 105.

that we lived in the impregnable fortress of a gracious life” (RS 58). It seems no coincidence that the first time Jenny declares Kitty “ugly” is also the first time Kitty neglects to be “amiabl[e]” to Chris (30), and that Margaret is deemed “wonderful” on the basis that she is willing to perform “supreme act[s] of sacrifice” for Chris, prioritizing him above all else (71).

Jenny’s use of the word *sacrifice* in her assessment of Margaret’s virtues is worth examining, for it connects Jenny’s perspective and narrative biases to both the 1912 essay cited earlier as well as a 1913 *Clarion* essay entitled “The Sin of Self-Sacrifice.” In the latter piece, West writes, “The basis of the anti-feminist position is the idea that women ought to sacrifice the development of their own personalities for the sake of men and children: that even if they are fit to vote and to fulfil other activities of men they should not do so, because all their energies should be spent on the service of their families.”⁷² West declares that experiential limitations imposed on women compel them to develop a felt imperative to sacrifice: a woman “from her childhood [is] guarded from the disturbance of intellectual effort and should pass automatically through a serenely sentimental adolescence to a home,” where “the tranquil flame of her unspoiled soul should radiate purity and nobility upon an indefinitely extended family.” That such ignorance is taken culturally to be a sign of “purity and nobility” is, to West, insidious and destructive. In the name of purity, women are deprived of the wisdom of experience, which one can only gain when there is a “collision between [one’s] nerves and external things.”⁷³ Conditioning women to be self-sacrificing causes them “to remain weak and

⁷² Rebecca West, “The Sin of Self-Sacrifice,” in *The Young Rebecca*, 235.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 235.

underdeveloped” and turns them into “a slave class.” On these grounds, West praises the militant suffragettes, who are “splendidly selfish.”⁷⁴

If Kitty resists the expectation of sacrifice, aggrieving Jenny with her audacity, Margaret exemplifies an unwaveringly self-sacrificing woman. Margaret is the only character in the novel aside from Chris whose background is detailed at length, allowing readers to witness the way in which her developmental path gives rise to her only discernible personality trait: selflessness. In Chris’s extended recollection of the summer of 1901, he persistently characterizes Margaret—who worked at her father’s inn on Monkey Island—as “charity and love itself” (36), “shy,” “silent[,]” “obedient[,]” and “conscientious” (36–9). Just as Kitty and Jenny are presented at the beginning of the novel as features of their domestic environment, whose role is to cultivate a relaxing habitat for Chris, Margaret in 1901 exists to facilitate the pleasure of her guests, and particularly Chris. Margaret is part of Monkey Island’s overall enchanting landscape. Chris’s descriptions merge Margaret with the inn’s gardens: her “mouth and chin” are as “delicate as flowers” (38), her body “like a lily stem” (38). Describing a luminous evening during which he and Margaret encounter “a small Greek temple” (41) while on a walk, Chris remembers:

... there was nothing anywhere but beauty. He lifted her in his arms and carried her within the columns and made her stand in a niche above the alter. A strong stream of moonlight rushed upon her there; by its light he could not tell if her hair was white as silver or yellow as gold, and again he was filled with exultation because he knew that it would not have mattered if it had been white. His love was changeless. (41)

This brilliantly layered passage ties Chris’s admiration to Margaret’s objecthood, as his language essentially transforms her into a Greek statue. Margaret is literally placed on a

⁷⁴ Ibid., 237, 238.

pedestal, where she blends so thoroughly into the setting of the temple that “he could not tell if her hair was white as silver or yellow as gold.” Later, after Chris exits Margaret’s life, we learn that she worked as a domestic for a few years, tending to a “large and needy family,” and then “began a courtship [with Mr. Grey] that... consisted of an incessant whining up at her protection instinct” (53–4). In Margaret’s marriage, she maintains the home and dotes on her husband with “constant attention” (54); Jenny discerns that Margaret had long “accepted it as her mission to keep loveliness and excitement alive in [her husband’s] life” (47), noting that she interacts with Mr. Grey “in a devoted way” (48).

Margaret’s continuous training as a caretaker and tender of men’s happiness means that, when she is brought to Baldry Court, she readily resumes the task of attending to Chris’s emotional needs. One afternoon, Jenny finds Chris sleeping peacefully among the trees while Margaret watches over him, “her mournfully vigilant face pinkened by the cold river of air sent by the advancing evening” (69). Struck by the beauty of this scene, Jenny thinks:

I knew it was the most significant as it was the loveliest attitude in the world. It means that the woman has gathered the soul of the man into her soul and is keeping it warm in love and peace so that his body can rest quiet for a little time. That is a great thing for a woman to do. I know there are things at least as great for those women whose independent spirits can ride fearlessly and with interest outside the home park of their personal relationships, but independence is not the occupation of most of us. What we desire is greatness such as this which had given sleep to the beloved. (70)

West counts on readers’ ability to detect Jenny’s narrative bias in this passage, her status as an unconscious proponent of anti-feminist ideology. The thrice-repeated invocation of *great* and her childish use of superlatives (“most significant,” “loveliest... in the world”) lack weight, for Jenny does not possess the sophistication to make such proclamations. In

the next paragraph, Jenny gushes on in praise of Margaret's devotion, marveling over "[w]hat she had done in leading him into this quiet magic circle" (70). All told, Jenny repeats the words *generous/generosity* five times, *beauty* another five, *wonderful* and *a gift* twice apiece (70–2). Jenny's exultation in this moment is hyperbolic. Her effusive insistence on the nobility of the scene functions reflexively to convey West's own conviction that what we are witnessing is *not* a beautiful or fortunate act of charity, but is instead a coerced sacrifice. Chris's contentment, we cannot help but notice, comes at the price of Margaret's own serenity: she remains "mournfully vigilant" while he sleeps, suffers a "cold river of air" while he is kept "warm in love," compromises the integrity of her soul to "gather[] the soul of the man" (70). And though Jenny's language is suffused with awe, she acknowledges that, in order to gain the meager power to "give[] sleep" to men, Margaret must relinquish something as profound as her "independence," the ability to be "fearlessly" engaged in the outside world (70). West uses Jenny's ebullience as a denaturalization mechanism that functions to question the supposed "purity and nobility" of women's prioritization of men, to instead reveal the injustice of the sacrifices made by those in the "slave class."⁷⁵

Return, in this way, dramatizes a dilemma inherent in West's behaviorist understanding of the mechanisms of sexist oppression. For West, the legal and cultural subordination of women and the limitations placed on their experiences and environments are the most pressing feminist issues. West often concludes her essays with a provocative call to action, demanding that women enact "a militant movement for more riotous living."⁷⁶ *Return*, however, confronts the practical barriers to such revolutionary

⁷⁵ Ibid., 235, 237.

⁷⁶ West, "A New Women's Movement," 134.

action: if the environment indeed determines the individual—if “the basis of all behaviour is, of course, the simple reflexes” (*SN* 73)—then women may lack the ability to resist their conditioned subordination, just as Pavlov’s dogs lack the capacity to will themselves to cease salivating to the scientist’s bell. Chris’s amnesia unsettles the conventional domestic habitat of Baldry Court, presenting the women an opportunity to alter their environment in a manner more conducive to their needs. Yet Kitty’s enervated attempt at resistance, Jenny’s disapproval of the same, and Margaret’s uncomplaining acceptance of the role of the self-sacrificing woman are all gestures that imply that women, given such opportunities, will ultimately be consigned to reestablish, rather than resist, patriarchal arrangements.

This brings us to the end of the novel. While most readings of *Return* focus on what Chris’s climactic cure means for the soldier himself—whether, for example, the decision to restore his memory is more or less ethical, or what the cure suggests about psychoanalytic practice or the psychology of trauma—we might look to the novel’s conclusion for an indication of whether West mitigates her cynicism regarding the women’s (in)ability to enact change. On this point, the ending is ambiguous. In the final passage of the novel, having been given license from Dr. Anderson to select the necessary objects to startle Chris into a cured state, the women return to the nursery, where Jenny “rummage[s] among Oliver’s clothes” and Margaret “play[s] with the toys on the mantelpiece” (84). The scene parallels the one that opens the novel, yet while the introductory passage established the women’s deep respect for the nursery’s male-controlled order—the toys remained “ready for play at their master’s pleasure” (3)—this order is now actively disturbed by the women’s foraging. Supplanting the master,

Margaret dares to “play.” A moment later, Jenny reflects that their goal is to “shock [Chris]” into normalcy (85), a phrase that, used in the context of Chris’s health, cannot but evoke the shell shock that gave rise to his amnesia, linguistically aligning the women with the wartime forces that seek to do Chris harm. Jenny and Margaret never waver in their “common adoration” (64) for Chris, and their actions here are aimed at restoring Chris’s mastery of Baldry Court, yet West renders the women’s relationship with the environment in this scene in unexpectedly subversive terms.

Relevant, too, is the fact that the conclusion of *Return* insists on the inevitability of shattered spheres: Mao writes that Chris’s cure and return to the front function to show that “magic circles”—like the one Chris and Margaret construct—“not only will not endure, but should not.”⁷⁷ This motif also has important feminist implications. Significantly, West uses the language of “magic globes” or “magic circles” to characterize not only the protective aura Margaret creates for Chris through her self-sacrificing care, but also the rarefied environment of Baldry Court cultivated by Kitty and Jenny for Chris’s pleasure. In a striking passage midway through the novel, Jenny mourns the fact that Chris no longer recognizes the exquisite habitat to which she and Kitty have devoted their lives, and envisions her sorrow in the following terms:

[Chris] is looking down on two crystal balls... In one he sees Margaret; ...then drops a glance to the other, just long enough to see that in its depths Kitty and I walk in bright dresses through our glowing gardens. ...He sighs a deep sigh of delight and puts out his hand to the ball where Margaret shines. His sleeve catches the other one and sends it down to crash in a thousand pieces on the floor. ...Chris is wholly enclosed in his intentness on his chosen crystal. No one weeps for the shattering of our world. (67)

Here, Jenny indulges in a transient moment of self-pity; in subsequent passages, she expresses admiration for Margaret’s “magic circle” (70) for the happiness it gives Chris.

⁷⁷ Mao, *Fateful Beauty*, 193.

But by the end of the novel, both Jenny and Margaret admit that allowing Chris to remain locked forever in a state of blissful contentment is not in his best interest. In the final scene, Jenny recognizes that “if [they] left him in his magic circle” contentedly receiving Margaret’s dutiful care, Chris would eventually be reduced to “senile idiocy” (88). Preserving Chris’s “dignity” (88) necessitates that this magic circle be broken and that he be re-exposed to the experiences—both the opportunities and the dangers—of the outside world. The irony of Jenny’s realization, made evident by the parallel of the matching crystal spheres, is that she does not recognize this lesson’s applicability to her own circumstances, does not perceive the fact that Chris’s “magic circle” is fundamentally no different from hers and Kitty’s. She recognizes that Chris’s sheltered life constitutes an unsustainable system that compromises his humanity and potential—to shield Chris is to be “utterly negligent of his future, blasphemously careless of the divine essential of his soul” (88)—yet she fails to understand that she, Kitty, and Margaret have long consigned themselves to just such a dehumanized existence. Thus, even though Jenny perceives the “shattering” (67) of spheres to be a tragedy, from West’s perspective, it can be read as a glimmer of hope. All confining spheres are, perhaps, likewise poised to crash.

In sum, although *Return* presents an unflinching exploration of the practical barriers to feminist progress, dramatizing the mechanisms by which women are conditioned to sustain a patriarchal system no matter their will or intention, and although no discernible solution to these barriers is offered, the novel nevertheless commits to the belief articulated by West in her essays, that progress is necessary and even inevitable. *Return* casts a cynical eye on West’s reform ideals, yet the end of the novel suggests that cynicism has not given way to despair. Though West cannot yet envision a way out of

institutionalized patriarchy, she inscribes in *Return* the same conviction with which she concludes “The Strange Necessity”: “I hold some assurance regarding the value of life, which makes my fate different from what it appears, different, not lamentable, grandiose” (SN 198).

The Sins of the Mother: Anti-Essentialism in *The Judge*

If *The Return of the Soldier* signals West’s awareness that her belief in the feminist cause was at least partially sustained by optimism, just one month before her novel was published, her optimism was justified by British law: on February 6, 1918, the British government passed the Representation of the People Bill, which granted suffrage to women over the age of thirty, enfranchising over six million women across Great Britain.⁷⁸ The law served as proof that progress, indeed, was possible.

At the same time, however, historians of the period note that though the passing of the franchise bill denoted a victory for women’s rights, the victory had a paradoxically chilling effect on the feminist movement. Sandra Stanley Holton reports that the enfranchisement law heralded “a conservative phase in the history of feminism.” While prewar suffragists agitated for equality and autonomy in the public sphere, a burgeoning faction of postwar “New Feminists,” lead by Eleanor Rathbone, began to call more reservedly for “adequate family incomes; good, cheap housing; access to birth control; and maternity care.”⁷⁹ Their efforts focused on “the special, particular needs of the family

⁷⁸ The millions of British women under the age of 30, including West herself, remained disenfranchised . Women would not attain equal franchise rights until the 1928 passage of the universal suffrage law.

⁷⁹ Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain*,

woman.”⁸⁰ Designating women’s needs as different and distinct from men’s, the New Feminists’ appeals eschewed equality and fell back on essentialist discourses, readily accepting that women had a “‘natural’ affinity” for certain activities and causes due “to their maternal status.”⁸¹ Whereas before 1918, many feminists—particularly the radical suffragettes of the WSPU, the group to which West belonged—“vigorously attacked the notion of separate spheres,” New Feminists “pursued a program that championed rather than challenged the prevailing ideas about masculinity and femininity.”⁸² Seeking to “ameliorate the day-to-day problems” for women within the patriarchal order,⁸³ the New Feminist agenda fractured the feminist movement in the 1920s, sparking heated intra-movement disputes. In short, though the passage of the Representation of the People Bill represented a landmark achievement, the years that followed were a time of anxiety for many women’s rights advocates, who saw former compatriots withdrawing from the cause of equality. The period is generally viewed as a time when “the discourse of women’s liberation faltered.”⁸⁴

It was in this shifting, post-suffrage climate that West composed her second novel. Appropriately, *The Judge* was itself a shifting document: the novel underwent

1900–1918 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 152.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 152. In *Making Peace*, Susan Kingsley Kent elaborates on this dynamic, framing the New Feminist conservative turn as a specifically postwar reactionary movement: after the war, British society became focused on reclaiming normalcy, an effort that included “attempts to reestablish separate spheres.” Eager not to appear to be seeding discord at a delicate time, New Feminists felt that equality feminists’ revolutionary demands and rhetoric would backfire, and that “protective legislation” would be “the best way to safeguard women’s interests.” Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 116, 117.

⁸¹ Helen McCarthy, “‘Shut Against the Woman and Workman Alike’: Democratizing Foreign Policy Between the Wars,” in *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918–1945*, eds. Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 151.

⁸² Kent, *Making Peace*, 6.

⁸³ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 152.

⁸⁴ Shirley Peterson, “Modernism, Single Motherhood, and the Discourse of Women’s Liberation in Rebecca West’s *The Judge*,” in *Unmanning Modernism: Gendered Re-Readings*, eds. Elizabeth Jane Harrison and Shirley Peterson (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 105.

several stages of planning and years of development before its publication in 1922. The book was initially conceived as an epic, nine-volume tale about an actual judge, built around a climactic scene in which the judge, while visiting a brothel, is struck down by shock when he sees that his mistress is the former wife of a man he condemned. In a 1917 letter to S.K. Ratcliffe, West breathlessly summarized her composition progress: “You see they have just got married, and her brother has to die, and his mother has to die, and he has to murder his brother and be hanged, and it’s really only *then* that the exciting things begin to happen.”⁸⁵ By the time the novel was published, West eliminated the character of the judge completely, retooling the story into a romance between Ellen, a young Scottish suffragette, and Richard, a prosperous Englishman, whose relationship plunges into melodramatic tragedy in the second part of the narrative due to the smothering influence of Richard’s demanding mother, Marion. It is Marion who assumes the now-metaphorical role of the novel’s titular judge: she remarks near the end of the novel, “Every mother is a judge who sentences the children for the sins of the father,” a statement that doubles as the novel’s epigraph.⁸⁶ West also abandoned her original multi-volume vision, though the finished, two-part, single-volume tome was a sizable 430 pages.

The Judge received mixed reviews. Many grumbled that the novel was overly long and tonally uneven, like the anonymous *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer who felt that the first half of the book presented a “witty, acute, and agreeable” courtship narrative that left the reader “unprepared for the *milieu* of horror and lust” displayed in Book II, which ends with Richard murdering his half-brother in vengeance after his

⁸⁵ Rebecca West, Letter to SK Ratcliffe, Christmas 1917, in *Selected Letters*, 34.

⁸⁶ Rebecca West, *The Judge* (1922; repr., London: Virago, 1983), 346; hereafter cited in text as *J*.

mother's suicide.⁸⁷ The criticism disappointed West: to her chagrin, most critics were focusing on the "Oedipal conflict"—the charged relationship between Richard and Marion, described at length in the novel's second half—and as a result missed the point of her novel completely. In 1922, she complained in another letter to Ratcliffe, "I have come to the conclusion that *The Judge* must be a very bad book as no one sees its thesis—the way the pleasant vices of Harry pile up into this tragedy which involves the innocent Ellen. I could beat the heads of all the people who talk about the Oedipus complex on a stone pavement."⁸⁸ The problem, West later surmised, was one of timing: she felt herself "unfortunate" to have written "a book about a friend of my family... in which he scarified the woman he loved to his mother" when "just then the phrase 'Oedipus complex' got loose." As with *Return* before it, West felt that the message of *The Judge* got lost in "this damaging chatter about psycho-analysis."⁸⁹

Today, *The Judge* remains relatively obscure. As with *Return*, critics who have studied the novel do not hesitate to apply the Freudian lens that so frustrated West—many take for granted that the novel offers "Oedipal plots"⁹⁰—but recent interpretations have also contextualized *The Judge* in terms of West's feminist convictions, as a text that emerges rather precisely from the specific sociopolitical circumstances of a post-suffrage

⁸⁷ Unsigned review of *The Judge*, by Rebecca West. *Times Literary Supplement*, June 29, 1922, 427, quoted in Phillip E. Ray, "The Judge Reexamined: Rebecca West's Underrated Gothic Romance," *Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 31, no. 3 (1988), 297.

⁸⁸ Rebecca West, Letter to SK Ratcliffe, summer 1922, in *Selected Letters*, 52.

⁸⁹ West and Hutchinson, "On 'The Return,'" 69. West implies here that the Oedipus complex did not factor into the composition of *The Judge* for roughly the same reason that she dismisses psychoanalytic readings of *Return*: she claims that the concept of the Oedipus complex had not yet "got[ten] loose" in English discourse. The persuasiveness of this explanation is open to debate. Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex was available to English speakers as early as 1911 with A.A. Brill's English translation of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and Freud continued to theorize the complex in the fourth edition of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in "The Ego and the Id," and in "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," all of which were not published in English until after 1923. It is difficult to reconstruct the exact moment, if there was such a moment, when the term "got loose" among English lay readers.

⁹⁰ Laura Cowan, *Rebecca West's Subversive Use of Hybrid Genres: 1911–41* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 54.

Britain. Shirley Peterson, for example, reads *The Judge* as a more or less direct political allegory, one that uses the “devouring mother and her future daughter-in-law (and heir apparent)” to represent “the women’s movement in its immediate postsuffrage phase as it sought a modern identity.” This allegorical tale, according to Peterson, criticizes the idealism of the prewar feminist movement, as West uses the novel to “vent[] her disillusionment with the suffragettes.”⁹¹ The ending of *The Judge*—which strongly implies that Ellen will be consigned to single motherhood like both Marion and her own mother—functions to show that “[t]he empowering ideology of liberation, autonomy and independence brandished by the early women’s movement as a social corrective to gender inequality [is] easily undermined by the specter of the single mother.”⁹² Subsequent critics have concurred, deeming the novel a bitter reflection on West’s suffragette past. Kathryn Laing argues that West—a single mother herself as a result of her affair with H.G. Wells—focuses on the politics of motherhood in *The Judge* and “gives a voice of anger to mothers.” The novel, in her reading, is a palimpsestic text that “enact[s] a rehearsal of maternal narratives.”⁹³ Nancy L. Paxton similarly contends that West’s second novel “invites readers to reconsider the effects of the suffragettes’ turn away from unaddressed problems defining women’s work and sexuality in order to pursue the franchise.”⁹⁴

The critical consensus, in other words, finds *The Judge* forwarding a stance in concert with the attitudes and agenda of the New Feminists.⁹⁵ Just as the New Feminists

⁹¹ Peterson, “Modernism,” 106, 109.

⁹² Ibid., 114.

⁹³ Kathryn Laing, “Versions and Palimpsests: Rebecca West’s *The Sentinel*, *Adela*, and *The Judge*,” in Schweizer, *Rebecca West Today*, 181.

⁹⁴ Nancy L. Paxton, “Renegotiating the Public and Private Divide: Reconsidering Rebecca West’s *The Judge*,” in Schweizer, *Rebecca West Today*, 191.

⁹⁵ The persistence of Freudian theory in these articles is likely not coincidental. As discussed in the

rejected the suffragette program of autonomy so that they might address “the special, particular needs of the family woman,”⁹⁶ these critics argue that West turns away from her previous radicalism and, in *The Judge*, focuses instead on “work and family, courtship and marriage, and motherhood and female sacrifice.”⁹⁷ The New Feminists’ employment of essentialist ideology—which historian Helen McCarthy describes as a “maternalist understanding[] of sexual difference” that “inflected so much interwar feminist discourse”⁹⁸—is similarly echoed in critics’ defining of *The Judge* as a “story of motherhood” that assumes the existence of “essential differences” between women and men.⁹⁹ While critics avoid explicitly labeling West an advocate of the New Feminist movement, they squarely position *The Judge* as a text that echoes New Feminists’ discursive “rejection of the equal-rights approach” and acceptance of “a special-needs approach” focused on motherhood.¹⁰⁰

While *The Judge* may indeed inscribe West’s attitudes towards the changes in the women’s movement in post-suffrage Britain, it is difficult to accept the claim that those attitudes favored the New Feminist doctrine of maternalism and domestic reform. There is little to no evidence that West’s ideological position shifted in tandem with the post-1918 decline in equality feminism; historians commonly cite West as one of several prominent figures of the era who unflaggingly “advocated equality with men.”¹⁰¹ Her

introduction, Kent has argued that New Feminism and Freud’s psychosexual theories were mutually reinforcing discourses; she finds that psychoanalysis bolstered the New Feminist proposition that “[h]appiness and health for women... depended on motherhood” and the notion that “women who refused motherhood” and “sought equality between men and women” possessed “a sexual pathology.” Kent, *Making Peace*, 110, 111.

⁹⁶ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 152.

⁹⁷ Paxton, “Renegotiating,” 190.

⁹⁸ McCarthy, “Shut Against,” 151.

⁹⁹ Laing, “Versions,” 179; Paxton, “Renegotiating,” 196.

¹⁰⁰ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, 152.

¹⁰¹ Kent, *Making Peace*, 135.

essays throughout the period consistently and aggressively condemn essentialist notions of “femaleness,” which, in her view, work only to “cultivate laxness of [women’s] mental tissue.”¹⁰² And, as Jane Marcus attests, West’s belief in the ethical importance of eliminating constraints on women made her sensitive to “the repressive nature of reformers’ schemes of domestic economy.”¹⁰³ Reading *The Judge* in relation to West’s ongoing engagement with behaviorist discourse clarifies this issue, as it enables us to recognize that *The Judge* does not register “disillusionment” with equality feminism.¹⁰⁴ On the contrary, the text disputes the New Feminist position—particularly with regard to motherhood/maternity—and expresses the urgent necessity of recommitting to the equality-feminist agenda. Through Marion’s narrative, West illustrates how the essentialist ideology of New Feminism works to diminish the potential of both women and the children they raise, while the character of Christina models an alternative, non-essentialist understanding of motherhood, one that reveals it to be a potentially subversive role capable of contributing to the cause of equality.

Indeed, *The Judge* presents two prominent mothers: Christina Melville (Ellen’s mother) and Marion Yaverland (Richard’s mother). Structurally, *The Judge* is split cleanly into two halves, and the narrative role of each mother is likewise evenly divided: Mrs. Melville appears only in Book I, Mrs. Yaverland only in Book II. While the overarching narrative of *The Judge* traces Ellen and Richard’s ultimately tragic love story, the individual narrative arc of each book is to a large degree defined by these mothers and their interactions with their children. Book I explores the relationship

¹⁰² Rebecca West, “Woman Worship,” in *The Young Rebecca*, 339, 340.

¹⁰³ Jane Marcus, Prefatory note to Correspondence between Mrs. Hobson and Miss West, in *The Young Rebecca*, 38.

¹⁰⁴ Peterson, “Modernism,” 109.

between Christina and her daughter and concludes with diphtheria tragically claiming Christina's life—prompting Ellen and Richard to shorten their engagement and move immediately from Edinburgh to Richard's home at Yaverland End—while Book II expounds on Marion's and Richard's relationship and ends with Marion's death by suicide. Despite this textual balancing act, critics studying *The Judge* tend to focus exclusively on Book II, positioning Marion as the novel's sole representative “mother figure” who “wields a fatalistic destructive force.”¹⁰⁵ This neglect of Christina, and of *The Judge*'s first half, is a critical oversight that my analysis seeks to address, as these mothers' roles are of comparable significance. West, I argue, deliberately juxtaposes the two mothers as a means of dramatizing the contrasting ideological positions underlying New Feminism and equality feminism.

When Marion makes her first appearance in *The Judge* at the start of Book II, she introduces herself—both to Ellen, who is at this point newly engaged to Richard, and to readers—with the words, “I am Richard's mother” (202). By substituting her name with a statement of her maternal role, Marion intimates that motherhood serves as the definitional aspect of her identity, an implication quickly proven accurate. Marion maintains that the “work of giving life” is a woman's “only justification for existence” (254), and professes that she feels “indifference... for all living beings who were not members of her family” (351). She feels herself “sealed in reserve to all but Richard” (215) and admits that she “care[s] for no one but [him]” (281). In another passage, Marion recalls the months when she was pregnant with Richard as a time of utter rapture: “her mind became subject to the duty of awaiting him with adoration as her flesh and blood were subject to the duty of nurturing him” (259). The words *subject* and *duty*, twice

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 111, 112.

repeated in the context of both mind and body, emphasize Marion's understanding that the aim of her existence is to serve her child, that her psycho-physiological being is bound to her maternity. She moreover considers women to be "such dependent things" (239), innately disposed to be relational and non-autonomous. (After Marion voices this opinion, Ellen inwardly deems her "not quite sound on the feminist question" [239].) Marion's own life serves for her as proof of this dependency, for once she became pregnant, "Harry, who had been lord of her life, receded rushing to a place of secondary importance, and she transferred her allegiance" to Richard (259). Indeed, though Marion has been interpreted as a "monolithic reminder of first-wave feminism,"¹⁰⁶ her maternity-based understanding of sexual difference aligns Marion not with equality feminists like Christabel Pankhurst but with Eleanor Rathbone and her New Feminism. Marion's insistence that maternity "justifi[es]" a woman's being echoes Rathbone's essentialist belief that "the potentialities of [women's] own natures" and "the circumstances of their own lives" are defined by "the occupation of motherhood."¹⁰⁷

In her feminist nonfiction, West approaches the subject of motherhood from a characteristically behaviorist standpoint, as evinced in "The Sin of Self-Sacrifice." In the middle of the piece, West takes up the subject of mothers, arguing that when sheltered or deprived women raise children, they inevitably condition their deprivation into their children, to the overall detriment of "the race." West reasons that, just as matter cannot "have a substance apart from its attributes," there "is nothing behind the race but the individuals. If half the individuals agree to remain weak and underdeveloped half the race is weak and underdeveloped." West rejects the notion that "underdeveloped" individuals

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 111.

¹⁰⁷ Eleanor Rathbone, "What Is Equality?" *Woman's Leader*, February 11, 1927, 3, quoted in Kent, *Making Peace*, 117.

can function as effective parents, declaring that a sheltered woman will “by her softness encourag[e] the famine that may some day starve [her children].”¹⁰⁸ Women must for this reason be permitted, like men, to “develop[] their own personalities” and “insist on self-realisation.”¹⁰⁹ West’s logic here frames mothering in Pavlovian terms, as a task of behavioral conditioning that requires adept, intelligent, and self-fulfilled conditioners.

The way in which West frames motherhood in her nonfiction lends insight into the character of Marion. While it is debatable whether West intended Marion to function as a representative exemplar of New Feminist ideology, Marion certainly espouses a maternity-based and essentialist view of womanhood that West identifies in her essays as unequivocally pernicious. Marion’s larger narrative, in this light, may be understood as something of a cautionary tale, dramatizing the adverse outcomes, for both parent and child, when a woman accepts that her personhood is reduced to her capacity for maternity. Recalling the Pavlovian model of motherhood articulated in “The Sin of Self Sacrifice,” *The Judge* posits that Marion behaviorally conditions into Richard a state of self-sacrificing dependency that reflects her own, raising him to replicate her own destructive absorption in the maternal relationship. Because Marion assumes the identity of self-as-mother, in other words, the only identity available to Richard is self-as-son.

West communicates this conditioned dynamic through an extensive description of Richard’s upbringing. We learn that in the first weeks of Richard’s life, Marion “kiss[ed] him extravagantly and unsatedly” (285), craving a “contact so close that it was unity with his warm young body” (286). The kisses she wishes to bestow are, as West’s narrator relates, “too oppressive for a child’s mouth,” just as her love is an “excessive burden”

¹⁰⁸ West, “The Sin,” 237.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 235, 238.

and “too heavy a cloak for one child” (286). West’s language foreshadows the danger inherent in Marion’s total, self-abnegating absorption in motherhood: believing Richard to be her sole reason for living, Marion resolves that she must never lose his devotion or affection, but “must set herself to be the most alluring mother that ever lived, so that he would not struggle in her arms but would give her back kiss for kiss” (286). That Marion achieves this troubling goal is confirmed in a later passage describing Richard’s boyhood: “In the afternoon she had to drive him out to go and play games with the other boys. Much rather would he have stayed with her, and when she called him back for a last hug he did not struggle in her arms but gave her back kiss for kiss” (307–8). West’s repetition in full of the phrase, “not struggle in her arms but gave her back kiss for kiss,” functions to display Marion’s success in conditioning Richard to reciprocate her own all-consuming love: he has “[given] himself up to loving her” as she has to loving him (302). Just as Marion felt herself “subject to the duty” (259) of caring for Richard during her pregnancy, her mothering has made him “subject to her now” (302) in return. As West rather explicitly attests, Marion effectively “train[s]” Richard to “submit[] to her in everything” (338–9).

Although Marion and Richard both believe they enjoy a “perfect relationship” (285), West’s language communicates the ways in which Marion’s neglect of individuality and preoccupation with motherhood incites a reciprocal—and insidious—preoccupation in Richard. Marion’s presence hovers, albatross-like, over Richard’s every thought and action. In Book I, long before Marion appears in the narrative, Richard ruminates that both Ellen and the suffragette speaker Mrs. Ormiston “remind[] him of his mother” (41, 61). When Richard lies, he speculates that it is a trait he gets “from [his]

mother” (49); in quiet moments, he wonders what his mother is doing; and when he thinks about his career goals, he thinks that it “was his duty to her to go out into the world and do great things” (63). The hills in Spain remind him of “where his mother used to meet his father” (69); his own prospects for love cause his thoughts to turn to “his mother’s love” (88). In a moment of anger, he thinks, “Oh, women were the devil! All except his mother” (70). Hearing the cries of a man in pain, Richard recalls when “he had heard his mother make just such anguished sounds as these” (89). He has “a recurrent tendency to brood on his mother’s wrongs until he went a little mad” (110). Observing Ellen, he wonders “what his mother must have been like when she was her age” (117). When, after their engagement, Ellen asks what she should call him, Richard responds, “Richard. That’s what my mother calls me” (168), a response that mirrors Marion’s self-naming in relation to her son.

This co-dependency extends to their physical relationship: Marion instills in Richard the habit of passionate physicality, a behavior forged by the many times in childhood when Marion made “her flesh... nice for Richard to kiss” (293), when Richard and Marion would “[cling] to each other” and “almost melt[] into each other” (301), when he would “cover her with kisses” (318). The intimacy and electric pleasure of their interactions are rendered in intentionally perverse, sexually charged terms: reunited for the first time since Richard and Ellen’s engagement, West describes how Richard “fold[s] [Marion] in his arms, and kissed her on the lips and hair. She rested quietly within his groping, pressing love. ...There was nothing solid in the world but their two bodies, nothing real but their two lives” (331). Marion is “amused” by the thought that she and Richard interact like lovers (321), thinks to herself that it “must be wonderful to be

Richard's sweetheart" (256), and feels regret "that being his mother she could not also be his wife" (256).

It is easy to understand why both early reviewers and critics today read the sexualized nature of Richard and Marion's relationship through a Freudian lens. Yet this ubiquitous critical assessment is worth questioning, not only in light of West's explicit denial of psychoanalytic influence, but also because of the ideological implications of framing the mother-son relationship in *The Judge* in these terms. Freud, in "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," calls the Oedipus complex "the central phenomenon" of early childhood sexual development, citing it as the strongest proof of essentialist sexual difference. Formulating the Oedipus complex directly leads Freud to declare his opposition to "the feminist demand for equal rights."¹¹⁰ Freudian psychoanalytical theory frames Oedipal longings as not only natural and innate, but also part of a larger system of gendered psychosexual development—a far cry from the behaviorist stance from which West, in this period, derives her own theory regarding the development of gendered traits.

Indeed, even if the erotic energies of Marion and Richard's relationship evoke the Oedipus complex for readers, West's description of Richard's childhood carefully develops his excessive devotion to Marion in a way that defies Freud's naturalizing interpretation of this incestuous desire and instead establishes their co-dependency as a product of Marion's conditioning, a set of behaviors elicited out of his developmental environment. In fact, the tragic events that conclude the novel are impelled by Marion's sudden awareness of this dynamic:

¹¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989), 661, 665.

She cried out to herself in anguish: "Of course! Of course! He cannot love Ellen because he loves me too much! He has nothing left to love her with!" ...[I]f Richard went on loving her over-much, the present would become hideous as she had never thought the circumstances of her splendid son could do. The girl would grieve.... And there would be no future. She would have no grandchildren. When she died he would be so lonely.... And it was her own fault. All her life long she had let him see how she wanted love... and so he had given her all he had, even that which he should have kept for his own needs. (346)

The revelatory language of this passage contains echoes of *Return*: just as Jenny realizes that allowing Chris to remain stagnantly conditioned within Margaret's beatific "magic circle" would be "utterly negligent of his future" (*RS* 88), Marion realizes that conditioning Richard to be singularly focused on the maternal relationship means that "there would be no future" for him. Marion accepts the situation as "her own fault," and, recalling Jenny's determination to shatter Chris's protective sphere, she vows to "put this right" (*J* 346). In Marion's case, however, there is no Dr. Anderson to provide a miraculous cure. Her solution is to commit suicide, an act which she believes will free Richard from his crippling devotion to her and allow him to move forward as Ellen's husband. (She leaves a suicide note that reads in part, "Give him to Ellen. I must die" [423].) Predictably, however, this act merely spurs Richard into a parallel act of self-destruction. Minutes after learning of his mother's death, "passion for Marion... devour[s] him" (424) and in an impulsive rage, Richard murders his half-brother Roger, condemning himself to the fate of execution. Ellen observes in the quiet moments after the murder that Richard looks "very much like Marion... [b]ecause his shoulders were bowed... and his gaze lay like a yoke on its object" (427). Where Ellen previously saw Richard's body only in terms of freedom and mastery—when meeting him, she admires his "conquer[ing]" air (31)—she now understands that the conditions of Marion's

parenting have strangled Richard, leaving him “bowed” and constrained like Marion herself.

The story of the Yaverlands concludes with violence so ghastly and fatalistic that Philip E. Ray likens it to Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher,”¹¹¹ yet the dramatic progression of the story is consistent with West’s behaviorist understanding of motherhood, applied to New Feminist ideology and taken to its logical extremes. By accepting maternity as the be-all and end-all of her identity, by focusing wholly on motherhood and sacrificing the development of her own personality, Marion dooms herself to being a “weak and underdeveloped” mother who conditions into her son her own limited sense of selfhood.¹¹² Marion’s narrative, in this way, functions as a rejoinder to Rathbone and her New Feminist acolytes, an dramatization of West’s conviction that women must not accept the deprived existence that a maternalist womanhood offers—for “if every alternate link of a chain is weak it matters not how strong the others are: the chain will break all the same.”¹¹³

West’s confutation of New Feminist ideology is, however, only one facet of *The Judge*, one that emerges specifically from Marion’s character and her relationship with Richard as it is rendered in Book II. As we broaden our analytical scope to include Book I—which focuses to a greater extent on Ellen and on her mother, Christina—we can appreciate the way in which *The Judge* also engages with West’s larger effort to employ her behaviorist aesthetic to explicate the mechanics of patriarchy. West draws on behaviorist-psychological discourses, and particularly the concept of habit, to develop her

¹¹¹ Ray, “*The Judge* Reexamined,” 304.

¹¹² West, “The Sin,” 237.

¹¹³ Ibid.

understanding of gender inequality and explore how a non-essentialist approach to motherhood may be regarded as a viable method of sociopolitical change.

Like *The Return of the Soldier*, *The Judge* is a text preoccupied with the notion of environmental conditioning, yet *The Judge* differs from its predecessor in that it routinely and explicitly takes up a specific concept from behaviorist psychology: habit. At one point in the text, Ellen mindlessly walks home from work and realizes that her movements have been guided by “sheer force of habit,” prompting her to reflect that “human beings are creatures of habit” (J 152–3). In uttering this phrase, Ellen expresses a core concern of the text: the notion that habit—i.e., conditioned behaviors—can overpower one’s conscious desires. Invoked over thirty times over the course of the novel, *habit* is, to paraphrase William James, the implicit flywheel of *The Judge*, and its most persistent agent. The novel refers to “habitual state[s] of mind” (37), “national habit” (38), “social habit” (53), habits of dress (54), the “habit of study” (64), “habitual response[s]” (78), “habitual pretence” (87), “habit[s] of thinking” (340), “habitual gesture[s]” (208), habits of parenting (128), the “thrifty habit to eat” (152), misunderstood habits (174), habits of avoidance (180), memories of habit (193), the “habit of excessive living” (243), “old habit” (359), and Richard’s “habitual splendid look” (362). Characters’ gestures are described as “mechanical” (46, 136, 243) and “automatic” (208, 254), enacted without conscious deliberation. West evokes *habit* in a variety of contexts, to describe behaviors both social—as in the Spanish “national habit of attending bullfights” (38)—and personal, as in Ellen’s “habit of saying things that will be found unpleasant” (213).

Habit is a term that, like *reflex*, carried specific associations in the 1920s connected to experimental psychology in general and behaviorism more particularly. In his widely influential chapter on the subject in *The Principles of Psychology*, William James defines “habit” as a nerve-based process by which the human organism is physiologically primed to return to repeated behaviors. Though James departs from strict materialism elsewhere in *Principles*, he takes pains to characterize habit in physiological terms: “That [habit] is at bottom a physical principle,” he states, “is admitted by all good recent writers on the subject.”¹¹⁴ James defines “simple habit” as, “mechanically, nothing but a reflex discharge,” and explains that even the “most complex habits” are similarly “nothing but *concatenated* discharges in the nerve-centres, due to the presence there of systems of reflex paths, so organized as to wake each other up successively.”¹¹⁵ Habit likewise became a key concept in the development of behaviorism: James’s influence is visible in John B. Watson’s discussion of the subject in *Behavior: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology*. In his own formulation, Watson more explicitly situates habit within the behaviorist stimulus-response model:

We do not hesitate to define habit as we do instinct—as a complex system of reflexes which function in a serial order when the organism is confronted by certain stimuli, provided we add the clause which marks off habit from instinct, viz., that in habit the order and pattern are acquired during the life of the individual animal.¹¹⁶

By distinguishing it from instinct, Watson highlights the dynamic and contingent nature of habit; he specifies that while all organisms of a particular species have common reflexive instincts, different organisms will “form different types of habit, depending on

¹¹⁴ William James, *The Principles of Psychology. Volume 1* (1890, repr. New York: Dover, 1950), 105.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 108, italics in original.

¹¹⁶ John B. Watson, *Behavior: An introduction to comparative psychology* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1914), 186.

the kind of environment into which the organism is thrown.” This last point is significant, as it foregrounds behaviorism’s characteristic emphasis on the physical environment.

While James in *Principles* maintains that individuals possess the free will to develop or break habits purely through diligence, Watson in *Behavior* discards this notion, asserting, “The organism is so constructed that when certain stimuli are presented certain types of random movements are [established or] set free.”¹¹⁷ In other words, old habits can be broken, and new habits form, only if an organism encounters altered environmental conditions that enable such change.

The persistent invocations of habit in *The Judge* function similarly to the insistent focus on settings in *Return*, in that they suggest West’s interest in examining the mechanisms by which environmental factors cultivate and constrain certain behaviors. But unlike Jenny and Kitty, who are unwittingly conditioned by their domestic habitat, Ellen is a suffragette and a student of science who embraces “a materialist conception of the universe” (*J* 171) and subscribes to the work of “Darwin and Huxley” (389). Ellen shares West’s awareness of behaviorist principles and the powerful effects of environmental conditioning, a fact suggested in the very first passage of the novel, which features Ellen sitting morosely at the window of the office where she works as a “wee typist” (10) daydreaming about the life she wishes she possessed. Ellen reflects:

Sometimes she would sit up in bed and stare through the darkness at an imaginary group of people whom she desired to be with—well-found people who would disclose themselves to one another ...[and] a splendid social life that had been previously nurtured by separate tender intimacies at hearths.... [T]here must exist, to occupy this environment, [this] imagined society....

But sometimes it seemed likely, and in this sad twilight it seemed specially likely, that though such people certainly existed they had chosen some other scene than Edinburgh, whose society was as poor and restricted as its Zoo, perhaps for the same climatic reason. (15–6)

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Ellen recognizes Edinburgh as a limited habitat that, like a zoo, can for “climatic reason[s]” (16) cultivate only certain “personalities” (17). The words *nurtured* and *environment* suggest Ellen’s understanding of the conditioned, physiological nature of this process, and her assumption that “separate tender intimacies at hearths” are necessary to inculcate “splendid” traits (15) recalls the repetition of behaviors required for habit formation. Edinburgh, Ellen thinks, is a place where people lead “mean [lives] of hopeless thrift” (14), capable of cultivating few habits that are not marked by “despondency” (14). Though she wishes those around here were “as splendid as the countryside, as noble as the mountains, as variable within the limits of beauty as the Firth of Forth,” sordid Edinburgh has shaped its residents into “what they were really like,” depressingly limited and in a state of social decay (17).

As Lisi Schoenbach notes, many modern authors—and particularly avant-garde writers—“scorn habit” wholesale “as the source of mindlessness, conformity, and complacency.” “Whether addressed directly or indirectly,” she contends, “habit’s numbing, deadening qualities commonly furnish the adversary against which the avant-garde artist must struggle.”¹¹⁸ In *The Judge*, however, West makes clear that what she (and Ellen) object to is not habit itself—an inevitable physiological process—but the gendered, institutional practices that make habit an inordinately oppressive force for women.¹¹⁹ If, as Watson insists, the “only way” to “remake the individual [is] by

¹¹⁸ Lisi Schoenbach, *Pragmatic Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

¹¹⁹ In this, West’s view aligns with the definition of habit that Liesl Olson advances in *Modernism and the Ordinary*: Olson argues that for many modernist writers, “Habit is neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’ but is indispensable and ritualistic,” part of the forgettable backdrop of ordinary activity “to which the individual must inevitably return.” Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.

changing his environment in such a way that new habits have to form,”¹²⁰ then the legal and social limitations placed on women’s agency and mobility unduly impinge on their ability to break undesirable habits and develop new ones.

Within the novel, West draws out this inequality most strongly in her representation of Richard and Ellen’s courtship. On the evening of their first meeting, the language West uses to render Ellen’s admiration for Richard, who is fresh from Rio and visiting Edinburgh on business, heavily emphasizes his freedom of movement: Ellen marvels at his “sea-going air” (26), his skin, which “told a traveller’s tale of far-off pleasurable weather” (28), and his speech, which “slipped the business leash” (29). He makes “gesture[s] of abandonment” and speaks like “a conqueror” (31). Richard’s demeanor excites Ellen so thoroughly that it prompts her to forget the limitations typically imposed on her sex: it “lift[s] her to the threshold of life” and inspires her to fancifully imagine becoming “the pioneer business queen” (32). As Ellen dreams of what she would do with Richard’s freedom—specifically, “crush[] rivals like blackbeetles” and “hand a gigantic Trust over to the Socialist State” (32)—the narration switches to Richard’s perspective:

And then he raised his eyes to [Ellen’s] face and was sad. ...For her body would imprison her in soft places: she would be allowed no adventures other than love, no achievements other than births. But her face was haggard, in spite of its youth, with appetite for travel in the hard places of the world, for the adventures and achievements that are the birthright of any man. “It’s rotten luck to be a girl,” he thought. “If she were a boy I could get her a job at Rio.” (33)

This passage highlights the idea that social mores, rather than physiology, have made sex a differential quality for Ellen and Richard: Richard regrets that it is simply a matter of “luck” that Ellen is a girl rather than a boy and will thus be “imprison[ed]” within a

¹²⁰ John B. Watson, *Behaviorism* (New York: Norton, 1925), xvii.

limited range of environments. The language of this paragraph relocates the presumed-inherent softness of women to the “soft places” in which they are forced to reside, just as the quality of hardness is attributed not to innate maleness but to the “hard places of the world” in which men are exclusively permitted to travel.

In subsequent passages, West connects the restrictions placed on women to a reduced capacity to resist the force of habit. Richard—who, at this point, has not yet clearly been revealed to be constrained by the manipulative influence of his mother—is described as having the ability to “acquire[]” (119), and “abandon[]” (359) habits, a capability that is explicitly tied to his freedom to seek out new experiences: he “had broken the habit of study,” for example, “by [pursuing] a life of adventure” (64), and though he is not Irish, Richard’s experiences in that country have enabled him to make it “his habit to wear the Irish manner of distraction” (195). For Ellen, by contrast, habit is an oppressive “force” (152). Her habits—such as her “thrifty habit to eat” old bread (152)—are unchosen behaviors, conditioned by her local circumstances.

Echoing West herself, who insists in an essay that “sex-antagonism has a sound logical basis,”¹²¹ Ellen grows to hate Richard for the privileges granted to him by patriarchy, even as she admires how his wide-ranging experiences and adventures have enabled him to “perfect [himself] in every way physically and mentally” (*J* 138). She broods:

[H]e walked on, masterfully, as one who knows he has the right to come and go, out of that wet grey street of which she was a part, to wander as he chose in strange continents, in exotic weathers.... In every way he was richer than she was.... She sobbed with rage as she perceived how different from her the possession of this past made him. When he reached Rio he would not stand by the quiet bay as she would have stood, ...but would go quickly to his house on the hill.... He would open the wrought-iron gates with a key which she had not

¹²¹ West, “An Orgy,” 101.

known he possessed, which had lain close to him in one of those innumerable pockets that men have in their clothes.... All his experience was a mockery of her inexperience. (138–9)

Again, what distinguishes Ellen from Richard, women from men, is that men alone enjoy the “right to come and go.” Ellen, like West, recognizes that Richard’s “experience,” “the possession of this past,” is not inconsequential: such experiential differences prompt him to behave differently, to “go quickly” at times when she would have chosen to “stand.” The freedom that Richard takes to be “the birthright of any man” (33) is transformed in Ellen’s imagination into “a key which she had not known he possessed,” kept exclusively in a pocket “that *men* have in their clothes.” West describes Ellen, conversely, as embedded in her environment, “part” of Edinburgh’s “wet gray street[s].” She is confined to “a series of corridors,” subject to “trampling wind” and surrounded by “figures that... stood arrested and, it seemed, flattened.” While Richard’s travel has allowed him to “perfect” his habits, Ellen’s confinement has brought her own life “down to this ugly terminal focus” (154). When Ellen consents to marrying Richard just pages after this passage—despite the fact that she believes in the “tyranny” of men (156) and is versed in “the iniquitous marriage-laws” (161)—it is in part because she understands that his proposal is her only opportunity to escape the monotonous habitat of Edinburgh, to “pass out through the iron gates” herself (197).

West’s discursive reliance on habit, maintained throughout the novel, coupled with her contrasting representations of Richard and Ellen in Book I, suggest that *The Judge* shares *Return*’s concern with the limitations placed on women’s access to environments and experiences. While *Return* focuses minutely on the conditioning that occurs within the domestic habitat of sheltered women, *The Judge* looks not only within

but also beyond the home, exploring the same mechanisms on a macro scale, revealing how legal and social inequities grant Richard—but not Ellen—greater access to the ability to reform his habits as a function of his freedom to pursue professions and travel autonomously. *The Judge*, like *Return*, is guided by West’s behaviorist understanding of human activity, revealing how the mechanisms of patriarchy are self-reinforcing and function to hinder women’s attempts to operate as men’s equals.

When West approaches the subject of motherhood in *The Judge*, in short, it is contextualized within this discourse of habit and environments, of sexist restriction and self-perpetuating cycles of conditioning, established through the guiding perspective of Ellen. And while Book II urges readers to reject Marion’s essentialist approach to parenting as a tool of patriarchy, Book I offers an alternative model of mothering in the form of Ellen’s mother, Christina.

Like Marion, Christina is a single mother who was abandoned by the father of her child—a betrayal that Ellen regards “as monstrous a story as anything people made a fuss about in literature” (193)—and who shares a strong, loving bond with her child. Ellen professes that she loves her mother deeply, “with the head as well as with the heart” (190). Yet maternity does not serve as the definitional aspect of Christina’s identity; indeed, if there is a quality that most strongly defines Mrs. Melville, it is what Ellen calls the “innocent passion for beauty” (191), her mother’s persistent desire to enjoy enriching facets of the world despite the limitations imposed by her impoverished circumstances. Ellen recalls her mother exclaiming, “in a tone of gourmandise, ‘I would go anywhere for a good sunset!’” and reflects fondly that “She loved most of all the unpossessable thing, the way the world looks under the weather” (192). Christina’s thirst for beauty makes her

adventurous, eager to seek out new environments and experiences: “[t]o see better the green glass of the unbroken wave and hear the kiss the spray gives the sea on its return, [Christina] would sit on the bow of the steamer, though that did not suit her natural timidity” (191–2).

In this way, Christina embodies the views espoused by West herself in “The Strange Necessity”: both position the pursuit of new, aesthetically rich experiences as a virtue, one that helps individuals strive towards “a victorious relationship with reality” (*SN* 82). West’s essays from this period encourage us to understand this passion for beauty, evinced by Mrs. Melville, in a feminist context, as they routinely applaud what she calls “the supreme virtue of selfishness”¹²² and position the pursuit of aesthetic pleasure as a crucial aspect of equality feminism. The poor woman who thirsts for beauty is, in West’s view, “a better rebel than the girl who accepts her poverty as a matter of fate and wears its more durable badge of drab garments,” for the beauty-loving woman “perceives... that the ugliness of the world is a stupid convention,” part of the “enforced asceticism” that oppresses and deprives women.¹²³ By daring to pursue “occasions of ecstasy” (*J* 191), Mrs. Melville participates in the “movement for more riotous living,”¹²⁴ implicitly aligning herself with West’s own feminist stance.

As Christina’s daughter, Ellen has been raised to share her mother’s aesthetic thirst: she is described as having a “rich consciousness of her surroundings” (*J* 10) and a soul which “take[s] this beauty and simmer[s] it in the pot of meditation into a meal that nourished life for days” (14). The sharing of this trait is significant, for it introduces the notion that Ellen’s feminist stance, in both its implicit and explicit manifestations, did not

¹²² West, “The Sin,” 238.

¹²³ West, “A New Woman’s Movement,” 132, 133.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

emerge spontaneously, but in fact derived from Mrs. Melville's example and training.

Elsewhere in the text, West confirms this implication:

It was [Ellen's] habit to let herself in with the latchkey just as if she were the man of the house.

"Mercy, Ellen, you're late! I was getting feared!" cried her mother.... She liked that sound. Ellen thought herself a wonderful new sort of woman who was going to be just like a man; she would have been surprised if she had known how many of her stern-browed ambitions, how much of her virile swagger of life, were not the invention of her own soul, but had been suggested to her by an old woman who liked to pretend her daughter was a son. (44)

West renders the parent-child relationship in the familiar language of conditioned behaviors: Ellen's "habit" of assertively entering the house is one of many similar behaviors "suggested to her" by her mother. While Marion's conditioning oppresses Richard by imposing a preoccupation with herself, Christina manipulates her influence to inculcate in Ellen qualities of independence and autonomy ("stern-browed ambitions" and the "virile swagger of life"), qualities that are significantly dependent on Christina's parental choice "to pretend her daughter was a son." It is later revealed that Mrs. Melville "used to stint herself" to buy her daughter "the finest collection of tin soldiers you can imagine," to appease Ellen's fanciful desire to be a soldier and enact feats of bravery (179). It is, we can presume, a result of this conditioning that Ellen desires "adventures and achievements that are the birthright of any man" (33) and is perceived by others as "awfully like a boy" (105). West suggests that a female child's ability to aspire to equality-feminist ideals, to understand her potential for matching men's achievements, depends on being raised by a mother who embraces these values herself. Ellen's determination to "be just like a man" (44), her devotion to the suffragette cause, and her conviction that "[o]ne ought to live for adventure" (145) are attributable to Mrs. Melville's own embracing of the ideology of equality.

If *The Judge* echoes *Return*'s concern for the limitations on experience imposed on women, then the subject of motherhood pushes West to examine this issue from a different angle. Indeed, Christina's method of parenting functions as a response to the dilemma posited in West's previous novel regarding women's ability to resist the subordination conditioned by conventional domestic habitats. In *The Judge*, motherhood—particularly single motherhood—is an avenue by which a woman like Christina might subvert patriarchal norms. Although West openly renders the disadvantages faced by single mothers and their children—poverty makes Christina “dusty and meagre” (77) and comprises the diminished environment that makes Ellen feel “inexperience[d]” and trapped (139)—Christina's circumstances nevertheless enable her to impress upon Ellen certain habits, including the claim to agentic action, necessary for feminist progress. Though Mrs. Melville herself receives no benefit from her efforts—Ellen “could find no moment when her mother's life had been decorated by any bright scrap of that beauty she adored” (192)—Christina succeeds in instilling in her daughter “the desire... for perfect self-possession” (85) and therefore contributes to the feminist cause. At the end of Book I, in the moments after Christina's death, the narrator muses: “though Fate had finally closed the story of Mrs. Melville's life, and had to the end shown her no mercy, there was no occasion to despair for the future. It might be well that no other life would ever be so grievous” (197). Functioning as a parallel to the scene in which Marion ruminates that due to her parenting “there would be no future” for Richard (346), the narrator affirms that Christina's work as a mother has ensured a better—or at least less “grievous”—future for her daughter.

The end of the novel—which finds Ellen agreeing to escape to Kerith Island with Richard, where they will consummate their relationship before his arrest for murder, prompting Ellen to contemplate a future in which she is a single mother raising Richard’s child—drives this notion home. Despite the tragedy that has beset Ellen and Richard, the tone of the concluding chapter is jubilant. Ellen declares early in the novel that “a woman’s capacity for mating and motherhood” is used “to bind her a slave either of the kitchen or of the streets” (53). Yet when faced with the prospect of her own maternity, Ellen describes feeling “pride and exultation” and thinks joyfully that, “[t]hough the night should engulf Richard and Marion, the triumph was not with the night. In throwing her lot with them and with the human race which is perpetually defeated, she was nevertheless choosing the side of victory” (430). The novel’s final sentence describes Ellen sitting calmly in the darkness: she “looked at the island, and wondered whether it was a son or daughter that waited for her there” (430). As Nancy Paxton observes, Ellen’s triumphal tone signals her decision to “follow[] her mother’s life-giving lesson rather than Marion’s example.”¹²⁵ Despite the tragic turn of her circumstances, Ellen has reason to look confidently to the future, because, through her own mother, she understands how the role of motherhood might be leveraged for positive ends, in the service of the feminist and suffragist causes that inspire her.

Although *The Judge* may indeed be a “story of motherhood,”¹²⁶ it is crucial that we parse, precisely, what motherhood means to West. Drawing on the concept of habit to articulate a behaviorist understanding of gender inequality, *The Judge* stresses the importance of resisting essentialism and maintaining an equality-feminist approach to

¹²⁵ Paxton, “Renegotiating,” 203.

¹²⁶ Laing, “Versions,” 179.

womanhood and maternity. The novel's epigraph, spoken in the narrative by Marion, attests that "Every mother is a judge," a statement which asserts the power bestowed on mothers to shape the characters of their children. Yet the novel urges us to question whether this power must be used, as Marion insists that it does, to "sentence[] the children for the sins of the father" (*J* 346) or whether this role might be employed in the service of resisting patriarchal structures. Through Marion, West indicts the New Feminist rhetoric that emphasized gender essentialism, while employing Christina, and ultimately Ellen, to iterate the progressive promise she believed to be inherent in a mother's commitment to the equality-feminist cause.

In examining Rebecca West's prose from the 1910s and '20, then, what emerges is a theory of aesthetics and artistic practice that is constitutively shaped not only by West's equality-feminist politics but by the principles of behaviorist psychology. West relates in "The Strange Necessity" that when she first encountered Pavlov's *Conditioned Reflexes*, "it was as if I had made an escape from the tomb into full sunlight, from a twilight place of wailing into an occasion of hilarity" (*SN* 72–3). This language of illumination is suggestive, intimating that West's aesthetics—and her feminist stance—are rendered justified and comprehensible only once cast in the light of behaviorism's ontology. West's modernism, as it were, rests on her acceptance of the intrinsic interpenetration of these domains, on her conviction that art must necessarily be an expression both of science and of politics.

THE MAKING OF MEN AND WOMEN: GERTRUDE STEIN, HUGO MÜNSTERBERG, AND THE DISCOURSE OF WORK

In June of 1895, while traveling by ship from New York to Hamburg, psychologist Hugo Münsterberg wrote an affectionate letter to his student Gertrude Stein, whom he had taught and mentored during her freshman and sophomore years at Radcliffe College. Wishing to bid her a formal goodbye—Münsterberg would not return to Harvard for his permanent position as professor and head of the psychological laboratory until 1897, when Stein was at medical school in Baltimore—Münsterberg repeatedly expresses his gratitude to her for their collaborations during his time in Cambridge. He writes, “I thank you for your part in that delightful Lowell-souvenir, I thank you for your generous contribution to the Helmholtz memorial, but I thank you above all for that model-work you have done in the laboratory and the other courses wherever I met you.” He continues:

[W]hile I met [at Radcliffe] all types and kinds of students, you were to me the ideal student, just as a female student ought to be, and if in later years you look into printed discussions which I have in mind to publish about students in America, I hope you will then pardon me if you recognize some features of my ideal student picture as your own. I hope to hear about your skill often and expect the best from you.¹

This brief and cordial letter, a testament to the mutual respect Stein and Münsterberg held for one another, serves to highlight a number of compelling points of connection between

¹ Hugo Münsterberg, letter to Gertrude Stein, 10 June 1895. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

student and teacher. Münsterberg's invocation of "types and kinds" of students, along with his desire to publish an account of the "ideal student picture," betray a psychologist's impulse to analyze and categorize human character. It is an impulse Stein shared, as would become patently clear in her novel *The Making of Americans*, in which she repeats in hundreds of subtly varied iterations that "There are millions always being made of every kind of men and women" and that "This is now a history of every kind of them."² The letter also refers to their mutual commitment to the field of experimental psychology, via Münsterberg's allusion to Stein's work in the Harvard laboratory and their common admiration for Hermann von Helmholtz. As Münsterberg's wish to write about American students suggests, he and Stein shared a predilection for analyzing American society. Around the same time Stein began work developing *Making*—a text that begins with her narrator pondering the "rare privilege, this, of being an American" (3)—Münsterberg would publish not just one but two studies of American life: *American Traits from the Point of View of a German* and *The Americans*. Finally, running through Münsterberg's missive is an subtextual concern with gender: his vocal devotion to Radcliffe, a women's college formerly known as the Harvard Annex, speaks to his advocacy for women's access to higher education, even as his casual use of the qualifier "*female* student" carries connotations of sexual difference. Both of these subjects, as I will demonstrate later on, were of great concern to the young Stein.

Within Stein studies, much has been made of the author's undergraduate work under William James. This critical trend began, in fact, with Stein herself, who placed considerable importance on James's role in her personal history in *The Autobiography of*

² Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress* (1925; repr., Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995), 220; hereafter cited in text as *MA*.

Alice B. Toklas. In that text, Stein calls James “[t]he important person in Gertrude Stein’s Radcliffe life” and credits him for her decision to pursue psychology and medical school.³ Stein and James’s intellectual association has subsequently become one of the cornerstones of Stein criticism, as scholars find fruitful resonances between Stein’s distinctive repetitive and experimental style and James’s psychological theories of consciousness, habit, and experience.⁴ In his seminal study *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science*, Steven Meyer presents William James as the most decisive figure in Stein’s oeuvre, to the point that he reads her work as an extension of Jamesian psychology. Stein, Meyer argues, “developed a more radical empiricism than James was able to, owing to her greater concentration on her compositional practices,” and consequently her “radical empiricism serves to correct, not just complement,” that of William James.⁵ While other critics writing both before and after Meyer disagree as to the nature, degree, and extent of James’s influence, it is at this point rare to find a study that does not take for granted the profound significance of James’s thought in the development of Stein’s literary aesthetic.

Compared to the considerable breadth and enduring vitality of scholarship pursuing the connection between Stein and James, Stein’s association with Hugo Münsterberg receives startlingly little critical attention. This indifference exists despite their congenial personal relationship, biographical similarities—both were of German

³ Gertrude Stein, *Everybody’s Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), 73.

⁴ See for example Lisa Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein: Body, Text, Gnosis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Barbara Will, *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of “Genius”* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Steven Meyer, *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Lisi Schoenbach, *Pragmatic Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Joan Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism: The Fact of Feeling from Jonathan Edwards to Gertrude Stein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁵ Meyer, *Irresistible*, xx, 318.

heritage and born into a Jewish faith from which they would later distance themselves—and the fact that Stein specifically names Münsterberg as among her early influences. In a letter to Robert Haas, for example, she cites him, alongside James and George Santayana, as one of the few people she worked with “in particular” at Radcliffe College.⁶

Münsterberg is Stein’s only undergraduate professor apart from James mentioned in the *Autobiography*. When critics do mention Münsterberg in their discussions of Stein’s work, it is typically only in passing. Meyer, for example, cites Münsterberg only to briefly note that Stein “work[ed] closely with Münsterberg and James” during her time in Cambridge and later to acknowledge that it was under Münsterberg’s direction that Stein conducted her widely discussed experiments in automatic writing.⁷ Omri Moses’s chapter on Stein in *Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life* similarly calls Münsterberg an “important intellectual influence[,]” though the rest of his chapter goes on to examine Stein’s prose in relation to James’s *The Principles of Psychology*.⁸

While William James is widely acknowledged as a leading luminary of the early twentieth century, Münsterberg and his ideas have fallen into obscurity. Today, his name is known by few aside from historians of psychology. Yet during the turn-of-the-century period in which Stein was at work on her most critically acclaimed texts, including *The Making of Americans*, *Three Lives*, *Tender Buttons*, and *GMP*, Münsterberg rivaled James in terms of both academic reputation and public notoriety. Matthew Hale, Jr. attests that in the early 1910s Münsterberg was “arguably the best-known psychologist in

⁶ Gertrude Stein, letter to Robert Haas, quoted in Clive Bush, *Halfway to Revolution: Investigation and Crisis in the Work of Henry Adams, William James and Gertrude Stein* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 270.

⁷ Meyer, *Irresistible*, 54, 224.

⁸ Omri Moses, *Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 128.

America and the most prominent member of America's largest minority, the German-Americans."⁹ Credited as the founder of industrial psychology, Münsterberg popularized his theories by writing articles for widely read publications like *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Magazine*, and his 1913 book, *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*, was a best-seller. When Münsterberg died unexpectedly of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1916, however, his reputation had already begun to suffer a precipitous decline, due in large part to his vocal support of Germany during the First World War. As psychologist Frank J. Landy relates in a review of Münsterberg's legacy, although Münsterberg "was a recognized scholar and a productive researcher," his general unpopularity at the time of his death functioned to ensure that he was "relegated to obscurity before his intellectual body even grew cold."¹⁰ Tim Armstrong agrees, writing that Münsterberg "was written out of the history of American psychology after [his] pro-German activities in the First World War" alienated him from the public.¹¹ Accordingly, Münsterberg's present-day obscurity has functioned to largely obscure the role that his psychological theories played in shaping Stein's experimental literary prose.¹²

Indeed, reading Stein by way of Münsterberg yields significant and as yet unappreciated insights into Stein's literary project in the first decade of the twentieth century, particularly when it comes to the development of her theories of character and

⁹ Matthew Hale, Jr., *Psychology and the Social Order: An Intellectual Biography of Hugo Münsterberg* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland Press, 1978), 3.

¹⁰ Frank J. Landy, "Münsterberg: Victim or Visionary?" *Journal of Applied Psychology* 77, no. 6 (1992): 794.

¹¹ Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology, and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 197.

¹² Münsterberg and Stein's shared interest in the psychology of fatigue has received some attention; see the chapter on Stein in Armstrong's *Modernism, Technology, and the Body* and Paul Stephens, "'Reading at It': Gertrude Stein, Information Overload, and the Makings of Americanitis," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 59, no. 1 (2013) 126–156. Ulla E. Dydo, Laura Marcus, Abigail Lang, and Jillian Murphet, writing on the birth of cinema technologies, have also interpreted Stein's mid-career work in relation to Münsterberg's 1916 book on cinema, *The Photoplay*.

her representations of gender and sexual difference. What Münsterberg and Stein share is an interest in how *work*—broadly defined in the dual senses derived from economics (work as labor, paid or unpaid) and physics (work as physical action or physiological energy expenditure)—functions to mediate the relationship between the individual and the environment. In texts like *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*, Münsterberg takes up the notion of individual psychological uniqueness—a foundational tenet of the differential approach to psychology to which he subscribed—and puts it into conversation with a labor market that desires widespread worker uniformity, positioning work as the manipulable variable capable of conditioning human psychology in the direction of either extreme. Bringing Münsterberg’s theories to bear on Stein’s earliest experiments in prose allows us to see that Stein adapts her teacher’s discourse, modifying his work-based understanding of psychology into a means of modeling individual psychological development and dismantling the logic of essentialist sexual difference.

The first section of this chapter examines Stein’s early essays on women and education, bringing them into conversation with Münsterberg’s research to illuminate the correspondences and differences in their thought, while the second section, focusing on *The Making of Americans*, proposes that Stein’s epic novel develops and interrogates this Münsterberg-inflected theory of character. Stein’s text ponders what it means for individual character development, particularly for women, when access to work is distributed unevenly and on the basis of sex. Work, for Stein, functions as the vehicle through which social categories like sexual difference are created or erased—or, in her parlance, the ways in which “individual feeling” gives way to “[s]lowly every kind of one com[ing] into ordered recognition” (*MA* 284). Ultimately, attending to Stein’s

representations of work in relation to character in *Making* allows us to draw out the often overlooked (or misunderstood) gender politics inscribed in that text.

“First a human being”: Industrial Psychology and Stein’s Early Essays

Since the 1980s, Gertrude Stein has enjoyed a more or less definitive place within the feminist literary canon. In that decade, a number of literary critics working mostly from a French-feminist theoretical approach began interpreting Stein’s radical formal and stylistic departures as inherently feminist aesthetic acts.¹³ Stein’s experimental writings, according to Elisabeth Frost, offer “a model for the feminist avant-garde text.”¹⁴

Elaborating on this notion in *A Different Language*, Marianne DeKoven contends that since “[c]onventional writing” is “the privileged language of patriarchy,” Stein’s “incoherent, open-ended, anarchic, irreducibly multiple” writing disrupts the patriarchal order and facilitates the emergence of alternative modes of signification.¹⁵ Melanie Taylor presents another version of this argument: she asserts that *The Making of Americans* in particular evinces “an uncanny anticipation of post-structuralist ideas and themes, self-reflexively dismantl[ing] their own and, by inference, other texts’ narrative and rhetorical conventions.” Taylor finds that consequently, “under the sheer weight of Stein’s monotonous repeatings, binary categories of gender are rendered nonsensical and

¹³ See for example Marianne DeKoven, *A Different Language: Gertrude Stein’s Experimental Writing* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Harriet Scott Chessman, *The Public is Invited to Dance: Representation, the Body, and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); Ruddick, *Reading Gertrude Stein*; Elisabeth Frost, *The Feminist Avant-Garde in American Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003); and Deborah M. Mix, *A Vocabulary of Thinking: Gertrude Stein and Contemporary North American Women’s Innovative Writing* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Frost, *Feminist Avant-Garde*, 18.

¹⁵ DeKoven, *A Different Language*, xiii–xiv.

inadequate.”¹⁶ Feminist interpretations of Stein’s work, in other words, disclose “a belief in the feminism implicit” in her nontraditional modes of composition,¹⁷ and this viewpoint has subsequently become a critical commonplace. These days, modernist scholars widely affirm the notion that Stein’s oeuvre conveys a thoroughly progressive, pro-feminist political stance.

This vibrant and longstanding body of feminist criticism exists in curious parallel with a more recent body of historicist criticism that has come to understand Stein as a writer who—particularly in her later works—endorsed conservative or even reactionary political views. John Whittier-Ferguson diplomatically notes that Stein was “by temperament and conviction ‘conservative’ in the word’s broadest sense: she was opposed to change.”¹⁸ Liesl Olson shares this assessment: taking up Stein’s 1945 bestselling memoir, *Wars I Have Seen*, Olson declares that by declining to comment directly on the sociopolitical climate in France—the book is “more about domestic life during the war than about the worldwide destruction and casualties on the battlefield”—Stein evinces “a surprising conservative tendency” grounded in “an obstinate refusal” to engage with political topics.¹⁹ In *Unlikely Collaborations*, an examination of Stein’s friendship with Vichy regime official Bernard Faÿ, Barbara Will more forcefully asserts that critics must “acknowledge Stein’s politically reactionary leanings of the 1930s and 1940s” and integrate this information into their interpretations of Stein’s early experimental literature.²⁰ Though Will does not openly challenge the feminist

¹⁶ Melanie Taylor, “A Poetics of Difference: *The Making of Americans* and Unreadable Subjects,” *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003): 27.

¹⁷ Chessman, *Public*, 8.

¹⁸ John Whittier-Ferguson, “Stein in Time: History, Manuscripts, and Memory,” *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 1 (1999): 120.

¹⁹ Olson, *Ordinary*, 113.

²⁰ Barbara Will, *Unlikely Collaborations: Gertrude Stein, Bernard Faÿ, and the Vichy Dilemma* (New

interpretation of Stein's oeuvre, she does not consider radical form to automatically imply radical politics. Rather, Will urges critics to attend to "the principles"—the influential discourses and ideas—"that guided [Stein] through her creative development, especially during the first and most radically heterogeneous decade of her writing."²¹ Indeed, seeking continuity between Stein's early and late career, Will advances the notion that Stein's early formal experiments were profoundly shaped by the ideas of Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*, emphasizing the fact that Weininger's text was a favorite among Nazis.

In short, depending on whom you ask, Stein's texts disclose either a subversively progressive writer whose "style amounts to an unsettling of everything patriarchal hierarchies seem to fix in place"²² or a fascist sympathizer whose later works "betray a fascination with masculine authority and authoritarian figures."²³ The discordance of these visions is startling, and not coincidentally, critics like Whittier-Ferguson have begun to urge scholars to exercise greater caution when approaching Stein's work. Critics "must make every effort," he insists, "to assess the meanings that our categories of understanding—'history,' 'politics,' even 'time' itself—might have held for the subjects of our scrutiny."²⁴ Discretion is particularly important within Stein studies, he argues, for compared to her contemporaries, Stein "is the most skeptical in her scrutiny of the subject's place in the world, the least inclined to foreclose questions, the most avid to query the suppositions that allow us to read and write."²⁵ Whittier-Ferguson suggests that

York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 15.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ruddick, *Reading*, 255.

²³ Annalisa Zox-Weaver, *Women Modernists and Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 60.

²⁴ Whittier-Ferguson, "Stein in Time," 117.

²⁵ Ibid., 145.

Stein's literary writings—the product of an insistently curious and fluid mind—call for a critical approach that is likewise suspicious of the definitive and attentive to the socio-historical specificity of discourse. Feminist critics may be overreaching, interpretively speaking, when they conclude that Stein personally embraced the anti-patriarchal energies that a poststructuralist analysis finds in her prose, while historicist critics should similarly reconsider the appropriateness of interpreting Stein's work from the early 1900s in relation to statements and views she articulated mid-century. I position this chapter among other recent critical commentaries seeking to reconcile this fractured portrait of Stein and her literature through a careful examination of her early discourse in relation to her immediate intellectual and sociopolitical milieu.²⁶

During the winter of 1901–02, when she was twenty-six years old and a medical student at Johns Hopkins, Stein composed an article entitled “Degeneration in American Women.” Brenda Wineapple discovered this piece just two decades ago while conducting archival research for *Sister Brother*—a study of the relationship between siblings Gertrude and Leo Stein, who were devoted companions from their earliest childhood until the two parted ways, permanently and acrimoniously, in 1914—and she reprints the essay in full in the biography's appendix.²⁷ In the twenty years since the publication of

²⁶ Consistent with Whittier-Ferguson's remarks, my scope in this chapter is limited to texts composed before 1915. Consulting an author's later works and reflections to inform interpretations of earlier writings can, of course, yield valid and important critical insights, and this is certainly a common practice in Stein studies, seeing as Stein published numerous essays and lectures in which she comments at length on her intention, process, and methodology of early literary projects. Ironically, however, there is greater reason to avoid this practice with Stein than for other writers, as Stein calculatedly used her published lectures and commentaries to attempt to retroactively control both the public and critical receptions of her works and literary legacy. See Barbara Will, *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of “Genius”* and Timothy W. Galow, “Gertrude Stein's *Everybody's Autobiography* and the Art of Contradictions” *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no. 1 (2008): 111–128 and “Literary Modernism in the Age of Celebrity” *Modernism/Modernity* 17, no. 2 (2010): 313–329.

²⁷ Given that the piece is unsigned and undated, Wineapple is cognizant of the need for rigorous validation, and she provides a convincing assortment of evidence—such as the typeface, which matches a contemporary work by Stein; stylistic consistencies; and Alfred Hodder's description of a piece by Stein

Wineapple's book, few Stein scholars have commented on the piece, despite the valuable information it discloses about the young Stein. As recently as 2012, Patricia Schechter incredulously observed that "the essay has gone unremarked by Stein scholars" since its recovery.²⁸

According to Wineapple, Stein likely composed the essay with the intent of delivering it as a lecture, or perhaps for publication in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The essay directly responds to another recent article in that journal by Dr. George H. Engelmann, titled "The Increasing Sterility of American Women." In her rejoinder, Stein echoes Engelmann's alarm about the low birth rate in the United States, which becomes the central concern of the essay: she chastises American women for failing to accept that "the ideal of maternity is the only worthy one for her to hold" and that "no work of hers can begin to compensate for the neglect of that function."²⁹ The problem, according to Stein, is that too many women are choosing to forgo having children in favor of pursuing higher education—a gambit she deems misguided. She declares that the modern woman has a tendency

to mistake her education her cleverness and intelligence for effective capacity for the work of the world. In consequence she underestimates the virile quality because of its apparent lack of intelligence. In the moral world she also finds herself the superior because on account of the characteristic chivalry of the American man the code of morality which her sheltered life has developed seems adequate for the real business of life and it is only rarely that she learns that she never actually comes in contact with the real business and that when she does the male code is the only possible one. All this of course leads to a lack of respect both for the matrimonial and maternal ideal for it will only be when women succeed in relearning the fact that the only serious business of life in which they

consistent with "Degeneration"—to validate Stein's authorship. See Wineapple, *Sister Brother: Gertrude and Leo Stein* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996). The piece has since been accepted by Stein scholars as authentic.

²⁸ Patricia A. Schechter, *Exploring the Decolonial Imaginary: Four Transnational Lives* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 194n68.

²⁹ Gertrude Stein, "Degeneration in American Women," reprinted in Wineapple, *Sister Brother*, 414; hereafter cited in text as "DW."

cannot be entirely outclassed by the male is that of child bearing that they will once more look with respect upon their normal and legitimate function. (413)

Stein's argument is essentially that patriarchy—"the male code" that dominates the "real business of life," which includes a pervasive norm of "chivalry" that "shelter[s]" women—ensures that American women will always be "outclassed" in their pursuit of any goal apart from wifedom and motherhood. Destined to fail in the "the work of the world," being the public world inhabited and defined by men, women should be content to embrace their "normal and legitimate" roles as wives and mothers. "Of course," Stein quickly admits, there are "a few women in every generation who are exceptions to this rule"—a prized category within which Stein presumably places herself—"but these exceptions are too rare to make it necessary to subvert the order of things in their behalf" (413). The vast majority of women, she insists, must heed her advice. Otherwise, Americans "are going the same way as France," with the birthrate rapidly descending until the United States is "showing a worse record than [France] has after ages of degenerative civilization" (414).³⁰

Though her point is fairly direct, Stein's language here is worth parsing. In the passage just quoted, Stein establishes an ideological binary that, on its face, resembles the "separate spheres" binary commonly found in the era's anti-suffragist rhetoric: the "serious business" of men in the outside world is juxtaposed to the maternal "function" of women at home. Interestingly, however, Stein does not adopt this binary wholesale but rather tweaks it to her purposes. She selectively manipulates her language to draw

³⁰ This is the only time in the essay, apart from the title, that Stein employs the word *degeneration*. Given the date of composition, Stein clearly intends to evoke Max Nordau and his infamous screed against the European culture of decadence, *Degeneration* (1895). Stein's sparse and strategic use of the term suggests that she cannily utilizes degeneration as something of a scare tactic (by threatening that Americans could soon warrant comparison to the poster children for civilization in decline, the French) while also alluding, as Patricia Schechter notes, "to the ideologically and racially charged task of motherhood at the time." Schechter, *Exploring the Decolonial Imaginary*, 62.

unexpected associations to each gendered pole. The “male code,” for example, is predictably associated with *business*—a world repeated three times in two sentences—and with “the work of the world,” thus invoking the familiar logic that men serve as the governors of political and economic life while women act as the domestic arbiters of morality. Yet Stein simultaneously disrupts this logic. She criticizes women’s claim to morality—she elsewhere calls the “the female ideal of moral and methods” a “false ideal” (413)—and instead linguistically aligns “the code of morality” with the “male code.” The working world, in her usage, is also the “moral world,” an equation which punctures the implied spiritual superiority of women’s domestic sphere. The “matrimonial and maternal ideal,” meanwhile, is correlated with corporeal language, including not only “child bearing” but also, peculiarly, “the virile quality,” which is aligned with the “normal and legitimate function” that women have been “underestim[ing]” but are now encouraged to “embrace.” Stein, in short, grounds her argument for maternity in an ideological binary, but a binary of her own design, one that strictly positions the world of work—of intelligence, morality, public life, volitional activity itself—against the imperatives of biological function, both “maternal” and “virile.” The difference is subtle but instructive, an early example of what will become one of Stein’s most characteristic literary strategies: she purposefully evokes a conventional semantic structure only to modify it to suit her own purposes.

Wineapple relates that Stein’s article and its “pro-maternity platform” horrified the friends with whom she shared it, Alfred Hodder and Mamie Gwinn.³¹ Hodder and Gwinn, both members of a discussion group seeking to promote a platform of gender equality, fundamentally disagreed with the notion that “a woman could not succeed” in

³¹ Wineapple, *Sister Brother*, 152.

ventures other than motherhood “without the help, the paternalism, in fact, of men.”³²

Notably, Stein’s essay does not endorse an essentialist understanding of sexual difference: her claim is not that women are inherently intellectually inferior to men, but rather that disadvantageous social and ideological conditions make it all but impossible for women to achieve intellectually or professionally at a level comparable to men, and therefore it is a wasted effort to try. Yet Stein’s emphasis on women’s “normal” reproductive potential and her recommendation that women remove themselves from public life make it easy to understand why her friends would regard the piece as inimical to their own equality-feminist values.

Hodder and Gwinn, moreover, expressed surprise that their friend Gertrude would espouse such a conservative stance. Hodder recalled Stein once saying that during her undergraduate years at Radcliffe, “she and her friends had believed in the equality of the sexes as if it had been a religion.”³³ Indeed, just two years prior to the composition of “Degeneration,” Stein delivered a lecture to a women’s group in Baltimore entitled “The Value of College Education for Women,” in which she articulates views antithetical to those she would uphold in her later essay. In “Value,” Stein insists that in addition to being wives and mothers, women must also be considered “from the standpoint of the breadwinner the economic woman to use the phrase that Charlotte Perkins Stetson [Gilman] has introduced.”³⁴ Though reluctant to question women’s duty to motherhood,

³² Brenda Wineapple, “Gertrude Stein and the Lost Ark,” in *The Critical Response to Gertrude Stein*, ed. Kirk Curnutt (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000), 349.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Gertrude Stein, “The Value of College Education for Women,” 1899. Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD, 1; hereafter cited in the text as “VE.” Stein is referring to Gilman’s landmark text of the turn-of-the-century women’s movement, *Women and Economics* (1898), which argues for the necessity of economic independence for women. Stein’s argument for women’s access to public institutions in “Value” largely echoes Gilman’s argument in *Economics*.

Stein argues rigorously for the need to expand women's economic and educational opportunities. "Is it necessary that in order to fulfill this function of maternity that a woman should be secluded supported and be economically useless[?]" she asks, adding, "I believe judging from the little history that I know that the nations who have produced the ablest men are those whose women are the freest and most active and it surely is what we would expect from our modern science" (5). Stein marshals discourses of biological and developmental science for the cause of gender equality, asserting that "sex differences aside from the genital organs are purely superficial" and that a "mother only becomes a female during her motherhood she is not concerned with her sex at any other time" (6). Sexual difference, according to Stein, is "force[d] on our children" socially: "we try to make them little men and women in their cradles at a time when they ought normally to be only human beings" (6). Once again, Stein develops a binary to suit her rhetorical position, as she juxtaposes *gendered* identity to *human* identity. She insists that persons of either sex should always be "first a human being," yet "civilized" society shapes women in particular to be "women first and always and a human being only if it so happens" (6–7). Stein ultimately contends that women must be granted access to opportunities within the labor market and in higher education because these experiences function to undo "oversexed" conditioning. Women, according to Stein, can shed their socially imposed sexual difference and become "human being[s]" by pursuing educational and professional opportunity: "The life of a college is on a small scale the life of the world," she declares. "If there is anything worthy in you it must come out for here you must earn whatever you get and through that discipline you become a self respecting human being" (11).

These essays show Stein dramatically shifting her stance on the topic of women and education in the span of two short years, suggesting that she was deeply ambivalent on questions of gender equality and women's aptitudes during the period just prior to the launch of her literary career. (She would begin work on *The Making of Americans* in 1903.) I will return to the topic of Stein's uncertainty on these issues later; for now, it is more important to recognize that the two essays, despite their differences, also evince notable commonalities. In both pieces, Stein's approach is empirical, suggestive of an understanding of the human mind consistent with experimental psychology. Meyer has observed that Stein, a scientist by training, would throughout her life refuse to conceptualize the mind "as a substance, along vitalist or idealist lines" and that she remained certain that the mind was "nothing less than the human brain."³⁵ These early essays testify to this idea. "Degeneration in American Women" is explicitly a piece of medical writing, in which Stein appeals to the scientific data on voluntary and physiological sterility to examine the phenomenon of the declining American birthrate. "The Value of a College Education for Women," though not an overtly scientific piece, likewise discloses a physiological understanding of psychological phenomena. In the essay, Stein disputes the disparate treatment of women and men on the grounds that brains are unsexed—a position which was gathering support in physiologist Franklin Mall's anatomy lab at Johns Hopkins, and which was also upheld by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the text referenced by Stein, *Women and Economics*. (Gilman quips, "There is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex. As well speak of the female liver."³⁶)

³⁵ Meyer, *Irresistible*, 116–7.

³⁶ Charlotte Perkins Stetson, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1898), 149.

A second and more unexpected commonality between the essays is that, in both, Stein's discussions of individual psychology and sexual difference are bound up in the concepts of work and labor. In "Value," she contends that sexual difference, as a physiological-psychological phenomenon, historically developed as a *consequence* of the division of the labor market, upending the more traditional notion that separate spheres reflect inherent differences between the sexes. "In the beginning," Stein presumes, "there was this normal division of labor" with men and women adopting an equal share of necessary work. As civilization developed, however, and "as the labor began to be done more and more away from the home, and the woman did not follow it she began to pay for her keep in a new and unhealthy fashion that is by becoming herself oversexed" (6). While women have long been "oversexed" in this fashion, Stein sees modern labor trends offering opportunities to reverse this effect: as women begin "to work in the factories" and achieve higher levels of education, this expanded domain of activity will "carry with it an enlargement of ideals and desires on the part of those who [will] in this way become individual human beings" (7). Sexual difference disappears, in other words, when men and women are given equal ability to work for "the fullest life within [their] reach." In these ideal conditions, an individual becomes "a member of a sex only when the time of functional use [i.e., reproduction] begins" (7). In "Degeneration," Stein employs the same work-based discourse even as she reverses her rhetorical position: she calls for women to embrace maternity because she has become convinced that women will never be granted equal access to "the work of the world" (413). In both essays, reproduction is a biological "function," categorically distinct from the unsexed "work" and "labor" that psychologically draws out a human being's individuality. Yet while in "Value" Stein

dreams of a society that no longer limits women to their reproductive functionality, in “Degeneration” Stein pessimistically concludes that “no work” a woman can do will outweigh the “normal and legitimate function” of reproduction in terms of societal value. She consequently argues that women should essentially resign themselves to a diminished existence for the sake of sustaining the American birthrate.

In short, the incongruous arguments of these two essays disguise their inherent similarities—similarities that, in turn, speak to the nature of Stein’s thought in the early 1900s. Both pieces present a consistent physiological, empirical understanding of individual psychological development inextricably bound to the concept of *work*, implicitly and expansively defined in Stein’s discourse as not merely paid employment but as any volitional behavior not constrained on the basis of reproductive functionality. Stein’s essays position work as a potent force of psychological conditioning, one that can be manipulated to create social categories, even those as seemingly profound as sexual difference. Not incidentally, this psychological model strongly resembles the dominant terms and tenets of industrial psychology, the school pioneered by Hugo Münsterberg in the 1900s and ’10s.

Münsterberg’s industrial psychology was itself something of a marriage between two other contemporary fields: differential psychology and scientific management. Differential psychology—a label coined by German psychologist William Stern in 1900 and whose adherents included Münsterberg, James McKeen Cattell, Charles Spearman, Alfred Binet, and G. Stanley Hall—was not a defined or discrete psychological school. Rather, it was a descriptive term loosely employed to refer to researchers interested in investigating individuality as a psychological concept, an innovative pursuit at a time

when most psychological laboratories were striving to define universal psychological principles or laws.³⁷ As a 1939 textbook explains:

Differential psychology in its broadest sense is concerned with differences in behavior between individuals and between groups. ...Differential psychology approaches this problem through a comparative analysis of behavior under varying environmental and biological conditions. By relating the observed differences in behavior to other known concomitant phenomena, it may be possible to tease out the relative contributions of different factors to behavioral development.³⁸

As implied by this passage, what defined the differential-psychological approach was not merely a focus on psychological individuality, but also a set of shared interests and methodologies. Working from a rigorously empiricist position—evinced in the textbook’s emphasis on *observable* effects in its definition of the field—differential psychologists sought to explicate individual difference specifically through measureable and replicable scientific experiments. In an 1879 article for the journal *Brain*, Sir Francis Galton coined the term *psychometrics* to describe this type of experimentation, defining “psychometry” as “the art of imposing measurement and number upon operations of the mind, as in the practice of determining the reaction-time of different persons.” Psychometric results, he specifies, must be “definite, and admit of verification,” thus enabling psychology to become capable of “assum[ing] the status and dignity of a science.”³⁹ A more subtle but equally definitional attribute of differential psychology was a commitment to addressing the practical problems of everyday life. James McKeen Cattell maintained that psychologists should be compelled to investigate the “practical applications of his

³⁷ For more on the history of differential psychology, see Michael J. Zickar and Robert E. Gibby, “Four Persistent Themes Throughout the History of I-O Psychology in the United States,” in *Historical Perspectives in Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, ed. Laura L. Koppes (New York: Psychology Press, 2007).

³⁸ Anne Anastasi, “The Nature of Individual Differences,” in *Fields of Psychology*, ed. J. P. Guilford (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1939), 251.

³⁹ Francis Galton, F.R.S., “Psychometric Experiments,” *Brain* 2 (1879): 149.

science,”⁴⁰ and Münsterberg agreed, framing “the practical application of psychology” as the most important advancement in the field, one made possible by the “development of schemes to compare the differences between the individuals by the methods of experimental science.”⁴¹ This imperative led most differential psychologists to focus their research on either childhood development or intelligence testing: Hall, for example, became famous for theorizing adolescence, while Stern invented the Intelligence Quotient and Binet developed the first practical intelligence test. Münsterberg, however, chose to bring differential psychological experimentation to the nascent movement of scientific management.

Scientific management was a generalized workplace management theory championed by Frederick Winslow Taylor, who developed his program, known as Taylorism, in the 1880s and '90s. Taylor received widespread renown in the 1900s following the publication of his books *Shop Management* and *The Principles of Scientific Management*. The goal of scientific management, in Taylor’s view, was the optimization of worker efficiency and productivity across all industries through the application of principles derived from scientific study. Taylorism was guided by the belief that efficiency is borne from standardization and worker uniformity; thus, workers’ tasks must be made increasingly rote and circumscribed, optimizing efficiency while minimizing the possibility that the worker apply any personal judgment. Taylor declares in *Scientific Management* that workers should be relieved of “the burden of gathering together all of the traditional knowledge... of classifying, tabulating, and reducing this knowledge to

⁴⁰ James McKeen Cattell, “A Statistical Study of American Men of Science: The Selection of a Group of One Thousand Scientific Men,” *Science* 24, no. 621 (1906): 658.

⁴¹ Hugo Münsterberg, *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 10; hereafter cited in the text as *IE*.

rules, laws, and formulae.”⁴² Consequently, as James Knapp attests in *Literary Modernism and the Transformation of Work*, as industrial businesses began enacting the process of Taylorization, “many kinds of work were degraded into the performance of mindless mechanical function.”⁴³ Knapp argues, moreover, that Taylor’s influential program was both facilitated by and served to augment a more general ideological revision of the notion of human subjectivity in the United States in the direction of boundless malleability. “Like so many of his contemporaries,” he writes, “Taylor had come to see human nature as relatively open, receiving its shape within historical process rather than as the result of inborn character or contestation.” Scientific management as a theory advanced the belief that any worker, once subjected to a perfected training program, could be made to conduct any task with optimal, machine-like efficiency.⁴⁴

Scholars sometimes erroneously frame Münsterberg’s participation in the discourses of scientific management—as well as the field of industrial psychology more broadly—as an endorsement or extension of Taylorism. Jillian Murphet, for example, accuses Münsterberg of seeking to reduce the human mind “to the simplest functions and habits,” thereby “ramifying the lessons of Fordism and Taylorism at the level of consciousness itself.”⁴⁵ Yet his contributions are more accurately characterized as offering criticisms and counterpoints to Taylor’s core premises. As a differential

⁴² Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911; repr., New York: Norton, 1967), 26.

⁴³ James F. Knapp, *Literary Modernism and the Transformation of Work* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 6. There are clear connections between the core principles of Taylorism and the critiques of both Marxist theory and modernist criticism, including the latter’s theorizations of the phenomena of alienation, fragmentation, and estrangement. Knapp explores these connections in detail in *Literary Modernism and the Transformation of Work*. See also Evelyn Cobley, *Modernism and the Culture of Efficiency: Ideology and Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

⁴⁵ Julian Murphet, “Gertrude Stein’s Machinery of Perception,” in *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing After Cinema*, eds. Julian Murphet and Lydia Rainford (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 71.

psychologist, Münsterberg regarded psychological individuality as not merely a physiological fact but a cornerstone of his research, and he was accordingly skeptical of Taylor's claims regarding the benefits of workplace standardization and worker uniformity. Commenting on the labor market in an article for *McClure's*, Münsterberg asserts that for any given worker's task, "psychological principles are involved which demand reference to individual tendencies."⁴⁶ During the first decade of the twentieth century, Münsterberg's research became increasingly focused on using psychometric data to analyze individuals and match them with the jobs most suited to their particular psychological traits. He writes in *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*:

The laborer, who in spite of his best efforts shows himself useless and clumsy before one machine, might perhaps have done satisfactory work in the next mill where the machines demand another type of mental reaction. His psychical rhythm and his inner functions would be able to adjust themselves to the requirements of the one kind of labor and not to those of the other. Truly the whole social body has had to pay a heavy penalty for not making even the faintest effort to settle systematically the fundamental problem of vocational choice, the problem of the psychical adaptation of the individuality. (33)

The revelation of Münsterberg's industrial psychology, in other words, lies in his conviction that the task of the industrial psychologist is not merely to develop maximally effective training strategies but "to discover the outlines of the mental individuality for particular practical work" (112) and to "determine this plasticity of the psychophysical apparatus"—i.e., the brain (135). By measuring and assessing a wide range of mental traits and aptitudes, a psychologist can help guide individuals to the most suitable types of work: "every result" of psychometric testing "can be translated into advice or warning with regard to the vocational choice."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Hugo Münsterberg, "Psychology and the Market," *McClure's Magazine* 34, no. 1 (1909): 90–1.

⁴⁷ Hugo Münsterberg, "Finding a Life Work," *McClure's Magazine* 34, no. 4 (1910): 403.

Ideologically, then, Münsterberg's approach to industrial psychology contradicts Taylor's vision of infinite worker pliability; instead, he assumes a human organism that is tractable only within limits. Münsterberg frames the labor market as a field upon which to tease out the psychological boundary between individual and society, the innate and the controllable. The workplace must account for the unique psychophysical structure of the individual person, even as the individual person must be conditioned within reason to adapt to the demands of the workplace. Unsurprisingly, the concept of developing habits is as relevant to Münsterberg's industrial psychology as it is to William James's general psychology, as habits function as the psychophysical expressions that testify to the conditioning effects of work. The "essential factor" of workplace proficiency, Münsterberg insists, "lies in the development of habits—habits of manipulation, habits of feeling attitude, habits of attention, habits of association, habits of decisions in overcoming difficulties; and every insight into this formation of mental connections offers guidance for a proficient training."⁴⁸ Work, in Münsterberg's usage, functions as the crucial medium through which habits are formed, through which the psychophysiological reality of individuality meets the societal need to organize individuals into categories of humanity.

Stein's early essays share the hallmark premises of her former professor's thought. Like Münsterberg, Stein insists on the reality of individual psychological uniqueness, the primacy of conditioning in directing a human's psychological development, and, most revealingly, the concept of work as the main social vehicle through which conditioning occurs. And yet when we look to those essays, we see that while her discourse follows Münsterbergian logic, she nevertheless draws different

⁴⁸ Münsterberg, "Market," 92.

conclusions about work and its relationship to individual human development. Münsterberg's texts, for their part, are specifically concerned with maximizing industrial efficiency in a finite set of labor markets. Therefore, in his usage, *work* is defined narrowly as a set of specific wage-generating skills, such as those required for typing, driving rail cars, or operating switchboards. Defined in this way, work is necessarily a circumscribing force: because labor opportunities are limited, the "psychical rhythm" and "inner functions" of an individual must "adjust themselves to the requirements of one kind of labor" or another (*IE* 33). Though individuals should strive to locate the jobs most suited to their unique psychophysical traits, some degree of training—i.e., directed conditioning—is required for the execution of work, a necessity that Münsterberg calls "the problem of the psychical adaption of the individuality" (*IE* 33). The point of training is to create common habits that attenuate those individual differences which would interfere with one's workplace responsibilities. The work required by the labor market, for Münsterberg, functions as society's great conditioning program, the avenue through which individuality is subdued so that a person may participate with maximum efficacy within coherently defined, market-driven groups.

Stein's essays, by contrast, embrace a much broader definition of *work*. In a variation of Morag Shiach's thesis that, in the face of changing labor trends, modern literary writers sought to reinscribe labor "as the energy of will, as the process of growth and creativity that drives both the individual and human species,"⁴⁹ Stein linguistically

⁴⁹ Morag Shiach, *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16. Shiach, departing from the line of thought advanced by Knapp and Copley, posits that modern literary explorations often reframe the activity of work in a way that ameliorates the fragmenting and alienating effects of capitalist labor. Though Stein's redefinition of *work* corresponds with this thesis, her rigorous empiricism and engagement with Münsterberg productively complicate Shiach's proposition that organicism and vitalism served as the dominant theoretical frameworks for authors exploring the edifying potential of work.

aligns *work* with “the life of the world,” including paid labor, higher education, and public engagement more generally (“VE” 11). Accordingly, she primarily figures work as an enriching, individualizing force. In “The Value of College Education for Women,” Stein declares that the act of engaging with the work of the world will “carry with it an enlargement of ideals and desires on the part of those who [will] in this way become individual human beings” (7). In Stein’s formulation, a human being’s psychophysical individuality is threatened with erosion or erasure not when one engages in “work” but instead when one’s existence is limited to carrying out only base biological functions, particularly reproduction. She attests that “the healthy development of the individual” can only occur when a human organism is allowed to live as “a member of its race irrespective of sex” (6). Whereas the “enlarg[ing]” experiences of work enable a person to pursue an individualized identity, Stein likens a life constrained by sex-based functionality to the undifferentiated existences of animals and machines. A woman who is prohibited from accessing the working world and defined only by her reproductive activities, she provocatively declares, resembles “a pig [who] instead of undergoing a normal development is turned into a machine for the manufacture of fat” or “the prouter [*sic*] pigeon who by artificial selection and a consequent abnormal development of his crop is capable of nothing but stupidly swelling like a balloon” (7).⁵⁰ In “Degeneration in American Women,” Stein articulates a similar understanding of the relationship between biological function, work, and individuality. In that essay, she semantically links the “real business of life” and the “work of the world” to psychological enlargement and

⁵⁰ In the manuscript for “Value,” this phrase is originally typed as, “nothing but stupidly gazing at the sky,” but Stein has crossed out “gazing at the sky” in pencil, writing over it, “standing swelling like a balloon.” Stein makes this change, perhaps, because the imagery of a passively swelling balloon connects more vividly to her criticism of women’s destinies being tied to their maternity.

expansion: when discussing those rare and exceptional women who are capable of succeeding within the “male code,” she asserts that “the opportunity of expression will be *open* to them” (413, my italics). The capacious virtue of wisdom is likewise something that “one only gets after years spent day after day in the daily round of working, listening and waiting” (413). Stein describes the “normal function” of maternity, meanwhile, as “a sacrifice” that forecloses other possibilities (414).

It is unclear whether Stein’s and Münsterberg’s theories of psychological development came to resemble each other as a result of their personal and professional relationship or by some other network of influence. What is clear is that Münsterberg and Stein share an interest in individual psychology, and both discursively position work as a fundamental force of psychological conditioning. Reading Stein by way of Münsterberg helps to illuminate not only the importance Stein places on the concept of work in her conceptualizations of human psychological development, but also the ways in which Stein, herself an aspiring psychologist, expands on Münsterberg’s theoretical model. By adjusting the definition of *work*—by building additional semantic associations that allow the term to refer not merely to paid industrial labor but more broadly to unimpeded volitional activity in the public sphere—Stein’s essays challenge Münsterberg’s assertion that work necessarily attenuates psychological uniqueness, and instead position work as a medium through which individualized character may be expressed and enhanced. Stein’s model also incorporates an antonym to *work* in *function*. Stein associates *function* with the compulsory behaviors linked to reproductive functionality, behaviors that by their avolitional nature inhibit the development of individualized identity. With these revisions, Stein transforms Münsterberg’s industrial-psychological framework into her

own discourse—what I call Stein’s “discourse of work”—that can be used to theorize not only worker-workplace relationships but human-environment interactions more generally. While Münsterberg’s theoretical model strictly concerns itself with investigating “how work and workmen can fit one another” (*IE* 37), Stein employs her own model to theorize human psychological development in terms of one’s *access* to work, and how that access is granted or denied according to external social constructs.

This brings us back to the initial issue raised by Stein’s essays, the reversal in her attitudes regarding gender equality and women’s aptitudes. It is worth noting that Stein was not, as far as we know, a prolific essay writer during her medical school years: indeed, apart from the writing composed for her college courses, “Value” and “Degeneration” are the only essays from this period uncovered by archival research. American women’s social roles and the nature of sexual difference were, it seems, topics weighing particularly heavily on Stein’s mind. Further, as noted earlier, Stein’s contradictory arguments express her uncertainty about how best to frame an ideological response to an American society guided by an essentialist understanding of sexual difference, a society which conditions men and women differently from birth. While Stein in “Value” eagerly cites scientific data and psychological discourse to endorse the struggle for gender equality, in “Degeneration” she uses the same concepts to cynically assert that such attempts are doomed to fail. In either case, Stein’s texts implicitly posit that the discourse of work is particularly suited to clarifying and exploring this sociocultural issue, with both “Degeneration” and “Value” relying on the discourse of work to address the phenomenon of gendered psychological development. In the next

section, we will see how Stein carries this network of concerns into her first major literary composition, *The Making of Americans*.

Steinian Work in *The Making of Americans*

Stein considered *The Making of Americans, Being a History of a Family's Progress* to be her masterpiece. She began composition of the one thousand-page novel in 1903, shortly after she made her permanent move to 27 rue de Fleurus in Paris, working on it off and on until completing the book in 1911. Though Stein immediately sought a publisher, *Making* went unpublished for over a decade, likely due to a combination of the text's length and difficulty and Stein's personal resistance to editing. Robert McAlmon printed the first edition in 1925, a year after Ernest Hemingway convinced Ford Madox Ford to print excerpts of the piece in his *Transatlantic Review*. *Making* is an aggressively experimental text, one that mostly eschews plot in favor of presenting a series of abstractly written character studies that focus on the members of two families connected by marriage, the Herslands and the Dehnings. Yet, as Maria Farland observes, "while the novel narrates certain events in the Hersland family history—births, marriages, deaths—it departs almost immediately from hereditary progression, instead aiming rather grandiosely toward a 'history of everyone,'" ⁵¹ a project that sends Stein freewheeling through extended, grammatically repetitive meditations on human nature, identity, and the compositional task of rendering human character in prose.

⁵¹ Maria Farland, "Gertrude Stein's Brain Work," *American Literature* 76, no. 1 (2004): 117.

For this reason, critics commonly interpret Stein's self-proclaimed masterwork as less a novel than an avant-garde psychological treatise that both dramatizes and interrogates its own theoretical assertions: in George B. Moore's words, the "history" promised by the novel's subtitle "rapidly becomes a psychology."⁵² Accordingly, the specific model of psychology proposed by and investigated in the novel has, since the 1970s, been a persistent topic of scholarly debate. At this point, something of a divided consensus has formed. A number of scholars read *Making* as an exploration of the typological understanding of human psychology elaborated in Otto Weininger's *Sex in Character*, which Stein professed to studying while working on her novel. Barbara Will argues that *Making* takes up and examines Weininger's "attempt to unite physiology and psychology under the rubric of a universal 'characterology.'"⁵³ A second cadre of critics argues that *The Making of Americans* owes a larger debt, psychologically speaking, to William James. In Steven Meyer's reading, *Making* enacts a gradual deconstruction of the epistemological premises of Jamesian psychology, with the text representing "the story of Stein freeing herself from James's beneficent influence."⁵⁴ Joan Richardson agrees that *Making*, along with other texts by Stein, are best read "as experiments in Jamesian radical empiricism."⁵⁵

These two dominant interpretations of *Making* are not mutually exclusive—both critical stances offer compelling insights into Stein's book-length attempt to exhaustively describe "every kind of living" (*MA* 17)—nor do they disallow the possibility of alternative investigations into Stein's influences. Indeed, with Weininger's and James's

⁵² George B. Moore, *Gertrude Stein's The Making of Americans: Repetition and the Emergence of Modernism* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 19.

⁵³ Will, *Gertrude*, 63.

⁵⁴ Meyer, *Irresistible*, 6.

⁵⁵ Richardson, *Natural History*, 233.

connections to the development of *Making* so thoroughly established, scholars have more recently begun to pursue subtler lines of intellectual influence that contribute to the text's psychological propositions, and in doing so have illuminated textual concerns that would have otherwise been overlooked.⁵⁶ Seeking a more particularized understanding of the novel's influences has enabled critics to concurrently develop a better understanding of how Stein uses psychological discourse to, in Lisi Schoenbach's words, "reflect with great sophistication on the relationship between [psychological models] and larger institutional forms."⁵⁷ My own analysis of *Making* extends this recent trend: without disputing the considerable weight that Weininger's and James's thought held within Stein's intellectual development, I find that reading *Making* in relation to Münsterberg's industrial psychology sheds light on sociopolitical nuances in the text that have not yet been acknowledged in the critical literature, specifically the ways in which Stein's novel utilizes the discourse of work—in this text, the physiological-psychological work of "being living" and "being one experiencing"—to explore the concept of sexual difference.

A core premise of Münsterberg's research was his assumption that human beings are psychophysically unique, and unsurprisingly, at the beginning of *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*, he presents this idea as a common-sense fact. "In practical life we never have to do with is common to all human beings," he asserts, "even when we are to

⁵⁶ Maria Farland, for example, reads the character typology of *Making* in relation to a contemporary biological theory of sexual difference known as the variability hypothesis, a lens that enables her to read *Making* as a work that, in part, "confront[s] variability's sexist assumptions in the realm of professional science." Farland, "Brain Work," 120. Along similar lines, Paul Stephens draws attention to *Making*'s thematic interest in fatigue and overstimulation and connects it to neurasthenia, a nerve disorder commonly diagnosed at the turn of the century. Noting Münsterberg's own influential investigations into the psychology of fatigue, Stephens posits that Stein's treatment of these concepts evince an "attempt to deploy character as a means by which to resist the normativizing tendencies of a technocratic society—particularly to resist the highly gendered discourse of neurasthenia." Stephens, "'Reading,'" 133.

⁵⁷ Schoenbach, *Pragmatic*, 51.

influence large masses; we have to deal with personalities whose mental life is characterized by particular traits” and interact with “single individuals whose mental physiognomy demands careful consideration.” When it comes to real-world problems, the kind to which Münsterberg applies his differential approach, “the average mind which the theoretical psychologist may construct as a type” has little explanatory value (9). And yet, throughout *Efficiency*, Münsterberg repeatedly utilizes the concept of the psychological “type.” He makes persistent reference to “mental types” (66) and “types of human beings” (85), and his experiments consistently yield evidence of groups of individuals displaying “characteristic unified activity” when faced with a given task (66). After conducting an experiment on attention, for example, Münsterberg concludes that when confronted with a challenge requiring attentiveness, human beings exhibit different and distinct “types of attention,” with some subjects “disposed to a strong concentration” while others “have the talent for distributing his attention over a large field” (136). (Münsterberg takes pains to clarify that “One type is not better than the other, but is simply different” [136].) In another chapter, he declares that psychometric tests have supported the existence of so-called early birds and night owls, writing that the “laboratory has already confirmed” that a person will either possess the mental type that causes their productivity to peak in the morning, or the type whose productivity peaks in the afternoon (222). Münsterberg defines a number of such specific typologies, derived from psychometric tests, ranging from evaluating subjects’ reactions to stress, to their ability to work with different varieties of typewriter, to their productivity while working under the influence of alcohol.

What becomes clear by the end of *Efficiency* is that what Münsterberg finds objectionable is not the concept of the mental type itself but rather the notion that a single, generalized type—or a single system of typology—is capable of describing the totality of human psychology. For Münsterberg, the systematic and cumulative positing of mental types is a useful methodological tool that may advance the aims of differential psychology. Creating typologies, in other words, is one of the “schemes” that the psychologist may use “to compare the differences between the individuals” (10). Münsterberg’s immediate experimental goals in *Efficiency* pertain to the finite realm of workplace tasks, using the creation of types to organize and streamline industrial labor; yet his larger differential-psychological project aims to create an ever-expanding network of “type” designations, wherein a human being’s psychological uniqueness may be expressed in terms of that individual’s particular assemblage of “mental types.” A person’s particular psychological profile becomes increasingly specified and clarified with every new taxonomy brought to bear on his or her psychophysical structure. When treated with due complexity and pursued across time, creating and designating mental types facilitates the elucidation of psychological individuality.

In her novel, Stein echoes Münsterberg’s attitude towards individuality and mental types. *The Making of Americans* is similarly centrally concerned with the relationship between individual psychology—which, in Stein’s associative parlance, is also termed “individual feeling,” “individual being,” “singularity,” “bottom nature,” or “character”—and what she calls “types” and “kinds” of people. These ostensibly oppositional concepts pop up repeatedly in the text in statements that, at first blush, appear contradictory: over the course of *Making*, Stein states her belief in psychological

uniqueness, declaring repeatedly that “each one [is] a different being from the many millions always being made” (137) and that “[e]very one then is an individual being” and that “every one is one inside them” (290) and that “[e]very one is separate then” (303) and that “each one is one” (872). Yet she also professes a belief in typology, iterating repeatedly that “there are two general kinds of them, the resisting, the attacking kind” (345) and that “mostly all of this kind of men and women are quite the same” (367) and that “there are then kinds in men and women” (493) and that “[e]very kind of being is quite common” (579). Bringing these statements together creates a certain discursive tension: how can Stein insist on typology while also maintaining the psychophysical individuality of every human being?

This tension becomes paramount for critics reading *Making* through the lens of *Sex and Character*. In *Sex and Character*, Weininger endeavors to present a comprehensive psychological typology, a “universal ‘characterology.’”⁵⁸ While his preface humbly professes, “In this book there lie only the germs of a world-scheme,”⁵⁹ Weininger nonetheless asserts that his binary, sex-based psychological typology is all-encompassing in its explanatory value. He bombastically claims that his theory yields “a harvest rich in its bearing on the fundamental problems of logic and their relations to the axioms of thought, on the theory of aesthetics, of love, and of the beautiful and the good, and on problems such as individuality and morality and their relations, on the phenomena of genius, the craving for immortality and Hebraism.”⁶⁰ In assessing Weininger’s influence on the composition of *Making*, critics interpret Stein’s contradictory statements regarding individuals and types as evidence of her grappling, and eventually dispensing,

⁵⁸ Will, *Gertrude*, 63.

⁵⁹ Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (1906; repr., New York: GP Putnam’s Sons, 1908), xi.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

with Weininger's theories. George B. Moore, for example, proposes that Weininger initially "provided [Stein] with a complete and systematic study of human behavior" and that his "categories gave her the idea to construct her own types in order to organize what she saw as the emotional characteristics of certain groups of people."⁶¹ In Moore's reading, Stein's assertions of individual difference, her insistence that no single typology can encapsulate human identity, indicate her ultimate repudiation of Weininger: "the failure of these theories, under the demands of the language to achieve an exact reproduction of her experience, signals a strategic change in her thinking."⁶² Reading through the prism of Weininger, critics like Moore contend that Stein begins *The Making of Americans* pursuing an exhaustive typology of character, and they read the novel as a disavowal of the premise of universalizing typology.

Yet, as Münsterberg's example demonstrates, utilizing typological categories does not necessarily indicate a belief in a *totalizing* typology: types may be employed as a means of investigating and clarifying individual character. Indeed, in *Making* Stein in fact anticipates the tension that readers may perceive in her statements on individual and typed character and takes pains to regularly diffuse it, in a manner discursively consistent with Münsterberg's approach. In one of the more explicit enunciations along these lines, occurring close to midway through the text, Stein insists:

This is a very certain way of knowing, grouping men and women, understanding, seeing the kind of natures in them, making certain of the resemblances between them. This is then a universal grouping, always everywhere with every education there are these same kinds of them, some are a complete thing of one kind of them, some are very little just at the bottom one kind of them and all the rest of them are other kinds of them, these are in them every degree of mixing, every degree of emphasising, some are the whole of their kind of them, some are only part of their kind of them; to commence again then with my way of seeing them

⁶¹ Moore, *Gertrude*, 10, 11.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 11.

and then the way of knowing the resemblances between them and so the making groups of them. To begin again then with my feeling of bottom nature in each one. (344)

Stein's language here implies a more complex attitude towards the delineation of types than a simple acceptance or rejection of the concept of typology. The act of "grouping men and women"—a "way of knowing" that Stein deems "universal"—enables an observer to "mak[e] certain of the resemblances," to recognize the "same kinds of them." And although Stein stresses the utility and validity of identifying "kinds" of people, she admits that the categories we create are neither exclusive nor encompassing. Group characteristics remain subject to "mixing" and "emphasising." Even among those of a similar "kind," variance abounds, as "some are the whole of their kind of them," while "some are only part of their kind of them." She urges her readers to interpret the character studies offered in the novel—the lengthy elaborations on the traits of Dehning and Hersland family members—as "my way of seeing them and then the way of knowing the resemblances between them." Crucially, Stein specifies a paragraph later that "learning *kinds*" leads to "learning *individual ones* by knowing this way of seeing," and she insists that this "explain[s] the meaning of this dividing of men and women into these kinds of them" (345, my italics). Stein discloses that *The Making of Americans* engages in typology, in other words, as a means of better articulating and understanding "individual being."

This Münsterbergian interpretation of Stein's use of typology in the novel helps to explicate an issue that often goes unacknowledged in the Weiningerian analyses. While critics attest that *The Making of Americans* begins with Stein embracing "a universal

system of taxonomy”⁶³ and gradually moves to an acknowledgement that people are “infinitely variable,”⁶⁴ in reality the text does not begin with Stein clearly advocating a totalizing typology, nor does it end with a clear renunciation of the same. The novel from the very beginning finds Stein meditating on the concept of psychological “singularity” (*MA* 21) and “individual being” (57) even as she declares that “[t]here are not so very many kinds of men nor so many kinds of women” (86). Likewise, as the text draws to a close, she persists in asserting that “Each one is a of a kind in men and women, of a kind of way of being one experiencing” (787) and that “There are kinds in men and women.... There can be lists of the kinds of them” (910), even as she insists that “each one is one” (872). Rather than moving in an obvious progression from typology to individual variability, the text throughout establishes the existence of, and grapples with the relationship between, individuals and types.

Situating Stein’s approach to type in the context of Münsterberg, moreover, encourages us to reconsider the significance of Stein’s compositional experiment. Moore argues that by the end of *Making*, having rejected Weininger’s types, Stein becomes less reliant “on the sense of pre-existing differences.” Drawing similarities between Stein and Kristeva, Moore claims that Stein develops a “growing awareness of the power of authorship and her ability to create even as she interprets.”⁶⁵ In effect, over the course of *Making*, Stein appears to come to the realization that “types” and “kinds,” if they exist at all, are *created* by the observer rather than *discovered*, and this is taken to be the primary revelation of the text. Yet the notion that types are incomplete and contingent creations of psychological study is an idea inherent to Münsterberg’s differential approach. Towards

⁶³ Farland, “Brain Work,” 118.

⁶⁴ Will, *Gertrude*, 63.

⁶⁵ Moore, *Gertrude*, 31, 32.

the end of *Industrial Efficiency* Münsterberg acknowledges that psychometric experimentation more often than not throws into “sharp focus... the strong individual differences” between subjects, differences which are made comprehensible and orderly through the articulation of “classifications” and “mental types” (*IE* 239). In *Making*, Stein inscribes a similar awareness that “types” and “kinds” are conditional rather than essential:

There are many ways of making kinds of men and women. Now there will be descriptions of every kind of way every one can be a kind of men and women.

This is now a history of Martha Hersland. This is now a history of Martha and of every one who came to be of her living.

There will then be soon much description of every way one can think of men and women, in their beginning, in their middle living, and their ending.

Every one then is an individual being. Every one then is like many others always living, there are many ways of thinking of every one, this is now a description of all of them. There must be then a whole history of each one of them. (290)

As in the passage quoted previously, here we find Stein again maintaining, without a sense of contradiction, that one can simultaneously be “an individual being” as well as “a kind,” “like many others.” There are, as she notes, “many ways of thinking of every one.” And just as the previous passage describes the process of “*making*... resemblances” and “*making* groups” (344, my italics), here Stein declares that “There are many ways of *making* kinds of men and women.” (The novel’s title likewise figures the category of *Americans* as a product of *Making*.) “Kinds,” we are meant to understand, are descriptive yet functional categories created in accordance with circumstance and conditioning. Stein specifies that type designations are determined in part by the perspective of the observer (the “way[s] one can think of men and women”), by the timing and conditions under which one is observed (whether one is “in their beginning, in their middle living, and

their ending”), as well as by the people with whom one interacts (those “who came to be of [one’s] living”).

Making, in short, is not a text that gradually comes to understand the dynamic and contingent nature of typological systems; rather, the text is *premised* on such an adaptable understanding of typological methods. As such, while many critics interpret Stein’s progressive rejection of fixed and universal character typology as the novel’s *raison d’être*, my analysis posits instead that *Making* offers a compositional exploration of the relationship between individual psychology and the categories (“types” and “kinds”) through which one’s character may be comprehensibly articulated. Stein experimentally utilizes the literary mode of the novel to investigate the dynamic process by which individuals develop their identities within this system—a project for which she employs her discourse of work.

The discourse of work, as elaborated in Stein’s essays, posits unimpeded volitional activity as the medium through which an individual becomes a “self respecting human being” (“VE” 11). In *The Making of Americans*, Stein transforms this discursive framework into a driving stylistic principle: a novel of gerunds and participle phrases, *Making* dramatizes the manner through which identity is dynamically created through action. Recalling the empirical approach of the differential psychologists, Stein’s process for “explain[ing] the being in each one” and “making resemblances” entails an extraordinary emphasis on behavioral verbs, as evinced in her declaration: “I will be able to... make a scheme of relations in kinds of being with each one having in them the way of eating, thinking, feeling, working, drinking, loving, beginning and ending, feeling things as being existing of their kinds of being... I will be able to make groups of them”

(595). Individual character, Stein suggests, is simultaneously created and disclosed by a person's "way of winning, loving, fighting, working, thinking, writing in each one" (344), by "the living and the being" (507). Stein's language transforms character traits typically considered static or stable and renders them as active, changeable properties. A character named Mr. Richardson, for instance, is described as a religious man, yet the narration pointedly frames his religion in active terms rather than as an inert attribute: Religion "was always natural in him as was his eating and sleeping and washing. He kept on this way in his existing, it was natural to him to keep on existing, it was natural to him to have in him religion and eating and sleeping and washing" (111). In two consecutive sentences, Stein syntactically places "hav[ing] in him religion" in a parallel position to "eating and sleeping and washing," imbuing "religion" with the active quality of the latter verbs. Other individuals are similarly deemed knowable by the "many kinds of ways every one has in them of doing everything in their daily living," the "many ways of having living inside one and having it come out from one" (185).

Most revealing is the way in which Stein's language redefines "being" itself into an insistently dynamic term: an individual is not *a* being but rather *has* being or *is* being. As with her reframing of "religion," Stein repeatedly syntactically positions "being" as interchangeable with more active verbs like "thinking," "feeling," and "living," as in this early passage in the novel focusing on Fanny Hersland, née Hissen:

All the Hissen people had it strongly inside them, the family *way of good living*. They were all in their natural *way of family thinking* gentle cheerful little men and women. They lived in their natural *way of being*, without any strong ambition. ... They had never any one of them an *important feeling* of themselves inside them.... Mrs. Fanny Hersland never would have had *such a feeling* if she had lived on in Bridgepoint, going on always with the right *kind of being*, she would often have an *angry feeling*, sometimes with her family, or her husband, or for them when things happened to them to worry them. (57, my italics)

In this passage, as in numerous others in the text, Stein places “living,” “thinking,” “being,” and “feeling” in syntactically correlating structures, both to describe the typical behaviors of the Hissen family (“...*of* good living”; “...*of* family thinking”; “...*of* being”) and Fanny Hersland’s atypical behaviors (“such a feeling”; “the right kind of being”; “an angry feeling”). “Being,” like “living” and “thinking,” becomes a term that denotes an active and shifting state, a reflection of character as it is expressed in the moment. As Stein declares, “every one has in them their own way of eating, their own way of drinking, their own way of sleeping, their own way of working... in short then, every one has in them their own being” (225). In *The Making of Americans*, the word “being” always denotes this semantic reorientation: a human being is what one *does*.

The discourse of work, in this way, inheres in the style of *Making*, which in turn enables Stein to continue the project, initiated in her essays, of investigating the sex-biased manner in which sociocultural practices condition individual character via the enabling or constraining of volitional behavior. As in the essays, the character studies within *Making* assume individuality as a psycho-physiological fact: describing Martha, Stein writes, “this one was different from all the others of them for this one had her own skin and so was separated from all the other of them that have or had or will have the same kind of being to make them... and so each one, even of this kind of them, are individual ones” (387). Yet Stein’s character studies also delineate the way in which the range of “types” or “kinds” an individual is capable of being is facilitated or constrained based on the behaviors that he or she is permitted to pursue. And indeed, just as Stein’s essays employ the discourse of work to dispute essentialism and examine the origins of sexual difference, *Making* posits that women in particular bear the burden of constrained

action. The novel dramatizes how sociocultural norms systematically delimit the “ways of being” a woman.

To begin an analysis of the representation of sexual difference in *Making*, we must first attend to Stein’s conspicuous use of the phrase “men and women,” which appears hundreds if not thousands of times over the course of the text. A tiny but representative selection of instances of this phrase in the novel include: “All the Hissen men and women had fine feeling” (73); there is the “independent dependent kind of men and women” (257); “this kind in men and women have a good deal of loving being in them” (369); “Phillip Redfern was of the kind of men and women... who have in their living a good deal of reputation from the living and the being” (444); “This gives me a pleasant feeling knowing kinds in men and women now” (581); “Julia Hersland was of the attacking kind in men and women” (658); “It means different things in the being in different kinds in men and women” (773); and “each kind in men and women is different from the other kinds of them” (909). As these examples attest, Stein mostly uses “men and women” in her discussions of “kinds.” For such instances, we might expect Stein to prefer a more parsimonious term like “people”—or perhaps, like Rebecca West, “human organisms”—yet she pointedly employs “men and women,” adjusting her grammar such that this phrase functions as a single semantic unit. Illustratively, a common phrase in *Making* is, “Every one is of a kind of men and women” (223), a sentence that flattens “men and women” into a unified grammatical term. In another example, Stein writes, “As I was saying men and women, women and women, men and men do so much repeating” (222). By restating the pairing three times but substituting “men” for “women” in each

repetition, Stein implies the equation of both terms, rendering “men and women” effectively neutral.

Cumulatively, Stein achieves an impressive effect: in adopting the phrase “men and women,” she implicitly maintains the basic physiological distinction between the sexes—legitimizing “men” and “women” as valid terms—and yet the aggressive repetition of this phrase functions to erase the notion that “men” and “women” are in any way *semantically* distinct. In statements like, “always each one is of a kind in men and women” (584), the delineation of “kind,” rather than the delineation of sex, is what matters. Tellingly, the number of instances in which Stein employs “man” or “woman” in isolation—the number of instances in which she discusses “men” independently from “women”—is vanishingly few compared to the ubiquity of the phrase “men and women.” Over the course of one thousand pages, this discursive pattern establishes an implicit anti-essentialist stance. Although biology necessitates that “men” and “women” exist as separate signifiers, when it comes to building psychological categories, to crafting the “types” and “kinds” that describe human identity, Stein acknowledges no inherent sex-based distinction. There is no “kind” of man, no “way of being” that would potentially be available to men, that would not also be available to women exposed to the same circumstances.

This non-essentializing usage of “men and women” serves as the foundation upon which Stein builds her individual character studies, which explore the specific, dynamic, and environmentally contingent manner in which a person’s identity forms. And when we examine these studies in relation to sex, what we find is that Stein develops her characters in a way that foregrounds the gradual process by which women are prevented from

engaging in the same range of behaviors as men—a process that ultimately results, she proposes, in the appearance, though not the reality, of inherent sexual difference.

This dynamic emerges most clearly in the contrast between Stein’s descriptions of the “making” of individual men and the “making” of individual women. We can begin by considering Stein’s character study of the patriarch of the Hersland family, David Hersland. Early in the novel, Stein describes in detail how Mr. Hersland developed his psychological “way of being”:

There was a mixture in him of several ways in which his kind of men have it in them to work out in them the beginning which is the strongest thing in them and the feeling themselves as big as all the world around them. This mixture in him had many ways of coming out in him, in his middle living. It was not easy to know it certainly about him then which mixture was most him, always it came out a good deal in him to everybody who saw him or knew him then that he was a man who was in feeling himself inside him as big as all the world around him... (140)

Drawn from one of the rare sections of the novel that discusses a “kind of men” in isolation from women, this paragraph is suffused with language connoting expansiveness and variability. Mr. Hersland feels himself “as big as all the world around him,” a twice-repeated phrase that implies an absence of constraint placed on the development of his character. Stein then bolsters this notion with the repetition of the word “out,” which she employs in a way to connote unfolding (“work out,” “coming out,” “came out”). At the same time, the fact that “the world around him” has a bearing on Mr. Hersland’s identity suggests that his identity is, to some extent, environmentally contingent. His character’s capacity for expansive development reflects a personal ability to behave in expansive ways, to be “domineering, fighting, brushing away from before him, sometimes breaking away from and leaving” (140). Prominent in this description, too, is the concept of *mixture*, a word repeated three times in the passage and which Stein uses to specify the

numerous “kinds of being” that exist within Mr. Hersland’s character. As an earlier passage states, “they have each one of them more or less in them of the kind of man they are... the mixture in them of other kinds of being in them” (136). In the same way that the accumulation of “types” is central to Münsterberg’s differential project, “mixture”—which Stein also calls “variation” or, in the sense borrowed from chemistry, “solution”—is key to Stein’s conception of individualized identity. The presence of multiple “mixture[s]” in Mr. Hersland’s character reflects his exposure to multitudinous “ways of being,” just as his access to “all the world around him” relates to his ability to incorporate and resemble many different identifiable “kinds.” Stein’s observation that it is “not easy to know... which mixture was most him” points to the unique complexity of Mr. Hersland’s psychological “being.”

Mr. Hersland’s distinctive “being” is both clarified and advanced by what the text calls his “business living,” the considerable portion of life, distinct from his “home living,” that he spends working away from his family. In keeping with the notion that a person’s “kind” is elucidated by those “who came to be of [one’s] living” (290), Mr. Hersland’s business living brings him into contact with other individuals—other working men—who contribute to his psychological development. The other workers have “a very strong feeling in them” about Mr. Hersland’s character that validates his own “feeling himself inside him” (142). Stein affirms that “the men who were working with him, the men who were working under him, they all knew about him that he was as big as all out doors” (142). Mr. Hersland’s business living also facilitates his individual psychological development: “he was always changing.... In his business living this came out in him, it came out in him in all his living, it came out to him in his ways of eating, in his ways of

doctoring, in his ways of educating his children. ...To the end of his business living he had in him a big beginning” (146). Business living—a sphere of activity specifically accessible to men—functions as a crucial domain in the development of Mr. Hersland’s individualized identity, within which he extends and refines the “mixture in him of all the kinds of natures in him” (149).

The two other major studies in the novel that focus on male characters delineate the psychological characteristics of Mr. Hersland’s sons, Alfred and David. Stein’s descriptions make it evident that these men differ in salient ways from their father. Mr. Hersland is a joyful yet impatient and aggressive man whom his children regard as overbearing. Alfred, by contrast, is refined and proud, having “a very considerable feeling for distinction and elegance and beauty and richness in living” (585) and possessing a “needing to be one succeeding in living” (638). The young David is moody—“he was sometime in his living needing angry feeling to be existing” (757)—but also personable and contemplative; Stein describes him as “one wanting it that he should be one realising every minute what there was in life to be a thing going on being doing” (745). Yet however distinct their personalities, the manner by which Alfred and David develop their individual “beings” replicates that of their father: Stein similarly couches the “making” of all three men in the language of expansion and possibility, characterized by uninhibited access to a variety of environments and experiences. Describing Alfred as a young boy, Stein offsets the ordinariness of his day-to-day life by stressing the range of activities and opportunities he pursues:

Alfred Hersland was with them in his daily living with the people living near him... and he did then everything they did in their daily living... [H]e lived his daily life then doing everything he did then with the boys the women and men living near him. He did his roller skating, a little shooting, some camping, a good

deal of fishing, some going about the country selling fruit.... He did his daily living completely with them, he did everything they were doing then... he did everything then with these then living near him, he had then his being in him and his daily living... (531)

The language here insists on the idea that Alfred's character develops in direct relation to his environment. His "daily living," which develops the "being in him," is defined by those "living near him." And yet the most conspicuous word in this passage, repeated four times, is *everything*. The fact that Alfred's "daily living" incorporates "everything... the boys the women and men" are doing stresses the notion that Alfred is free to experience a wide variety of "ways of being" both within and outside his own household. Likewise, his hobbies—skating, shooting, camping, fishing, and "going about the country"—recall the "big as all the world around him" quality that contributes to the formation of his father's character. Just as Mr. Hersland enjoys the benefits of the "business living" conducted outside the home, Stein later specifies that Alfred's living comprises a combination of "making a living and... marrying Julia Dehning and ... knowing a fair number of men and women" (591). And just as Mr. Hersland's being is "not easy to know," Stein repeatedly iterates the possibility for mixture and variability in Alfred's character. She asserts that he "was not ever really knowing what could and what could not come out of him" (599), that he "has being in him as pieces only of being," and that his "being was not complete in him" (576). Communicating this sentiment in the most forceful of terms, Stein declares, "in Alfred Hersland there is every kind of variation" (525–6).

The chapter dedicated to the younger David Hersland, meanwhile, is Stein's most abstract character study, to the point where the text, as Farland observes, "veers toward

non-sense, its meanings strained under the pull of its tendency toward abstraction.”⁶⁶ The specificity of Mr. Hersland’s doctoring or Alfred’s roller skating gives place to skeletally bare descriptions of David’s behavior, as in this characteristic excerpt:

[David] was doing some things then and some others were doing some things then and he was doing some things and some others were doing the things he was wanting to be needing to be doing then, and he was doing some things then, and he was doing some things he was needing to be doing then and some others did things then when he was doing things, and some were doing things then and he was going to be doing things then, and he was doing things then and some others were doing things then and some others were going to be doing things then, and some were doing things and he was doing things and some others were doing things and he was going to be doing things and he was needing to be doing things... (802)

This representation of David’s actions, which goes on like this for two pages, is disorientingly extreme. We have no way of knowing what particular “things” David is “doing” or how long he does them or in what context they are done. Yet this very lack of specificity—which includes a pointed ambiguity regarding whether others share in his “doing”—has a paradoxically enlarging effect. Readers are prompted to consider the theoretically infinite possibilities as to the activities David might be pursuing and with whom he might be interacting. The fact that David “is one doing something and doing that thing and another thing and that thing and another thing and another thing and that thing and another thing and another thing again” (804) implies an utter lack of limits on his behavior and therefore on his character. We are invited to infer that, like Mr. Hersland, “all the world” is available to him, or like Alfred, he is doing “everything.” Indeed, Stein later affirms that “David Hersland was certainly one having all of such ways of being being in him” (811), his capacity for “being being” rivaling Alfred’s capacity for “every kind of variation.”

⁶⁶ Farland, “Brain Work,” 135.

In her character studies of the Hersland men, then, Stein establishes a noticeable trend: starting in their childhood and extending into their “middle living,” the three men develop their “being” in explicitly unconstrained circumstances. Stein’s associative language makes plain the fact that having the ability to behave freely in their surrounding environments—to be “as big as all the world,” to pursue “business living,” to “do everything”—enables Mr. Hersland, Alfred, and David to cultivate identities that are complex and individualized. Their characters are emphatically the product of “mixture” and “variation” of countless “kinds.” Their collective example, meanwhile, finds a sharp contrast in the two major character studies focused on women, the studies of Martha Hersland and Julia Dehning.

Martha is the older sister of Alfred and David, yet her “living,” unlike that of her brothers, is marked by containment and constraint, qualities that Stein vividly associates with the physical environment of the home. While Alfred engages in lively explorations of the countryside, Martha is “a young woman of the being of those living in small houses near them” (394). Stein repeatedly specifies that Martha’s activities are “little” and defined by domestic ritual. In contrast to Alfred’s boyhood “daily living” of skating and fishing and roaming, Stein details how Martha “with the girls... would help the mothers cooking or setting the table, she knew their daily living, she helped them in wiping the dishes when they were washing them” (413). An earlier passage, in which Stein describes a psychological trait that she calls “servant queerness,” clarifies the significance of Martha’s kitchen activities. One of the rare instances in the novel describing women in isolation from men, the passage specifies that some women have “an anxious being and later in their living from much sitting alone in a kitchen, from

much eating without any one being then with them or around them, from much cooking” (185). While domestic servants themselves are the individuals most prone to exhibiting “servant queerness,” Stein declares that “there are then many women and many kinds of them who have sometimes servant queerness in them” (186). Notably, just prior to the passage detailing Martha’s working in the kitchen, Stein revealingly states that “Martha then had a nervous feeling” (412) and was “being afraid of everything” (413).⁶⁷

The discrepancy between the experiences of Martha and her brothers, particularly when it comes to their access to the world outside the home, is far from accidental. In a passage describing Martha’s childhood participation in a game of hide-and-go-seek with her brothers and some other neighborhood boys, Stein relates:

Sometimes then they stayed a long time in the orchard, later than Alfred said to Martha he would tell her father, she had no business to be playing. ... Alfie would be saying Martha should not be playing that evening. Sometimes Alfie would make Martha go in. ... He was then a little beginning to have in him the feeling that he was a good citizen, that he was the oldest son, he did not know then yet very specifically why she should go in, they neither of them knew very specifically why she should not be playing hide and go seek in the evening but Alfie was beginning then to have such a feeling about himself in him that he should send her in ... and then she always had a sullen fear inside her. (534)

In a bitter inversion of Mr. Hersland’s expansive “business living,” Martha is told she has “no business” roving outside the home as late as her brothers and their male friends.

Stein’s language here not only calls attention to the different treatment given to Martha, but also specifically establishes that Alfred’s gender-biased behavior toward her is a

⁶⁷ Stein’s description of “servant queerness” recalls her descriptions of the titular character in “The Gentle Lena,” the third story in her 1909 collection *Three Lives*. Lena is “still and docile,” a person who “[does] not really know what it was that had happened to her” (159), traits that Stein associates with Lena’s status as a poor, sheltered servant. Stein’s story consistently links Lena’s psychological limitations to the constraints placed on her life, noting that Lena “never thought to spend” her wages and “did not know that she could do anything different” (162), prompting her to become “nervous” when exposed to unfamiliar experiences or people (170). While Stein presents “The Gentle Lena” as an isolated character study, the extended scope of *The Making of Americans* enables her to connect the psychological dynamics of phenomena like “servant queerness” to larger sociocultural forces. Stein, *Three Lives* (1909; repr., London: Peter Owen, 1970).

learned behavior that has a profound psychological effect on his sister. The fact that the text repeats twice that Alfred “was *beginning* to have in him the feeling” that she should be treated differently, combined with the fact that “neither of them knew very specifically why” this should be the case, conveys the idea that sexual difference is a concept conditioned into the children rather than an innate dissimilarity. That Alfred believes sending Martha inside is connected to being “a good citizen” and “the oldest son,” moreover, powerfully ties this conditioning specifically to sociocultural institutions, as it frames enforcing sexual difference as an integral aspect of both American society and American families, which replicate society’s patriarchal order. (Martha’s status as the oldest *child* is functionally irrelevant.) Stein stresses that having her behavior curtailed in this way has a permanent impact on Martha’s psychological development, causing her to “always [have] a sullen fear inside her.”

Later on, in a narrative move that recalls “Degeneration in American Women,” Stein reveals that Martha chooses to attend college, an uncharacteristically bold action that we might expect to result in psychological enrichment and expansion similar to that enjoyed by her brothers. Instead, however, Stein describes this stage of Martha’s life in the following terms: “...as I was saying she went to get her college education. This is now to be more history of her and how she came to have a lover and how he came then to leave her and what happened then to him and what happened then to her. In short, this is now to be a history of all the living there ever was in her, all the being in her” (427). The fact that the text describes Martha learning “a little” (427) at college before shifting focus to her existence as a wife testifies to the fleeting nature of that hopeful development before the narrow demands of married life descend on Martha’s “being.” On the whole,

Stein's language emphasizes the extent to which Martha's "individual being" is systematically circumscribed, marked by simplicity and predictability rather than complexity and variability. Summing up Martha's character, Stein concludes:

And this in a way always was true of her, all her living she was the same whole one, there was very little change in her, mostly all her living the whole of her was repeating completely, when she was learning, when she was loving, when in her later living she was still struggling. She was then all her living the same whole one, there was the same concentration of being in her, the same the proportion of one thing to the other things active in her. (425)

While the variety of behaviors and environments encountered by the Hersland men enhance their psychological complexity and dynamism, Martha's longstanding confinement to "little houses" (424) enables correspondingly little development. Martha is a stagnant character with few facets or traits, as evinced by the fact that the dominant words in this passage are "same," "always," "whole," and "still." In another passage, Stein remarks on "how little [Martha] knew in living" (424).

The character study of Julia Dehning—whose marriage to Alfred forms the link between the Dehning and Hersland families in the novel—more explicitly connects the concepts of womanliness to the developmental effects of constrained behavior. Julia leads, as one of the earliest paragraphs in the novel attests, a "well guarded life" (19). Described as "like all other young girls," Julia serves as the novel's standard-bearer for conventional femininity: "She learnt very well all the things young girls of her class were taught then and she learnt, too, all the things girls always can learn, somehow, to be wise in. And so Julia was well prepared now to be a woman" (20). Stein's repetition of the word "learnt" here introduces the idea, reinforced in the passage describing the Hersland children's game of hide-and-go-seek, that sexual difference arises out of learned behaviors rather than innate qualities. Here, however, Stein further connects this

conditioning to the limitation of identity, as her language emphasizes the systematizing nature of Julia's learning, the repetition of "all" and "always" erasing the differences between the girls in Julia's cohort.

Much later in the text, describing Julia's adult life, Stein again invokes "learning" in the context of conditioned sexual difference. This time, Stein uses the term to highlight the profound limitations in Julia's psychological character: "As I said she was one wanting to be learning anything, needing everything as anything could feed her for being one doing living. As I said once in telling of her loving and marrying Alfred Hersland he was one to her really doing learning in living. Always as I was saying she was not doing any learning for living" (651). Employing language that recalls how Alfred "did everything" (531) as a young boy and as a result became capable of "every kind of variation" (525–6), Stein describes Julia as "needing everything," a desire that she connects to the ability to live expansively, to be "being one doing living." Yet the text suggests that Julia's being a wife—"loving and marrying Alfred Hersland"—entails sacrificing her ability to learn, a sacrifice not shared by Alfred, who "was one to her really doing learning." Indeed, "not learning" becomes the defining characteristic of Julia's "being":

She was certainly then one not using her being for living because she certainly was not learning anything in living, she certainly had some loving feeling in her in her living, ...she certainly was not learning anything ever in living for living, she certainly was not learning anything ever in living her living, she certainly was not ever learning anything, she certainly was completely feeling needing learning anything... (654)

Stein's prose, though characteristically repetitive and full of gerunds, conveys the tragedy of Julia's circumstances. Though Julia persists in feeling like she is "needing learning anything," the constraints associated with marriage prevent her from enjoying

psychological expansion. As Stein declares rather dramatically, she “certainly was not learning anything ever.”

Stein, in this way, employs her associative language within extended studies of individual character development to simultaneously identify and dramatize the mechanism by which American sociocultural practices—regarded, in the text as in life, broadly and amorphously—give rise to the appearance of essentialist sexual difference. At the core of Stein’s explorations of gendered traits lies her observation that, at a fundamental level, women are uniquely and systematically denied the ability to “work,” to behave volitionally in a way that exposes them to the experiences and environments that cultivate and clarify psychological differentiation. Indeed, as Stein writes in an early passage, women “have not in their middle living so much in their way of being to make it all inside them mix into a whole as most men have it in them in their middle living, *they have less in the conditions of their living* to make the natures in them mix together” (141, my italics). Women’s apparent simplicity, their lack of mixture, is the result of a systematic, sex-based deprivation in “the conditions of their living.”

Over the course of *The Making of Americans*, then, Stein explores a Münsterbergian framework of psychological thought, which like Münsterberg’s industrial-psychological model is premised on the notion that human beings are psycho-physiological individuals who are immersed in and thus conditioned by changing environmental demands. Within this empirical framework, psychological character is both defined and expressed by one’s capacity to “work,” by one’s volitional behavior. Stein regards volitional action as the process by which men and women “become individual human beings” (“DW” 7), by which they, in Münsterberg’s parlance,

experience the “harmonious unfolding of the personality” (*IE* 35). Through the simple and natural process of “being one experiencing,” individuals encounter the people and environments which facilitate the “mixing” and the “variation”—the accumulation of “types”—and which clarify one’s individual psychological “being.” What Stein proposes within the character studies of *Making*, however, is that the sociocultural structures of the United States function to grant men the right to volitional action, while women, from a devastatingly early age, experience systematic constraints on their behavior. When replicated on a national scale, this pattern gives rise to psychological sexual difference.

That said, read in the context of Stein’s two early essays, each of which establish clear (if oppositional) ideological stances on the topic of conditioned sexual difference, *The Making of Americans* appears curiously detached. Rebecca West, we may recall, leverages behaviorist discourse in *The Return of the Soldier* and *The Judge* not only to illustrate the self-perpetuating cycles of gendered conditioning that give rise to gendered minds but also to condemn such cycles and to articulate possible paths of resistance. Although Stein in *Making* similarly takes up the discourse of work and a Münsterbergian understanding of typology to carefully elucidate the systematized manner in which limitations on women’s access to work interfere with their ability to develop into fully individualized beings, she stops short of either staking a clear ideological position or offering a means of disrupting the status quo. *Making*, in other words, aspires to explication rather than expostulation when it comes to the mechanics of sexual difference. Münsterberg, for his part, cites ideological disinterest as a necessary component of psychological study. He writes that psychology must “speak the language of an exact science in its own field, independent of economic opinions and debatable

partisan interests” and that “the psychotechnical specialist fulfills his task only when he is satisfied with demonstrating that certain psychical means serve a certain end” (*IE* 20).

Stein in *Making* appears to have been motivated by a similar philosophy. Her tone throughout the text is impersonal and dispassionate, her descriptions and assessments of characters—for instance, “Julia Dehning was not such a one. Julia Dehning had nervousness a good deal in her in her living” (623)—universally rendered in direct, declarative syntactical constructions.

Ultimately, I understand Stein as a political but not polemical literary writer, a view that perhaps helps to mediate, if not fully reconcile, what Wanda Van Dusen calls “the debate over the depth of conviction behind Stein’s ‘anti-patriarchal’ experimental writing between 1906 and 1932 in light of evidence of her political conservatism.”⁶⁸ For even if we see the young Stein vacillating on contemporary issues like the feminist movement for equal rights—and even if, as John Whittier-Ferguson alleges, Stein would throughout her life exhibit a “longstanding preference for avoiding risky, public, political stands” and a distaste for “the outdirectedness, the expenditure of energy that sociopolitical labor demands”⁶⁹—these tendencies do not prevent Stein from using her literary prose to meditate on politicized topics. To the credit of critics who seek to interpret Stein’s work within a feminist context, consistent across Stein’s essays and her self-proclaimed literary masterpiece is an awareness of the existence of patriarchy—the “male code” that dictates the daily lives of both men and women (“DW” 413)—coupled with an acceptance of the doctrine of psychophysical uniqueness that inherently disputes gender essentialism. We have every reason to believe that Stein’s zeal for using literary

⁶⁸ Wanda Van Dusen, “Portrait of a National Fetish: Gertrude Stein’s ‘Introduction to the Speeches of Marichal Pitain’ (1942),” *Modernism/Modernity* 3, no. 3 (1996): 70.

⁶⁹ Whittier-Ferguson, “Stein in Time,” 118.

composition to tease out psychological theories is at least partially informed by a concomitant desire to examine sociopolitical concepts like sexual difference from a psycho-physiological perspective. Stein, in this way and as ever, remains something of an enigma, a writer whose works, while eschewing polemics, may nevertheless be situated within the context of early twentieth-century feminist discourse.

CHANGING THIS UNALTERABLE NATURE: VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE EVOLUTION OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

On May 29, 1938, days prior to the publication of Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas*, London's *Sunday Referee* newspaper announced the new book in an article capped with the agitated headline, "WOMAN STARTS NEW SEX-WAR."¹ A radical screed against the twinned evils of fascism and patriarchy "much more formidable and savage" than *A Room of One's Own*,² *Three Guineas* was foreordained to receive such impassioned responses. In her diary, Woolf reports feeling unruffled by reactions like the *Referee*'s. Instead, she confesses to "hav[ing] a sense of quiet & relief." She is satisfied to at last be at "the end of six years floundering, striving, much agony, some ecstasy: lumping the Years & 3 Gs together as one book—as indeed they are."³ *The Years*, a historical novel set between 1880 and the "Present Day," had been published the year before. Woolf originally intended for the two texts to be a single work, an experimental "novel-essay" preliminarily titled *The Pargiters*, which would be a "summing up of all I know, feel, laugh at, despise, like, admire hate & so on" pertaining to "history, politics,

¹ "WOMAN STARTS NEW SEX WAR/Says Men's Clothes are 'Barbarous,' *Sunday Referee*, May 29, 1938.

² Jane Marcus, introduction to *Three Guineas*, by Virginia Woolf (1938; repr., Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), xlv.

³ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume 5: 1936–1941*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), 148.

feminism, art, literature.”⁴ Her diary entry communicates clearly that although *Three Guineas* and *The Years* ultimately developed into separate books, Woolf continued to think of the two as a single endeavor. Having labored over the project since 1931, she is pleased to have finally seen her vision to its conclusion.

Historically within Woolf studies, *Three Guineas* and *The Years* have been understood as together representing a pivotal moment in the author’s oeuvre. Woolf’s work on these texts signaled the start of her “late period,” the point at which she transitioned from “the modernist 1920s” to “the socially engaged 1930s.”⁵ The shift, for many scholars, was pronounced: as Woolf became “increasingly preoccupied with dissecting the links between patriarchy, patriotism, fascism and war,”⁶ her experimental investigations into the nature of consciousness gave way to explicitly political and more conventionally rendered fare. Although this interpretation of Woolf’s career remains common in the critical literature,⁷ numerous critics now seek to instead moderate this divide, building bridges between what Alex Zwerdling loosely terms Woolf’s “psychological” and “political” fiction. Zwerdling’s *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* was the first major study to dispute the supposed apoliticality of Woolf’s early fiction, and today, a substantive body of literature attests to the fact that, although Woolf undeniably became more overtly vocal about sociopolitical matters in the 1930s, her

⁴ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume 4: 1931–1935*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1982), 152.

⁵ Alice Wood, *Woolf’s Late Cultural Criticism: The Genesis of ‘The Years,’ ‘Three Guineas’ and ‘Between the Acts’* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷ To take one example, *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf* discusses the novels of the 1920s and those of the ’30s in separate chapters. In one chapter, Jane Goldman characterizes the former set of works as commonly aspiring to “an eddying prose capable of expressing the lyric heights of subjective emotional expression.” Goldman, “From *Mrs Dalloway* to *The Waves*: New elegy and lyric experimentalism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, 2nd ed., ed. Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 52. Meanwhile, Julia Briggs contends in the other chapter that issues pertaining to the “rise of fascist politics in the 1930s... take centre stage” in Woolf’s late-period works. Briggs, “The novels of the 1930s and the impact of history,” in Sellers, *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, 76.

interest in issues like pacifism and feminism did not suddenly emerge in that decade but were rather abiding concerns in her life traceable to her earliest prose.⁸ In the introduction to her recent *Virginia Woolf: Ambivalent Activist*, Clara Jones appreciatively notes that “to posit a politically and socially engaged version of Virginia Woolf”—once a novelty—has now “arguably become something of a scholarly commonplace.”⁹

Peculiarly, however, when it comes to challenging the periodization of Woolf’s oeuvre, few scholars have turned in the other direction, to reconsider the implication that once she began work on *Three Guineas* and *The Years*, Woolf ceased engaging with psychological theory. Given Woolf’s famous declaration in 1919 that “For the moderns ‘that,’ the point of interest, lies very likely in the dark places of psychology,”¹⁰ critics widely understand psychological thought to be an inextricable component of Woolf’s literary experimentation, and a wealth of scholarship testifies to the diversity of her influences and interests throughout the 1910s and ’20s. Several critics have explored the ways in which Woolf’s novels from her earlier period engage with the contemporaneous rise of Freudian psychoanalytic theory,¹¹ while others, more relevant to the purposes of

⁸ See Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987); Jane Goldman, *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Merry M. Pawlowski, ed., *Virginia Woolf and Fascism* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jane Garrity, *Step-Daughters of England: British women modernists and the national imaginary* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Naomi Black, *Virginia Woolf as Feminist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Christine Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Evelyn Tsz Yan Chan, *Virginia Woolf and the Professions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Clara Jones, *Virginia Woolf: Ambivalent Activist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

⁹ Jones, *Ambivalent*, 2.

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, “Modern Fiction,” in *The Common Reader* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1925), 156.

¹¹ See for example Elizabeth Abel, *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Rachel Bowlby, *Still Crazy After All These Years: Women, Writing and Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992); Lyndsey Stonebridge, *The Destructive Element: British Psychoanalysis and Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Vara S. Neverow, “Freudian Seduction and the Fallacies of Dictatorship,” in Pawlowski, *Virginia Woolf and Fascism*; Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the*

this study, have attested to how Woolf's literary presentations of selfhood engage with the experimental psychology and empiricist philosophies being advanced by figures like William James, Edmund Husserl, Ernst Mach, William McDougall, and Bertrand Russell. While interpretations vary, critics generally find Woolf drawing on psychological discourses in her works to grapple with the relationship between personal consciousness and broader social collectives.¹² Allen McLaurin, voicing the critical consensus, argues that Woolf's novels in the 1920s employ psychological thought as a means of presenting increasingly skeptical interrogations of the notion of individual selfhood, viewing "*The Waves* [as] her most thoroughgoing attempt to establish a continuity between the individual and group consciousness."¹³

As McLaurin's statement demonstrates, discussions of Woolf's engagement with psychological thought tend to conclude in 1931 with *The Waves*, typically hailed as the culmination of her stylistic and psychological experimentation.¹⁴ Judith Ryan's *The Vanishing Subject* similarly traces a "trajectory from *Jacob's Room* to *The Waves*," reading Woolf's presentation of individual consciousness in relation to the "empiricist

Bloomsbury Avant-Garde; Maud Ellmann, *The Nets of Modernism: Henry James, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Martin Hägglund, *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); and Sanja Bahun, "Woolf and Psychoanalytic Theory," in *Virginia Woolf in Context*, eds. Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹² See Harvena Richter, *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Allen McLaurin, "Consciousness and Group Consciousness in Virginia Woolf," in *Virginia Woolf: A Centenary Perspective*, ed. Eric Warner (New York: Macmillan, 1984); Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Michael Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Craig A. Gordon, *Literary Modernism, Bioscience, and Community in Early Twentieth Century Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2007); and Brook Miller, *Self-Consciousness in Modern British Fiction* (New York: Palgrave, 2013).

¹³ McLaurin, "Consciousness," 38.

¹⁴ Some critics include Woolf's last, posthumously published novel *Between the Acts* (1941) in their analyses of psychological discourse, while still omitting *The Waves* and *Three Guineas* from discussion. McLaurin, for example, acknowledges that although *The Waves* is perhaps Woolf's most successful "attempt[] to express the idea of a group mind," *Between the Acts* is the "culmination of Virginia Woolf's exploration of group consciousness." He makes no mention of the works Woolf published in between. McLaurin, "Consciousness," 36, 38.

atomism” of early twentieth-century psychology. In her conclusion, Ryan notes that in the 1930s, Woolf “began to engage more and more with social questions,” letting this statement serve as the rationale for making *The Waves* her endpoint.¹⁵ Craig A. Gordon likewise lauds *The Waves* as both “the apogee of Woolf’s narrative innovation” and the text that best succeeds in exploring “the relationship between the human nervous system and structures of communal and national identification,” a position broadly shared by Michael Tratner and Brook Miller.¹⁶ Cumulatively, these assessments bolster the longstanding implication that in 1931 Woolf engaged in a sort of ideological quid pro quo, that her heightened attention to sociopolitical interests necessitated relinquishing “the scientific spirit of inquiry with which she would approach her analysis of the self and its reactions.”¹⁷ Little sustained consideration has been given to the proposition that, just as Woolf’s early “psychological” novels were infused with sociopolitical concerns, her turn to more explicitly feminist prose was facilitated and informed by an ongoing interest in psychological thought.

This chapter argues that reading *Three Guineas* and *The Years* in relation to psychological theory—specifically, evolutionary social psychology—illuminates previously overlooked facets of both texts, particularly the forward-looking, utopian dimension of Woolf’s feminist-pacifist stance. Embraced by figures like Julian Huxley, Wilfred Trotter, and William McDougall, evolutionary social psychology regarded human psychological development as “essentially a social process” while employing evolutionary thought to theorize the manner in which individuals and social groups

¹⁵ Ryan, *Vanishing*, 191, 206.

¹⁶ Gordon, *Bioscience*, 20. See also Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics* and Miller, *Self-Consciousness in Modern British Fiction*.

¹⁷ Richter, *Inward*, 9.

engage in reciprocal psycho-physiological modification progressively over time, striving toward what McDougall calls “the higher plane of social conduct.”¹⁸ Drawing out the evolutionary social-psychological contexts to *Three Guineas* and *The Years* allows us to recognize how Woolf utilizes psychological discourse to theorize sexual difference and underwrite her radical sociopolitical program, advanced in both texts but articulated differently in each.

I first examine *Three Guineas* in relation to the evolutionary social-psychological work of Huxley, Trotter, and McDougall, focusing on how Woolf uses their theoretical framework to think about the interrelated problems of patriarchy, fascism, and sexual difference. Far from inciting a “NEW SEX-WAR,” Woolf’s book-length essay pursues a unique variation on this psychological discourse aimed at cultivating a feminist-pacifist utopia, comprising individuals “alter[ed] in the hereditary constitution” to transcend psychological sexual difference.¹⁹ In the second section, turning to *The Years*, I investigate the ways in which Woolf transmutes her political stance—enunciated in a “didactive demonstrative style” in *Three Guineas*—into the “dramatic” mode of her novel.²⁰ Woolf’s historical novel strategically adapts the discursive premises of her essay, advancing a utopian vision that productively extends the stance of *Three Guineas*. Ultimately, recovering the psychological contexts of these works enables us not only to appreciate the ongoing importance of psychological thought to Woolf’s literary project into the 1930s, but also to recognize the crucial role such thought plays in her negotiations with the concepts of sexual difference and social change.

¹⁸ William McDougall, *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Boston: John W. Luce, 1909), 175, 209; hereafter cited in text as *SP*.

¹⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), 221; hereafter cited in text as *TG*.

²⁰ Woolf, *Diary Vol. 4*, 6.

***Three Guineas*, Evolutionary Social Psychology, and Woolf's Feminist Utopia**

Rhetorically speaking, *Three Guineas* presents something of a Trojan horse. The form of the piece lends itself to this characterization: the text comprises a single letter to the male chair of a pacifist society, within which Woolf drafts other, hypothetical pieces of correspondence, resulting in a layered epistolary frame that formalizes the text's thematic interest in embeddedness. Although Woolf initially presents the essay as an attempt to answer the timely question, "How in your opinion are we to prevent war?" (*TG* 5), the text gradually reveals itself to be more centrally concerned with eliminating patriarchy. Woolf makes the case that the public scourges of war and fascism are surface manifestations of the private scourge of an inherently poisonous patriarchal system. The concept of hierarchy itself—taken to its most destructive extremes in fascist dictatorships, but entrenched no less nefariously in institutions like universities, professions, and the church—derives from the most fundamental societal division of all, the hierarchical dominion of men over women. To desire a permanent solution to the problem of war, Woolf insists, is to desire the permanent dissolution of patriarchy, for "the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected," and "the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other" (168).

One aspect of the text liable to surprise first-time readers is that, in the third chapter of *Three Guineas*, Woolf irritably calls for expunging the word *feminist* from the English language. "Feminist," she complains, is "a vicious and corrupt word that has done much harm in its day and is now obsolete." She continues:

The word, according to the dictionary, means 'one who champions the rights of women.' Since the only right, the right to earn a living, has been won, the word no longer has a meaning. And a word without a meaning is a dead word, a corrupt

word. ... The word 'feminist' is destroyed; the air is cleared; and in that clearer air what do we see? Men and women working together for the same cause. ... [Feminists] were fighting the tyranny of the patriarchal state as [pacifists] are fighting the tyranny of the Fascist state. Thus we are merely carrying on the same fight that our mothers and grandmothers fought. (120–1)

Renouncing the label of “feminism,” in other words, proves to be a rhetorical strategy that clarifies the aim of Woolf’s essay, which is to explicate the wide-ranging damage wrought by patriarchy on *all* members and levels of society. Quoting Josephine Butler, Woolf explains that her cause is not to promote “women’s rights only” but rather “the rights of all” (121). In this way, as Naomi Black attests, Woolf does not “so much reject as reach beyond a certain narrow definition of feminism.”²¹ Even if Woolf disclaims her restricted definition of “feminist,” the ideological project of *Three Guineas* is nevertheless obviously feminist in the more expansive sense assumed by most readers and critics: the text focuses on denouncing the repercussions of patriarchy, exploring the issue of sexual difference, and calling for a non-patriarchal order. Black argues that when discussing *Three Guineas*, “we need not accept Woolf’s own more constraining definitions of the term, nor her insistence that she and others were not feminists because they hoped to serve not just women, but all of humanity.”²²

Critics, myself included, more or less unanimously share Black’s willingness to characterize *Three Guineas* as a feminist work; many even freely discuss the feminism of the text without any reference to Woolf’s comments on the label. Yet Woolf’s stated hostility to the word “feminist” is instructive, signaling the depth and subtlety of her thought regarding the relationship between the biological category of “woman” and how

²¹ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 24.

²² *Ibid.*, 49.

that category was and is socially articulated. Indeed, her nuanced interrogations of this topic comprise the rhetorical backbone of *Three Guineas*.

At the start of *Three Guineas*, addressing the question posed by an unnamed male correspondent—"How in your opinion are we to prevent war?"—Woolf initially problematizes his use of the word "we." Noting the societal barriers that have historically prevented women from attaining the educational opportunities, professional stature, and personal wealth available to men, Woolf insists that the category of "we" must be divided by sex. She argues that "'we'—meaning by 'we' a whole made up of body, brain, and spirit, influenced by memory and tradition—must still differ in some essential respects from 'you,' whose body, brain and spirit have been so differently trained and are so differently influenced by memory and tradition" (22). As a result of the conditioning of systemic patriarchy, Woolf attests, women's status and perspective profoundly differ from those of men. This proposition, a familiar one within equality-feminist discourse, is typically accompanied by a demand for reformed conditions that would liberate women and erase the psychological difference associated with sex. (Recall, for example, Rebecca West's endorsement of "riotous living" or Stein's appeal for women's access to college educations.) Crucially, however, the particular aims of Woolf's essay complicate her thinking on this matter: she wishes not only to alleviate women's oppression but also to promote peace. As such, she reasons that while helping women "join that procession... of educated men" (76) may resolve the problem of inequality, it would do nothing to prevent war. It is "obvious," Woolf writes, "that if [women] are going to make the same incomes" and receive the same educations as men, then women "will have to accept the

same conditions that they accept” (85), thus becoming complicit in patriarchy’s intrinsic ills. Women would, like men, “[lose] sight, and sound, and sense of proportion” (88).

On this logical basis, Woolf instead proposes her famous “Society of Outsiders,” a social agenda that “has the same ends as [the pacifist] society” but which “seeks to achieve them by the means that a different sex, a different tradition, a different education, and the different values which result from those differences have placed within our reach” (134). Necessarily a society of women, the Outsiders’ Society will “experiment not with public means in public but with private means in private” (134), cultivating women’s unique contributions, most notably their capacity for indifference and objectivity. The activities she outlines for outsiders are specific and sensible, founded on an ethos of abstention: a woman in the Outsiders’ Society “will bind herself to take no share in patriotic demonstrations; to assent to no form of national self-praise; to make no part of any clique or audience that encourages war” (129). Outsiders working within the professions will “reveal any instance of tyranny or abuse” and will refuse competition, working instead “in the interests of research and for the love of the work itself” (132–3). Outsiders should endeavor to boycott the institutions of men. “By making their absence felt” at places like the church, Woolf reasons, “their presence becomes desirable,” resulting in institutional reformation (141). In this way, per the correspondent’s request, the methods of the Outsiders’ Society may undermine the societal mechanisms that give rise to war.

Scholars studying *Three Guineas* in relation to Woolf’s ideology of sex and gender tend to home in on the description of the Society of Outsiders as the focus of their analyses. Parsing the attributes and goals of the society, critics take Woolf’s essay as a

whole to be championing a form of gender constructivism, advancing a stance that eschews essentialism while still upholding the notion of sexual difference. Yael Feldman, for example, argues that “Woolf did not see female difference as a stable, inherent *nature*, but rather as an acquired feature, a *construct*—what contemporary theory has labeled *gender*—the result of socialization.”²³ When it comes to addressing the twinned evils of patriarchy and fascism, Feldman contends that Woolf is motivated by “a perceptive *non-essentialist* intuition. Unlike maternalist feminism, she is not at all sure that the female/maternal instinct, supposedly sex-specific, will withstand the pressure of socialization in the world of masculine aggression.” This prompts Woolf to invoke a “license to differ” and advocate for women’s abstention from male society.²⁴ Naomi Black likewise frames Woolf’s stance as a non-essentialist revision of contemporary maternalism. Calling Woolf a “social feminist” rather than an “equality feminist,” she compares Woolf’s rhetoric in *Three Guineas* to the protectionist stance of Britain’s New Feminists: in both cases, she argues, women are encouraged to “avoid being assimilated into the masculine version of society” and instead focus on constructing an alternative social order built “on their qualities as women.”²⁵ For these critics, *Three Guineas* valorizes a gender-separatist program inspired by Woolf’s perception that women’s difference, though “historically produced” by patriarchy,²⁶ is an asset deserving of protection and enhancement. The formation of the Outsiders’ Society is “a psychologically defensive move” disguised as a “subversive act.”²⁷

²³ Yael S. Feldman, “From Essentialism to Constructivism?: The Gender of Peace and War—Gilman, Woolf, Freud,” *Partial Answers* 2, no. 1 (2004): 134.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

²⁵ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 10, 46.

²⁶ Marie-Luise Gätgens, “*Three Guineas*, Fascism, and the Construction of Gender,” in Pawlowski, *Virginia Woolf and Fascism*, 33.

²⁷ Feldman, “Essentialism,” 138.

This consensus reading of *Three Guineas*' approach to sexual difference depends on two premises, each worth reexamining. First is the default presumption that the Society of Outsiders serves as the climax of Woolf's ideological project, a presumption that prompts critics to neglect the essay's crucial final section. Second is the proposition that Woolf clearly rejects essentialism,²⁸ when there is compelling evidence to suggest that Woolf in fact sidesteps both essentialism and constructivism, positing instead a fundamentally porous relationship between "innate" and "accidental" traits (*TG* 9). Reframing the critical conversation on these two points reveals the role of evolutionary social psychology in *Three Guineas*, drawing our attention to how Woolf utilizes this discourse as a means of developing the text's ultimate feminist-pacifist stance.

Woolf devotes the majority of her essay to a detailed explication of the damage wrought by patriarchy's divisiveness. Early in the text, she condemns patriarchal institutions for requiring people "to segregate and specialize." Instead, she avers, humans should be encouraged "to combine," "to co-operate," and to discover "what new combinations make good wholes in human life" (43). Woolf regards the division of public and private spheres, a split created and sustained by patriarchal practices, as inherently insidious:

Behind us lies... the private house, with its nullity, its immorality, its hypocrisy, its servility. Before us lies the public world, the professional system, with its possessiveness, its jealousy, its pugnacity, its greed. The one shuts us up like slaves in a harem; the other forces us to circle, like caterpillars head to tail, round and round the mulberry tree, the sacred tree, of property. It is a choice of evils. Each is bad. (90)

²⁸ Rachel Bowlby has observed that critical interpretations of Woolf's feminism typically correspond to the school of feminist thought embraced by the critic: "the question of identifying the real nature of Woolf gets bound up with identifying the real nature of women, or literature, or feminism, or feminist literature." As interpretations of Woolf as a proponent of gender constructivism in *Three Guineas* flourished in tandem with the popularity of gender constructivism in contemporary feminist theory, these interpretations strike me as susceptible to Bowlby's critique. Rachel Bowlby, *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 13.

Given this conundrum, throughout *Three Guineas*, Woolf reiterates that the only lasting solution—to the problems of fascism, war, competitiveness—is the utter obliteration of patriarchy in all its forms. All, she insists, must be “burn[ed]... to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies” (45). In Christine Froula’s estimation, Woolf’s essay calls for the “dismantl[ing of] not just the gender barrier but the social and national barriers on which fascism, Nazism, xenophobic nationalism, and war depend.”²⁹ Against this standard, the Society of Outsiders is a puzzlingly inadequate offering. If outsiders are to “experiment not with public means in public but with private means in private” (134), then the Outsiders’ Society is implicitly premised on acquiescence, rather than resistance, to the division of public and private spheres. Likewise, by advocating for the creation of a separatist society, Woolf seemingly concedes to the “necessity for two worlds” divided by sex, a concept which the essay denounces as characteristic of fascist dictatorships (214n31). The activities of the Outsiders’ Society are admirably practical—indeed, Woolf insists that they are already being enacted in “private and submerged experiments of which there is no public proof” (141)—yet they are also passive. Loretta Stec states the case aptly when she attests that Woolf’s program is “limited by the ‘actual facts in the actual world’ for which she had to account.”³⁰ It is difficult, Stec acknowledges, to reconcile Woolf’s blistering invective against the existential threat posed by patriarchy with the meager plan of action offered by the Society of Outsiders.

In fact, Woolf herself recognized the deficiencies of the Outsiders’ Society.

Following the description of the Society’s program, *Three Guineas* continues for another

²⁹ Froula, *Bloomsbury*, 265.

³⁰ Loretta Stec, “Dystopian Modernism vs Utopian Feminism: Burdekin, Woolf, and West Respond to the Rise of Fascism,” in Pawlowski, *Virginia Woolf and Fascism*, 189.

thirty pages, and in this much-neglected final section, Woolf reaches beyond the Society's limited aspirations and focuses on the radical aim of achieving "private... [and] public freedom" (142), of realizing "the dream of peace" (169). The contents of this final section are sometimes taken to be part of the program for the Society of Outsiders, yet Woolf explicitly draws a distinction. Addressing her correspondent at the essay's end, she observes apologetically, "you have not asked us to dream. You have not asked us what peace is; you have asked us how to prevent war," a request that requires "fix[ing] our eyes upon... the fact" (169). The Outsiders' Society is a program proposed "in light of the facts" (102). It is "no visionary sketch" (141), but rather a stopgap measure, an immediate and practicable response to "the sound of the guns in your ears" (169). Yet Woolf nevertheless allows herself to dream; in the final section, she pivots away from her practical program and turns her attention to the more speculative prospect of peace.

The problem with the Outsiders' Society, Woolf explains by way of transition, is that it is limited by its requirement of secrecy: "[O]utsiders, even when there is no question of financial dependence, may still be afraid to speak freely or to experiment openly" (151). Peace—that theoretical condition in which war is not merely deferred but made impossible—requires the eradication of fear. In peace, one may "speak freely as free people should" (148). Tasking herself with the "analysis of that fear and of the anger which causes that fear" (153), Woolf argues that "fear" and "anger" are in fact alternate names for the divisions of sexual difference. Fear is "womanhood... whose sex made it her sacred duty to sacrifice herself" (159), while anger is "manhood" whose "deeply rooted" desire to retain power gives rise to "the utmost violence" (164). Peace therefore depends, Woolf posits, on overcoming sexual difference itself, on the obliteration of

womanhood and manhood. We must “kill the woman” (159), she insists, and “change this unalterable nature” (166), or else conditions will remain “the same today as they were 2,000 years ago” (167). In contrast to the measured language that characterizes the Outsiders’ Society, Woolf’s rhetoric soars as she imagines the erasure of sex and the emergence of a common “human figure” unimpeded by the burdens of patriarchy. This figure, she believes, is realizable through concerted effort: “By our thoughts and actions [we] can ourselves change that figure. A common interest unites us” (168). Drawing her essay to a close, Woolf describes the “dream of peace”: it is “a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only,” the capacity “to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity,” the “recurring dream that has haunted the human mind since the beginning of time... the dream of freedom” (169).

The rhetorical arc of Woolf’s argument therefore culminates not, as has been supposed, with the Society of Outsiders and its “very circumscribed” ambitions,³¹ but rather with a lyrically rendered vision of peace—a vision that embraces unity rather than separatism, and whose utopian ambition is in proportion to the hideous ills of patriarchy. I will return to the significance of this structural reorientation later on. For now, let us move on to the text’s theorization of sex and gender, and to the consensus claim that Woolf “is careful not to essentialize” women and men’s differences and instead embraces gender constructivism.³²

Woolf first takes up the concept of sex-specific psychological traits early in *Three Guineas*, in a discussion of the motivations that prompt men to go to war. “[T]hough many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes,” she posits, “to fight has

³¹ Stec, “Dystopian,” 188.

³² Ibid.

always been the man's habit, not the woman's. Law and practice have developed that difference, whether innate or accidental" (9). While Woolf's assertion—that in contemporary society, fighting is a trait exhibited only by men—is simple and clear, when it comes to the discourses of sexual difference, her language is strikingly equivocal. Woolf describes fighting as both an "instinct," which is by definition an inherent quality, and a "habit," which is by definition an acquired quality.³³ She then doubles down on the ambiguity, explicitly leaving open the question of whether the gendered trait is "innate or accidental." Over one hundred pages later, Woolf returns to this same issue, only to repeat her noncommittal language. "Fighting," she reiterates, "is a sex characteristic which she cannot share, the counterpart some claim of the maternal instinct which he cannot share, so is it an instinct which she cannot judge" (127). Here, in accepting the reality of psychological "sex characteristic[s]" inaccessible to the opposite sex, Woolf makes what appears to be a decisively essentialist declaration. Yet the next sentence immediately contradicts this presumption. The fighting instinct, she adds, is "as foreign to [women] as centuries of tradition and education can make it" (127), a statement that denies the innateness of sex characteristics by framing them as socialized products. Along similar lines, Woolf asserts early in *Three Guineas* that "it seems plain that [men and women] cannot understand each other because of these differences. It seems plain that we think differently according as we are born differently" (12–3). The uncertain connotation of *born* again obscures Woolf's stance: The phrase "we are born differently"

³³ The *OED* provides two non-obsolete definitions for *instinct*, both of which use the word "innate": "Innate impulse; natural or spontaneous tendency or inclination," or "An innate propensity in organized beings... manifesting itself in acts which appear to be rational." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "instinct, *n.*," www.oed.com (accessed June 15, 2017). The definitions for *habit* are conversely characterized by acquisition: "A settled disposition or tendency to act in a certain way, esp. one acquired by frequent repetition of the same act," or "Custom, usage, use, wont." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "habit, *n.*," www.oed.com (accessed June 15, 2017).

may imply that sexual difference is biologically inborn, or that men and women are born into systemically disparate circumstances.

As the foregoing examples suggest, over the course of *Three Guineas*, Woolf's implication that gendered traits are simultaneously inherent and conditioned becomes its own discursive pattern. Woolf frames psychological differences between men and women as a matter of "influence[]" and "train[ing]," only to assert in the very same sentence that women "must still differ in some essential respects" from men (22). She proposes that we may accept that women are "able to take a more purely disinterested view of culture than their brothers, without for a moment claiming... that they are by nature more disinterested" (119), only to declare pages later that women's capacity for "indifference" is a "fundamental and instinctive distinction" between the sexes (127). Collectively, these assertions disrupt the widely held assumption that Woolf plainly rejects gender essentialism. The reality is more unexpected: Woolf advances a discourse that *denies the contradiction* between nature and nurture, the innate and the acquired.

Three Guineas' endnotes help to explicate this peculiar discursive pattern. As Black attests, the endnotes in *Three Guineas* "do more than provide sources and examples," although they do serve this traditional function; they are "often lengthy and substantial enough to be considered short essays" that meaningfully expand on Woolf's points in the main text.³⁴ Importantly, in three discursive endnotes, Woolf discloses that her ambivalent language regarding sexual difference emerges out of a model of psychology informed by genetics and evolutionary theory.

In one note, expanding on the main-text assertion that men and women "differ enormously" in terms of their access to education and property (22), Woolf laments that

³⁴ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 136–7.

she cannot back up this claim with empirical data: “there are no figures available with which to check facts that must have a very important bearing upon the biology and psychology of the sexes” (176n15). She yearns for data which might account for “the number of sheep and cattle consumed by each sex,” as well as “their physical exercises; domestic employments; facilities for sexual intercourse, etc.” Woolf concludes the endnote by stating, “It must be left to the scientist of the future to tell us what effect drink and property have had upon the chromosomes” (177n15). In another note, pondering the psychological differences between women and men, Woolf consults the work of evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley.³⁵ Quoting Huxley, she asserts that “from the moment of fertilization onwards, man and woman differ in every cell of their body in regard to the number of their chromosomes,” which are “the bearers of heredity, the determiners of our characters and qualities” (219n42). Based on the genetic reality, Woolf muses, it seems “clear that the sexes now differ and will always differ” (219n42), a notion she revisits in the text’s penultimate endnote. In this third endnote, Woolf returns to the idea that psychological differences between men and women are genetically encoded. This time, however, she considers the possibility of genetic alteration:

³⁵ In *Three Guineas*, Woolf engages in a broad critique of “Science,” arguing that the scientific profession (including psychology) has, like all professions, been poisoned by patriarchy. She criticizes scientists for perverting findings to support their beliefs: To “excuse and conceal” sexism, “Nature was called in; Nature it was claimed who is not only omniscient but unchanging, had made the brain of women of the wrong shape or size... Science, it would seem is not sexless; she is a man, a father, and infected too” (165). Yet Woolf also heavily relies on scientific figures, methods, and principles to substantiate her points. As Holly Henry attests, “It was not science in general, but science rallied in support of aggression, that Woolf wished to expose and resist.” Woolf plainly distinguishes in the text between what she considers corrupted science—including the pseudoscience of psychosexuality cited by Professor Grensted, which she scornfully rejects—and the valid, indifferent science practiced by people like Huxley. Henry, *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science: The Aesthetics of Astronomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 155. See also Christina Alt, *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and Elizabeth G. Lambert, “‘And Darwin Says They Are Nearer the Cow’: Evolutionary Discourse in *Melambrosia* and *The Voyage Out*,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 37, no. 1 (1991): 1–21, the latter of which makes similar claims about Woolf’s employment of evolutionary-biological discourse in her earliest works.

Professor Huxley... warns us that “any considerable alteration of the hereditary constitution is an affair of millennia, not of decades.” On the other hand, as science also assures us that our life on earth is “an affair of millennia, not of decades,” some alteration in the hereditary constitution may be worth attempting. (221n48)

In light of these endnotes, Woolf’s equivocations regarding sexual difference in the main text are made comprehensible. Hereditary science offers Woolf a framework through which sex-specific traits may be understood as simultaneously innate *and* acquired. In speculating that “drink and property” may modify chromosomal structures and that “alteration[s]” may be made “in the hereditary constitution,” Woolf positions genetic material as a durable yet mutable medium through which human traits may be biologically codified or erased across time. Within such a framework, the concept of essentialism itself loses some of its deterministic sting: that which is presently innate within human psycho-physiology—including differences associated with sex—may in fact have been produced by “centuries of tradition and education” (22) and may likewise be open to future modification.³⁶

By bringing the chromosomal basis of human character to bear on the societal problem of patriarchy, moreover, Woolf aligns herself rather explicitly with a particular branch of psychological theory: the evolutionary social psychology³⁷ being advanced in

³⁶ This aspect of Woolf’s discourse may be regarded as a variation on what Kimberly A Hamlin calls “Darwinian feminism.” Hamlin writes that “Nineteenth-century Darwinian feminists” drew on Darwin’s theories to “reimagine their bodies and their role in reproduction” in evolutionary terms. She posits Darwinian feminism as an American phenomenon that faded at the turn of the century. *Three Guineas* productively complicates this assumption, as Woolf offers an example of a British writer continuing to utilize evolutionary (if not purely Darwinian) discourses in the service of feminist ends. Hamlin, *From Eve to Evolution: Darwin, Science, and Women’s Rights in Gilded Age America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014), 16–17. Woolf’s incorporation of evolutionary discourse into her aesthetic strategies and ideological stance may also be framed as an embryonic iteration of today’s evolutionary literary theory, which is similarly interested bringing Darwinian thought to bear on human sociocultural and artistic activities. See for example Brian Boyd, *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009) and Nancy Easterlin, *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

³⁷ I employ the term “evolutionary social psychology” as the most parsimonious way to describe the

the 1920s and '30s by not only Huxley but also William McDougall and Wilfred Trotter. Grandson of T.H. Huxley ("Darwin's Bulldog") and brother to Aldous, Julian Huxley was a prominent evolutionary biologist and a leading proponent of the modern evolutionary synthesis, which bridged the gap between Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection and the biological mechanisms of Mendelian genetics. Though Huxley professed to be a thoroughgoing materialist, his theoretical writings were informed by a fundamental humanism. He embraced a doctrine of biological progress—the theory that evolution yields progressively independent, complex, and finely organized species—and argued on biological grounds that the human evolutionary process differs from that of "lower" organisms. As he contends in his 1923 collection, *Essays of a Biologist*, "the type of mind which has been evolved in man is much more plastic—a much more elastic and flexible mechanism than any tool previously evolved by life for handling the problems of existence."³⁸ He elsewhere calls the emergence of the human brain a "critical point" in evolutionary history, "after which the properties of the evolving material underwent radical change."³⁹ While the evolution of nonhuman organisms is dictated solely by "blind natural selection," Huxley proposed that the complex neurological structure of humans has enabled a second and simultaneous "mode of inheritance" unique to humanity, which he terms "tradition-inheritance" or "experience-inheritance" (*EB* 44).

common tenets embraced by Trotter, McDougall, and Huxley, despite the fact that it does not derive from any modern-era scientific publication. It was not until the 1990s that "evolutionary social psychology" emerged in academic discourse as a discrete term used to describe the rigorous investigation of the intersections between evolutionary principles and social-psychological research. See for example Jeffrey A. Simpson and Douglas T. Kenrick, *Evolutionary Social Psychology* (New York: Psychology Press, 1997).

³⁸ Julian Huxley, *Essays of a Biologist* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923), 44; hereafter cited in text as *EB*.

³⁹ Julian Huxley, introduction to *The Phenomenon of Man*, by Pierre Tielhard De Chardin (New York: Harper, 1959), 11.

“Tradition-inheritance” refers to the singular capacity of humans to form communities that “transmit[] its peculiarities to later ages by means of tradition” (44).

Huxley denies that tradition-inheritance is a form of neo-Lamarckism—i.e., the “soft inheritance” theory that an organism can pass on traits acquired during its lifetime. Yet he admits that the end result is effectively the same:

By means of tradition-inheritance, man is virtually enabled to “inherit acquired characters”; ... Finally, it is possible, as is being increasingly realized, thus to accumulate experience relating to the alteration of biological inheritance, and so eventually *to substitute conscious purpose for blind natural selection in man’s future evolution.* (EB 80–1, my italics)

In other words, as humans genetically evolve, they do so in the context of social communities that function as “a special environment, made by man for man’s own development” (86) and endow humans with unprecedented control over their evolutionary path.⁴⁰ Although characteristics acquired in life cannot be passed down by direct genetic inheritance, societies enable humans to dictate the environmental conditions within which natural selection operates and thus indirectly guide evolution. In Huxley’s view, given the extraordinary evolutionary opportunities, tradition-inheritance should become the basis for all societal reform: “Biologically speaking,” he writes, “it is perfectly clear that some co-operative system, involving federation in one form or another, is the proper system to adopt... the ‘world-state’ is not merely a figment of unpractical dreamers, but an obviously desirable aim for humanity” (95).

⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly, Huxley embraced eugenics, serving terms as Vice President and President of the British Eugenics Society, though his approach to the field was considered and nuanced compared to many of his contemporaries. Donald J. Childs observes that though Huxley was a proponent of both positive and negative eugenics, he was also “aware of the dangerous prejudices in mainline eugenics” and denounced racist and classist eugenic programs. Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7. Huxley, for example, warned fellow eugenicists against “mistaking for our eugenic ideal a mere glorification of our prejudices,” asserting that “It is not eugenics but nationalist and imperialist politics if we speak in such terms as subject races or miscegenation.” Julian Huxley, “Eugenics and Society,” *Eugenics Review* 28, no. 1 (1936): 30.

In endorsing “some co-operative system” to facilitate the emergence of a progressively evolved humanity, Huxley incorporates into his evolutionary model the social-psychological theories of William McDougall and Wilfred Trotter, both cited in Huxley’s essay collection.⁴¹ Discussions of social-psychological concepts within modernist studies often focus on the mass psychology outlined in Gustave Le Bon’s 1895 study *The Crowd*, which used a depth-psychological model to argue that unconscious motives drive the behavior of large groups of people. Yet historians of psychology attest that England’s interwar period saw Le Bon’s theories challenged or even overshadowed by the “enormous vogue” of McDougall and Trotter, whose work sought biological explanations for social behavior grounded in Darwinian thought.⁴² In McDougall’s 1908 textbook *Introduction to Social Psychology*—a text so popular it went through twenty-one reprints in twenty years—he posits the existence of a universal “gregarious instinct,” which prompts human organisms to have “uneasiness in isolation and satisfaction in being one of a herd,” leading to the formation of organized societies (84). Trotter, in his 1916 study *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, similarly attributes social behavior to an innate “gregariousness” in mammals.⁴³ For both McDougall and Trotter, this gregarious instinct (in Trotter’s parlance, “herd instinct” [42]) revolutionizes theories of psychological development, refuting the notion that individual psychology is a “pure” phenomenon. As McDougall insists, psychological development is “essentially a social

⁴¹ Woolf herself was also familiar with all three researchers. She directly cites Huxley in *Three Guineas* and dined with him socially in 1936. See Edward Bishop, *A Virginia Woolf Chronology* (London: Macmillan, 1989). We know from her diary that by 1917 Woolf had read *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*. While it is not certain that Woolf read McDougall, his *Introduction to Social Psychology* was a hugely popular text in British psychology; a number of scholars, including Michael Tratner, Craig A. Gordon, and Rachel Crossland, have attested that Woolf’s discourse was influenced by his writing.

⁴² L.S. Hearnshaw, *A Short History of British Psychology, 1840–1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986), 234.

⁴³ Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1921); hereafter cited in text as *IH*.

process... dependent throughout upon the complex interactions between the individual and the organised society to which he belongs” (175). Both texts also explicitly describe human psychology in evolutionary terms: Trotter attributes gregariousness to “the influence of natural selection” (103), while McDougall specifies that the gregarious instinct is a product of the evolutionary development of the human brain and nervous system (88).⁴⁴

Like Huxley, McDougall and Trotter offer a dynamic vision of human psychology and social behavior. They insist that an individual’s psychological tendencies and larger societal formations are mutually susceptible to change via the process of ongoing reciprocal modification. “[G]iven the native propensities and capacities of the individual human mind,” McDougall affirms, “all the complex mental life of societies is shaped by them and in turn reacts upon the course of their development and operation in the individual” (18). Accordingly, both McDougall and Trotter ponder the concept of social-psychological perfectibility, the hypothetical process by which the individual-social feedback loop may be manipulated to cultivate a maximally cooperative and fulfilling society—or, in McDougall’s words, an optimally “complex and cultured society” (221) that fosters “the highest plane of conduct” in individuals (227). Trotter argues that the herd instinct compels humans to strive for a society characterized by “an integrative tendency... a common life and common purpose” (251). At the same time, such a society will not be realizable unless humanity coordinates to enact a program of conscious intervention that he terms “rational statecraft” (251). Like Huxley’s “co-operative

⁴⁴ For the sake of brevity, I emphasize the points of continuity in McDougall’s and Trotter’s thought. Sustained comparative analyses of their work have revealed theoretical and methodological differences which are not relevant for my purposes but would be significant to any historian of social psychology. See for example John F. Laffey, “Social Psychology and Political Ideology: The Case of Wilfred Trotter and William McDougall,” *Historical Reflections* 12, no. 3 (1985): 375–402.

system,” McDougall’s “highest plane of social conduct” and Trotter’s “rational statecraft” stem from the notion that humanity’s evolved capacity for forming an enduring civilization doubles as a unique opportunity by which humans can direct their evolutionary future, both biological and social. Huxley, McDougall, and Trotter all endorse an evolutionary social-psychological program, one concerned less with individuals than the broader process by which humans reciprocally determine and are determined by their social communities. Their texts imagine the possibility of intervening in that process to perfect, gradually and in accordance with evolution by natural selection, the social-psychological dynamic.

Reading *Three Guineas* in relation to the broader discourses of evolutionary social psychology transforms our understanding of Woolf’s sociopolitical project, particularly when it comes to her final meditation on the “dream of peace.” Throughout her essay, Woolf collapses the boundary between inherent and conditioned sex-based psychological traits in a manner consistent with Huxley’s evolutionary-biological approach. Having acknowledged the limitations of offered the Society of Outsiders, Woolf’s rhetorical project requires that she pursue a longer-term solution to the problems of war, patriarchy, and sexual difference. In a feminist adaptation of evolutionary social-psychological thought, Woolf’s final section in *Three Guineas* posits social-psychological perfectibility as the mechanism through which an enduring utopian order may be realized.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Notably, Donald J. Childs situates similar literary projects in the context of eugenics; he describes Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, for example, as offering a “literary version of eugenical logic” analogous to the feminist version of evolutionary logic I discern in *Three Guineas*. I eschew framing my analysis in eugenicist terms because I find *Three Guineas* and *The Years* less concerned with eugenical concepts like degeneracy or sexual selection and more concerned with extending the specific propositions of McDougall and Trotter’s social psychology. Still, Childs is right to highlight the ethically fraught nature of this engagement, and his study offers a relevant and valuable examination of topics that are beyond the scope of

A note on my use of the term *utopian*: critics are prone to casually referring to the utopian nature of *Three Guineas*—or (mis)characterizing the Outsiders’ Society as a utopia—without a sustained investigation of the appropriateness of this label.⁴⁶ While utopian writing was once thought to be anathema to a modernist literary tradition more famous for its representations of apocalypse, utopian studies scholars have recently revised this presumption. Nathan Waddell and Benjamin Kohlmann, for example, have identified a distinctive strand of modernist utopian writing that is self-ironizing and skeptical, with modern writers inscribing critiques of utopian thinking even as they indulge in it.⁴⁷ Woolf’s discourse in *Three Guineas*, meanwhile, aligns with what scholars have termed feminist utopianism.⁴⁸ Feminist utopian writing focuses on “exposing and undoing injustices experienced by women and subalterns in patriarchy,”⁴⁹ engaging in what Frances Bartkowiak calls “the rhetoric of utopian speculation.”⁵⁰ In contrast to both ironic, modern utopias and the static, classic utopias exemplified by Thomas More, feminist utopianism “embraces a view of human nature as malleable and social rather than determined, fallen and individualist,” favoring “a gradualist approach to

my own project. Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics*, 58. See also Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴⁶ For example, Susan Stanford Friedman has described *Three Guineas* as expressing “a utopian longing for a peaceful world citizenship.” Friedman, “Wartime Cosmopolitanism: Cosmofeminism in Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas* and Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis*,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 32, no. 1 (2013): 23–4. Jane Marcus has similarly admired the text’s “political anger and utopian idealism.” Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 135. In neither analysis is utopia mentioned again. Only Loretta Stec has offered a sustained consideration of *Three Guineas* in relation to utopia: she argues that *Three Guineas* offers fleeting “utopian moments” which invite readers to “imagine another way to arrange our social relations,” without advancing a particular utopian vision. Stec, “Dystopian,” 188–9.

⁴⁷ See Nathan Waddell, *Modernist Nowheres: Politics and Utopia in Early Modernist Writing, 1900–1920* (New York: Palgrave, 2012) and Benjamin Kohlmann and Rosalyn Gregory, eds., *Utopian Spaces of Modernism: British Literature and Culture, 1885–1945* (New York: Palgrave, 2012).

⁴⁸ See Frances Bartkowiak, *Feminist Utopias* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Lucy Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (London: Routledge, 2002); and Alessa Johns, *Women’s Utopias of the Eighteenth Century* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

⁴⁹ Alessa Johns, “Feminism and Utopianism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 178.

⁵⁰ Bartkowiak, *Feminist Utopias*, 5.

change, a cumulative approach to history and a shared approach to power.”⁵¹ Eschewing catastrophic “revolutionary shifts,” feminist utopias offer a process-oriented and distributed vision of change grounded in progressive psychological and behavioral modification. According to Alessa Johns, women writing in this mode advance the proposition that, given a sustained effort by enough people on a sufficiently long timeline, “people will evolve into utopian subjects.”⁵² While Johns employs the term *evolve* casually, connoting a general gradualist progression, Woolf in *Three Guineas* pursues a more literal understanding of this premise, derived from evolutionary social-psychological thought.

In the final section of *Three Guineas*, Woolf positions sexual difference—the categories of *manhood* and *womanhood*, forged and sustained by men’s anger and women’s fear—as the root of patriarchy. In the parlance of utopian studies, sexual difference is the foundational scourge that must be exposed and undone to make peace possible. Although sexual difference is so “deeply rooted” as to be biologically inscribed (*TG* 164), Woolf nevertheless insists that it is surmountable: “[A]re not brain and body affected by training?” she asks. “Does not the wild rabbit differ from the rabbit in the hutch? And must we not, and do we not change this unalterable nature? By setting a match to a fire frost is defied; Nature’s decree of death is postponed” (166). In comparing the differences between men and women to the differences between “the wild rabbit” and “the rabbit in the hutch,” Woolf alludes to the evolutionary-biological premise, epitomized by Darwin’s finches, that organisms will evolve to adapt to the specificities of their environment. Strikingly, Woolf asserts not only that “this unalterable nature” *must*

⁵¹ Johns, “Feminism,” 178.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 186, 183.

be changed, but that it *already has*, a proposition that more specifically invokes the evolutionary social-psychological premise that humans can and do exert a degree of control over their evolutionary path.

While Woolf declines to explicitly detail the procedure by which “people will evolve into utopian subjects” free of sexual difference,⁵³ the process is implicitly registered in her language at the essay’s close:

...[We must] release other emotions such as the human figure... arouses in us who are human beings. For it suggests a connection and for us a very important connection. It suggests that the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected, that the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other. But the human figure... suggests other and more complex emotions. It suggests that we cannot dissociate ourselves from that figure but are ourselves that figure. It suggests that we are not passive spectators doomed to unresisting obedience but by our thoughts and actions can ourselves change that figure. A common interest unites us; it is one world, one life. How essential is it that we should realise that unity... [for] the public and the private, the material and the spiritual, ... are inseparably connected... [and] by asking our help you recognise that connection; and by reading your words we are reminded of other connections that lie far deeper than the facts on the surface. (168–9)

Here, Woolf describes a feminist version of the evolutionary social-psychological theory of human perfectibility. Recalling the reciprocal process of social-psychological development—the idea that societal practices shape individual psychologies, and vice versa—Woolf’s language when describing her utopian subject oscillates between societal and individual registers. The phrase “we... are ourselves that figure” conjoins individualized humans (“we”) to the collective body (“that figure”), as does the phrase “it is one world, one life.” Woolf’s emphasis on *connection*—repeated six times and reinforced by analogues like “unity,” “common,” and “inseparabl[e]”—reads as a variation on Huxley’s “co-operative unit” (*EB* 95) or Trotter’s “common life and common purpose” (251). Notably, for the first time in *Three Guineas*, Woolf abandons

⁵³ Ibid., 183.

the sex-specific use of “we,” generalizing her rhetorical appeal to “us who are human beings.” Consistent with Huxley’s claim that progressive human evolution can be brought about by “personal conscious effort” (97) and Trotter’s assertion that “direct conscious effort” is necessary for rational statecraft (252), Woolf insists that the utopian subject, the common “human figure,” can be brought about “by our thoughts and actions.” Like Huxley, who acknowledges that his “co-operative system” is commonly considered “merely a figment of unpractical dreamers” (95), Woolf admits that to posit a “unity that rubs out divisions” is “to dream the recurring dream that has haunted the human mind since the beginning of time” (*TG* 169). Nevertheless, she affirms, bringing about that dream is “essential,” and achievable so long as we “recognise that connection” (168–9).

Woolf concludes *Three Guineas*, then, with a feminist utopianism that hinges on her more general acceptance of the premises of evolutionary social psychology. Recovering the psychological foundations of Woolf’s discourse, in this way, not only uncovers the ongoing and underappreciated importance of psychological thought to Woolf’s literary project in the 1930s, but also reveals a somewhat unexpected optimism inherent to her feminist-pacifist stance. While she remains clear-eyed regarding the immediate threat posed by the rising tide of fascism and the poisonous nature of patriarchal structures, Woolf draws on evolutionary social-psychological thought to formulate a feminist agenda that both responds to present conditions and looks centuries ahead to a possible future where women and men have, with a united purpose, erased all trace of psychological sexual difference from the chromosomes themselves. In the next section, turning to *The Years*, we will see that Woolf also tasks herself with expressing

this vision aesthetically, using her fiction to exploring different facets of this sociopolitical stance.

“But how could she say it?” *The Years* and the Limits of Language

In her 1927 essay, “The New Biography,” Woolf famously contrasts the “granite” of factual reality to the “rainbow” of fiction. Commenting on the difficult compositional task facing biographers, Woolf casts the need to relate “truth in its hardest, most obdurate form... pressed by the weight of research” against the imperative to disclose the vital “personality” of the biographer’s subject, which can only be rendered through the artistry of fiction.⁵⁴ She insists that though the “truth of real life” and the “truth of fiction” are equally “genuine” truths, they are “antagonistic; let them meet and they will destroy each other” (234). The incompatibility of these two modes, Woolf suggests, creates the peculiar “problem of biography” (229): the form necessitates that biographers “use the novelist’s art of arrangement, suggestion, dramatic effect” to enliven factual material, and yet the combination degrades, resulting in a work that “has neither the freedom of fiction nor the substance of fact” (234). Her assessments, though applied to biography, are readily mapped onto other projects that seek to bring fiction in line with historical record. Woolf portends that the writer who seeks to merge factual and literary truth invites disaster, for “the imagination will not serve under two masters simultaneously” (234).

It is easy to understand why “The New Biography” is routinely cited in critical discussions of *The Years* and its discarded predecessor, *The Pargiters*. If Woolf’s “novel-

⁵⁴ Virginia Woolf, “The New Biography,” in *Collected Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 4*, ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), 229; hereafter cited in text.

essay” began as an attempt to challenge her own pronouncement regarding the incommensurability of the fictional and nonfictional modes, then her decision to disentangle *The Years* from *Three Guineas* implies an admission, perhaps, that she had it right the first time.⁵⁵ In February 1933, after having written a full chapter of *The Pargiters* comprised of five fictional vignettes interspersed with six essays, Woolf dissolved the project. She set the essays aside for what would later become *Three Guineas* while recasting the fictional episodes into the “1880” chapter of *The Years*. As Pamela Transue speculates, Woolf “must have felt that her attempt to synchronize the truth of fact with the truth of fiction was unsatisfactory.”⁵⁶ Indeed, *The Years* is widely regarded as a case study in artistic retooling. Thanks to the publication of Woolf’s holograph notebooks, as well as the galley and page proofs of *The Years*—compiled and analyzed in Mitchell Leaska’s 1978 edition of *The Pargiters*, Grace Radin’s 1981 *Virginia Woolf’s ‘The Years’: The Evolution of a Novel*, and Anna Snaith’s 2012 annotated edition of *The Years*—critics can trace Woolf’s process as she gradually cultivates her novel out of the earlier, more polemical material. Transue enthuses, “it is fascinating to see how Woolf set out to rid her story of didacticism in *The Years*,” transforming ideology into art.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Mitchell Leaska originated this reading in his 1978 introduction to *The Pargiters*, and it has remained a dominant narrative in interpretations of *The Years* ever since. Some critics have pushed back on this reading, arguing that Woolf’s juxtaposition of “granite” and “rainbow” is more ironic than rigid, a framework through which she plays with binary thinking in her fiction. See for example Pamela L. Caughie, *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991) and Derek Ryan, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). Anna Snaith goes even further: she deems the granite/rainbow distinction a red herring, arguing that “the idea of a conflict between fact and fiction... is a radically inaccurate version of Woolf’s own conception of the process,” a stance that has been echoed by other critics. Snaith, *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 94.

⁵⁶ Pamela Transue, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Style* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), 147.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

Woolf's compositional journey from *The Pargiters* to *The Years* has proved so fascinating, in fact, that analyses of the novel's evolution dominate the critical literature.⁵⁸ Scholars—particularly those studying Woolf's feminism—frequently privilege the early drafts as equally if not more authoritative than the published novel, which despite Woolf's labors is typically regarded as aesthetically subpar. Transue, for example, deems the book “largely an artistic disaster.”⁵⁹ It is common to find critics implicitly or explicitly suggesting that the novel is a defective creation whose true meaning and value is revealed when read in relation to *The Pargiters* and its proofs. Radin, illustratively, asserts that “it is in these uncut documents that [Woolf's] social and political theories are developed most fully,” while in the published novel, Woolf's views are “softened” to the point of undermining both her politics and her art.⁶⁰ Subsequent critical assessments have widely embraced this palimpsestic approach to *The Years*, as scholars continue to position the novel's “pre-texts” as instrumental to discerning Woolf's “intentions for this book as a work of feminist social analysis.”⁶¹

Without disputing the value of examining *The Years*' compositional history, Gloria Fromm appropriately counters that the “novel that Virginia Woolf spent more than

⁵⁸ See for example Transue, *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Style*; Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde*; Wood, *Virginia Woolf's Late Cultural Criticism*; Chan, *Virginia Woolf and the Professions*; Randi Saloman, *Virginia Woolf's Essayism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012); Rebecca Stephens, “Virginia Woolf's *The Pargiters* and the Dialogue of Genre,” *Genre* 28, no. 1–2 (1995): 171–184; and Maren Linett, “The Jew in the Bath: Imperiled Imagination in Woolf's *The Years*,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 2 (2002): 341–361.

⁵⁹ Transue, *Politics*, 159. Woolf herself ambiguously remarked in her diary, “I myself know why [*The Years* is] a failure, & that its failure is deliberate.” Woolf, *Diary Vol. 5*, 65. Though Woolf was prone to crippling self-doubt following the publication of her novels, this comment has bolstered critics seeking to deem the novel flawed. Alternatively, John Whittier-Ferguson has recently interpreted “deliberate failure” as a formal strategy, reading the novel as intentionally and successfully pursuing a late-modern style that calls attention to the deficiencies of language. Whittier-Ferguson, “Repetition, Remembering, Repetition: Virginia Woolf's Late Fiction and the Return of War,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 57, no. 2 (2011): 232.

⁶⁰ Grace Radin, *Virginia Woolf's 'The Years': The Evolution of a Novel* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), xxiii, 4.

⁶¹ Wood, *Cultural Criticism*, 29.

four years composing and recomposing deserves a better fate than to be praised for the flaws she tried to eliminate from it.”⁶² Naomi Black concurs, noting that even historicist or biographical readings ought to give weight to “the finished work of an author who sometimes wrote as many as seven or eight drafts of what she intended for the public.”⁶³ I place myself among this cadre of scholars who attend to the published version of *The Years*, not only out of respect for Woolf’s presumed intent, but also to better isolate and examine the novel’s distinctive aesthetic strategies.

Though the style of *The Years* differs markedly from her earlier, more experimental works of fiction—Stephen M. Barber describes it as a mostly conventional, “heterogeneously realist” historical novel⁶⁴—the text evinces Woolf’s characteristically meticulous attention to form. Detailing scenes from assorted years in the lives of the extended Pargiter family between 1880 and roughly 1935 (“Present Day”), *The Years* offers a tidy tripartite organization: the first and last chapters, each about a hundred pages in length, are separated by a middle section of nine shorter chapters which collectively cover two-hundred pages. In a structure that loosely recalls the scenic interchapters of *The Waves*, Woolf prefaces each chapter with a brief, objectively narrated passage describing the weather and social climate of England (“In London all was gallant and strident; the Season was beginning; horns hooted; the traffic roared...”), after which the narration slides into the semi-focalized perspectives of various characters.⁶⁵ Eleanor—the eldest daughter of the Pargiter family, aged in her twenties at the novel’s opening and

⁶² Gloria G. Fromm, “Re-inscribing *The Years*: Virginia Woolf, Rose Macaulay, and the Critics,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 13, no. 2 (1986): 293.

⁶³ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 13.

⁶⁴ Stephen M. Barber, “States of Emergency, States of Freedom: Woolf, History, and the Novel,” *Novel* 42, no. 2 (2009): 202.

⁶⁵ Virginia Woolf, *The Years* (1937; repr., Orlando: Harcourt, 2008), 212; hereafter cited in text as *Y*.

nearing eighty at the close—functions as a sort of anchoring consciousness in the text, akin to Clarissa’s role in *Mrs Dalloway*. The narrative is also filtered through the perspective of numerous other characters, including various Pargiter siblings (Edward, Martin, Rose) and their children (North, Peggy), cousins (Kitty, Maggie, Sara), and the family patriarch, Colonel Abel.

As one might expect from the novel’s origins, and substantiating Woolf’s own view that *The Years* and *Three Guineas* are conceptually “one book,”⁶⁶ readers comparing the two works will notice that *The Years* shares much of *Three Guineas*’ imagery and themes. Indeed, the novel essentially dramatizes the essay’s core analytical points. Kitty’s father, for example, is pointedly observed to be writing a history of “five generations of Oxford men” while Kitty herself receives no formal education (Y 76). The robes and wigs of the men at the Law Courts strike Eleanor as a performance intended to make the men seem “immune from human weakness” (105), echoing Woolf’s assessment that such garb is “a displeasing spectacle” intended to “emphasize [men’s] superiority” (TG 27). *The Years* also depicts the subtle manner in which the modern social environment naturalizes sexual difference, conditioning men to be “possessive, jealous,” and “highly combative” (TG 81). In “1880,” for instance, in a scene describing Edward’s time at Oxford, we learn that Edward derives pleasure from the “spasm of jealousy” he incites in his friend Ashley, who correspondingly finds Edward’s “small vanities” endearing (Y 51). Woolf allows readers to enjoy this seemingly innocent, adolescent display of possessiveness before revealing its pernicious root: in “1891,” Colonel Abel looks at Eleanor and observes “how bright-cheeked, how unconcerned” his daughter appears—“she has her own life to live,” he thinks—and this rumination prompts a

⁶⁶ Woolf, *Diary Vol. 4*, 152.

“spasm of jealousy” within him (98). While Ashley’s jealousy appears benign, Colonel Abel’s parallel “spasm” exposes such possessiveness as a mechanism of patriarchal power. By 1891, Eleanor has already forfeited her own future to care for her father after her mother’s passing, a decision born out of the socially and biologically entrenched idea that Eleanor’s “sex made it her sacred duty to sacrifice herself to the father” (*TG* 159). Despite his daughter’s ongoing devotion, the mere thought of Eleanor having “her own life” provokes the Colonel’s jealousy. Linked by Woolf’s similar phrasing—and the fact that Edward resides in Colonel Abel’s former rooms at Oxford, connecting the men across time—these scenes serve to illustrate *Three Guineas*’ assertion that centuries of socialized sexual difference have given rise to the possessive and combative traits in men that also lead to fascism and war.

Notably, though such analogues between novel and essay permeate *The Years*, they are consistently understated: sensitive to the risk of propagandizing, Woolf denies her characters the platform she grants herself in *Three Guineas* to pontificate. In a characteristic instance, just as Eleanor “pull[s] herself together” at an unidentified committee meeting to express “a very definite opinion,” the narration cuts off and the scene changes before Eleanor’s words are recorded (91). Woolf also sidelines major global events of the period in *The Years*, instead preferring descriptions of mundane occurrences like daily errands, luncheons, and dinner parties. Far from draining the novel of its political potency, depicting ordinary events enables Woolf to “establish[] a correspondence between the minutiae of the everyday” and broader “world-historical processes,” as one critic argues.⁶⁷ In rendering the mundane, *The Years* performs the

⁶⁷ Thomas S. Davis, “The Historical Novel at History’s End: Virginia Woolf’s *The Years*,” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 60, no. 1 (2014): 2.

notion—central to *Three Guineas*—that the public and private spheres are “inseparably connected” (TG 168).

The Years, in short, is easily read as a text that more or less directly inscribes the feminist “political message” of *Three Guineas* “within its narrative form.”⁶⁸ Yet in converting the essay’s “granite” into the novel’s “rainbow,” Woolf literally trans-forms her vision: even if both works “carry[] the same message,”⁶⁹ as Black asserts, the aesthetic mode of the novel shifts the contours of Woolf’s argument. As scholars like Elizabeth Evans, Thomas Davis, and Steven Barber have argued, Woolf develops the formal strategies of *The Years* to complement or extend the sociopolitical ideas offered in her essay; I argue that this principle likewise applies to *The Years*’ employment of evolutionary social-psychological discourse. Indeed, in a manner analogous to *Three Guineas*, Woolf draws on evolutionary social-psychological theories in *The Years* to inform her representations of individual and social behavior, and to advance a feminist-pacifist vision of a progressively evolved human species. Yet Woolf also utilizes the fictional form of the novel to explore new facets of this stance: in rendering the intimate interactions of the Pargiter family, *The Years* exposes the complicity of language—a product of centuries of communication practices developed in accordance with patriarchy—in sustaining the divisions of sexual difference. Woolf’s novel develops the feminist-pacifist utopian vision of *Three Guineas* by positing that the progressive evolution that brings about the “dream of peace” will necessitate transcending language, as humanity’s means of communication correspondingly evolve to enable what Trotter calls “complete communion” between human beings (213).

⁶⁸ Elizabeth F. Evans, “Air War, Propaganda, and Woolf’s Anti-Tyranny Aesthetic,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 59, no. 1 (2013): 75.

⁶⁹ Black, *Woolf as Feminist*, 129.

As noted in passing in the previous section, a core component of evolutionary social-psychological theory is the idea that although each human being contributes to the larger social order, the individual himself is of radically diminished importance.

Illustratively, McDougall asserts in *The Group Mind* that

each man is an individual only in an incomplete sense; ...he is but a unit in a vast system of vital and spiritual forces which, expressing themselves in the form of human societies, are working towards ends which no man can foresee; a unit... which can change or add to them only in infinitesimal degree... [T]he play of this system of forces at any moment in history is predominantly determined by the conditions which are themselves the products of an immensely long course of evolution, conditions which have been produced by the mental activities of countless generations and which are but very little modified by the members of society living at any one time...⁷⁰

McDougall's language insists that the proper register for theorizing human psychology is at the level of species: individuals are "units" whose endeavors are "incomplete," "infinitesimal" and "little," while the human species, as manifested in societies, is a "vast system" honed over the "immensely long course of evolution" and "countless generations." He later elaborates that human social practices are "largely the result of a long continued process of selection, comparable with the natural selection by which, according to the Darwinian theory, animal species are evolved" (113). Since social practices define human psychology, human beings themselves are best understood in terms of their common traits and in the context of an evolutionary timeline. Therefore, while every individual is discrete and unique, any given individual is profoundly insignificant in the scientific sense of the term. McDougall and Trotter's texts approach

⁷⁰ William McDougall, *The Group Mind*, 2nd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 6; hereafter cited in text as *GM*. A cross-disciplinary, contemporary parallel to McDougall's logic is T.S. Eliot's aesthetic argument in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," which posits an "existing order" of artistic tradition which "is complete before the new work arrives but which "must be, if ever so slightly, altered" with the introduction of every new work of art. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920), 44.

the human subject in the “broad, general way” (*IH* 47) of ethological or ecological studies, examining the psychological development and characteristics of our highly evolved, “gregarious species” (*IH* 50).

Accordingly, both McDougall and Trotter routinely, even ubiquitously, draw comparisons between human beings and other animal species. McDougall compares a human crowd to “a flock of birds swinging through the air” (*GM* xiv); he finds human divisions of labor resembling the behavior of other “birds or mammals,” as when “one or more sentinels constantly keep watch while a flock or herd feeds or rests” (66); and he likens human social conditioning to the domestication of chickens, squirrels, cats, and dogs (*SP* 25). Trotter’s *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*—whose title explicitly applies the label “herd” to human societies—even more rigorously pursues connections between humans and “the mammalia other than man” (108). Finding humans “as essentially gregarious as the bee and the ant, the sheep, the ox and the horse” (112), Trotter carefully parses the comparative qualities of human society in relation to other animal groupings like hives, herds, and flocks. Notably, aligning humanity with the animal kingdom does not debase or diminish the human species within this discourse; rather, accepting Darwinian evolution is what enables the “dynamic, functional, voluntaristic view” of the human organism (*SP* 5). Accepting the human species as part of the universal evolutionary process, in other words, is the premise that enables McDougall and Trotter to frame humanity in terms of its untapped evolutionary potential, to theorize the optimally evolved social order. By engaging in a detailed comparative analysis of “[t]he hive and the ant’s nest” and “the flock and the pack,” Trotter reaches

his conclusion that “Socialized gregariousness is the goal of man’s development. A transcendental union with his fellows is the destiny of the human individual” (166–7).

In *The Years*, Woolf develops aesthetic strategies that resonate with McDougall’s and Trotter’s species-focused discourse, as she consistently reduces the individual to a “unit in a vast system” (*GM* 6). This tactic is initially evident in what Elizabeth Evans terms the novel’s “preludes,” the scenic passages that preface each chapter in which “an apparently objective narrative voice” describes the present setting.⁷¹ The first prelude—also the novel’s opening passage—renders the “uncertain spring” of 1880:

In the country farmers, looking at the fields, were apprehensive; in London umbrellas were opened and then shut by people looking up at the sky. But in April such weather was to be expected. Thousands of shop assistants made that remark, as they handed neat parcels to ladies in flounced dresses standing on the other side of the counter at Whiteley’s and the Army and Navy Stores. Interminable processions of shoppers in the West end, of business men in the East, paraded the pavements, like caravans perpetually marching... (*Y* 3)

Woolf begins *The Years* with a depiction of collective human behavior, of a common stimulus yielding predictable and homogenous action. In this passage, Woolf’s narrator acknowledges divisions of class, sex, and geography, yet the parallel syntax of the sentences functions to temper these differences. Instead, we are prompted to notice the similarity between the behaviors of farmers and urbanites (“In the country... looking at”/“in London...looking up”) and of women and men (“of shoppers in the West”/“of business men in the East”), united in their common responses to the changeable weather. Tellingly, too, the stimulus in question is rain, the vast scale of the natural world throwing into relief the shared qualities of the human beings. The narrator’s assertion that “[t]housands of shop assistants” recite precisely the same comment in identical interactions across the city is an illuminating bit of hyperbole that imbues the Londoners’

⁷¹ Evans, “Air War,” 66.

movements with a prescribed quality, which is itself reinforced by the image of “[i]nterminable processions” and “caravans perpetually marching.” In this way, the novel’s opening passage signals Woolf’s interest in humanity writ large, highlighting an instance of humans unwittingly exhibiting communal behavior as they proceed through socialized routines.

There are eleven scenic preludes (plus a few interludes) in the novel, and all of them are, as Evans observes, similarly “universalizing, seemingly indiscriminate” in their treatment of human beings.⁷² Each chapter begins with a view of humanity as a species characterized by socially conditioned homogeneity. In the prelude introducing the autumn of 1891, for instance, Woolf’s narrator remarks: “the wind blew here a hat off; there lifted a veil high above a woman’s head... It was difficult to work after the holidays. Margate, Eastbourne and Brighton had bronzed them and tanned them” (84). As in the first passage, the natural elements function to generalize humanity, collapsing the populace into a collective “them” ruffled by wind and browned by sun, while also gesturing to the socialized expressions of sexual difference that exist within the herd the juxtaposition of men’s hats and women’s veils. Another chapter prelude relates: “the flowers in cottage gardens, lilac and pink like cotton dresses, shone veined as if lit from within. Faces of people standing at cottage doors or padding along pavements showed the same red glow as they fronted the slowly sinking sun” (290). Sweeping together all “people,” whether at home or on the streets, Woolf’s language conveys the image of

⁷² Ibid., 68. In Evans’s analysis, these scenic passages stand in for an “autocratic vision” which is then “repeatedly undercut” by the subjective knowledge offered in the character-focalized narration, which displays characters’ “myopic and prejudiced views” (75). In this way, for Evans, *The Years* incorporates a subtle acknowledgement of “the seductive power of authoritarian knowledge” (54). While Evans’s analysis is compelling, I propose an alternate way of reading the preludes, not as “represent[ing] an autocratic vision” (70) oppositional to the focalized narration, but rather as offering a ‘species-level’ perspective to offset the ‘unit-level’ perspective of the characters.

human beings as innumerable and indistinct as the “cotton dresse[d]” flowers, communally turned in an impulsive yet highly uniform gesture to witness the sunset. In another passage, rain pours over England, and the narrator describes how “the cows, already turned out in the grey fields, under the dim hedges, munched on, sleepily chewing with raindrops on their hides.” Subsequent lines specify that the rain “poured equally” and “with impartiality,” not only on “the very wise, the very great” but on “all breathing kind, the munchers and chewers, the ignorant, the unhappy” (45). Here, Woolf’s language not only revisits the image of a humanity united by nature’s impartial rain, but even further aligns the human species with “all breathing kind,” including the more literal herd of munching cows.

Given that *The Years* is otherwise dedicated to describing the individual lives of various Pargiter family members, this framing device functions as a deliberate strategy prompting readers to approach the Pargiter narratives from a sharply withdrawn perspective. Substantiating this notion is the fact that, even after the narration moves into the Pargiters’ interiorized perspectives, Woolf does not abandon the detached view of the human species. Recalling the evolutionary social-psychological emphasis on animal groupings like “[t]he flock, the herd, the pack, the swarm” (*IH* 212), the narratives of *The Years* are rife with animal imagery, as characters are pointedly compared to apes, birds, sheep, and other creatures. Eleanor, for example, watching women on the street, thinks that they “swarm[] in and out of shops... like rooks swooping in a field” (89) and later interacts with an old woman who “pluck[s] her hands like a large tousled ape” (93). Eugénie observes Colonel Abel “look[ing] glum and formidable, like an old bull with his head down” (116), while opera patrons are “like birds settling in a field” (172). Martin

likens the family servant, Crosby, to “a frightened little animal” who “trot[s]” off into the street (211), and his cousin Sara to “a bird, a somewhat disheveled fowl” (216). Kitty finds partygoers resembling “gulls settling on fish” (247), their movements “like the flutter of white-winged gulls” (250). In the “Present Day” chapter, as the narration bounds animatedly between characters during a party, Hugh is described as a bear shaking his paws (346) and an “old elephant” (358); Nicholas is “some loose-skinned, furry animal” (350); North is first “a dog on a leash” (354), then a horse (356). Partygoers resemble a penned “flock of sheep” (345). North finds Milly’s voice resembling the “munchings of animals in a stall” and repeatedly imagines everyone in the room “wallow[ing] in the primeval swamp, prolific, profuse, half-conscious” (356), the phrase “primeval swamp” connoting a more specifically Darwinian expression of bestial imagery.

These aesthetic strategies—which situate human beings alongside other animal organisms on an evolutionary timeline—prime readers intellectually for the evolutionary social-psychological concept of human perfectibility, which Woolf introduces rather explicitly midway through the novel and then develops into a recurring theme. The first instance appears in the “1910” chapter, when Sara Pargiter returns home to the dingy flat she shares with her sister, Maggie. As they talk, Sara looks out the window to observe a commotion on the city street outside. She then turns back to Maggie:

Her face in the mixed light looked cadaverous and worn.... She stood there hunched up, with her hands clenched together.

“In time to come,” she said, looking at her sister, “people, looking into this room—this cave, this little antre, scooped out of mud and dung, will hold their fingers to their noses”—she held her fingers to her nose—“and say ‘Pah! They stink!’” ...Maggie looked at her. Curled round, with her hair falling over her face and her hands screwed together she looked like some great ape, crouching there in a little cave of mud and dung. (179)

Here, filtered through the eyes of Sara and Maggie, Woolf evokes the concept of progressive evolution, as their shared imaginative space links the present to the evolutionary past and future. By figuring the apartment as a “cave of mud and dung” and Sara as “some great ape,” the sisters acknowledge humanity’s primate ancestors. Yet they also signal their awareness of their own primitiveness when compared to humans in a distant “time to come,” to which Sara refers in an assured future tense. Moments later, Maggie “repeat[s] to herself, ‘They stink,’” and thinks, “It was true... they were nasty little creatures, driven by uncontrollable lusts” (179). Though this assessment is hardly descriptive of the well-mannered Pargiter sisters, Maggie uses an ambiguous and inclusive “they,” aligning herself and Sara with all human “creatures” and implicitly ceding to the evolutionary social-psychological premise that individuals cannot be meaningfully understood apart from their environment and social peers.

Woolf further develops this theme in the “1917” chapter. Now enduring a country at war, Maggie, Renny, Sara, Nicholas, and Eleanor gather for a dinner that is interrupted by a German air raid. As the group takes shelter in the cellar, Sara again derisively and spontaneously calls her surroundings a “cave of mud and dung” (277), an image Eleanor subsequently evokes in a fireside conversation with Nicholas. Taking up the subject of “the New World”—the vague but better future to which the party toasts at dinner—Eleanor asks Nicholas, “D’you think we’re going to improve?” Nicholas responds: “It is only a question...of learning. ...The soul—the whole being,” which “wishes to expand; to adventure; to form—new combinations...” (280). When Maggie interrupts their conversation moments later:

Eleanor started. She had seemed to be looking into the future. ... Eleanor wished that he would go on talking—the man she called Nicholas. When, she wanted to ask him, when will this New World come? When shall we be free? When shall we live adventurously, wholly, not like cripples in a cave? He seemed to have released something in her; she felt not only a new space of time, but new powers, something unknown within her. (280–1)

Grace Radin observes that while Sara's "cave of mud and dung" figures human beings as primitive cave-dwellers, Eleanor's parallel image of "cripples in a cave" alludes not only to humanity's primitiveness but also to "Plato's parable of the shadow world," suggestive of the need for humans to evolve on "both physical and spiritual" grounds.⁷³ Indeed, while Sara and Maggie in 1910 introduce the notion of progressive evolution but communicate no particular vision for humanity's future, Eleanor and Nicholas in 1917 articulate a vision with greater ideological specificity. Having broached the idea of perfectibility, the idea that humans will "improve," Eleanor and Nicholas associate humanity's evolution with a set of ideals rather explicitly consonant with the utopian vision of *Three Guineas*. Sharing the language of the essay, which advocates for discovering "what new combinations make good wholes in human life" (*TG* 43) and for bringing about the common "human figure" (168), the "future" that Eleanor and Nicholas share is characterized by "new combinations," freedom, and expansion, the emergence of "the whole being." Echoing Woolf's insistence in *Three Guineas* that human beings "by our thoughts and actions can ourselves change that figure" (168), Nicholas posits that bringing about the New World is "only a question... of learning." Eleanor, in what is perhaps an oblique allusion to Woolf's faith in genetic alteration, likewise perceives that the "powers" for such change exist "within her." Later on, in the "Present Day" chapter—the final chapter in which Woolf alludes to the theme of perfectibility—Nicholas even

⁷³ Radin, *Evolution*, 142, 144.

more directly cites the evolutionary means by which the New World may be realized. When Kitty asks Nicholas to share the toast he had prepared to give, he responds, “I was going to drink to the human race. The human race... which is now in its infancy, may it grow to maturity!” (404), his imagery placing the human species at the start of its progressive-evolutionary path.

Woolf’s aesthetic strategies throughout *The Years*, in this way, draw on the evolutionary social-psychological model of human mind and behavior, contextualizing individuals as “unit[s] in a vast system of vital and spiritual forces” (GM 6) and alluding to the possibility of the human species progressively evolving in a manner “informed by conscious direction” (IH 162). In this respect, *The Years* directly corroborates the theoretical stance of *Three Guineas*, as the novel and essay mutually approach human beings from a species-level perspective, understanding the process of evolutionary change as susceptible to strategic human intervention in the interest of gradual (bio)social improvement. Just as Woolf in *Three Guineas* calls for the emergence of the “human figure” who will usher in the “dream of peace” (TG 168–9), characters within *The Years* catch glimpses of “a world in which people were whole, in which people were free” (Y 370), a world that will only be realized if people begin “living differently” (371), if they “begin there, at the centre, with themselves” (384).

Yet when we turn our attention to how the novel incorporates the issue of sexual difference into this evolutionary social-psychological discourse—and, by extension, the utopian vision of humanity’s future—it becomes evident that *The Years* is not merely a fictional restatement of *Three Guineas*. Indeed, *The Years*’ narrative form enables Woolf to particularly examine the way in which language-based communication—the verbal

means by which people disclose themselves to one another, rendered frequently in the novel's conversation-heavy scenes—factors into her vision of a progressively evolved humanity. Building on the importance that McDougall and Trotter place on the concept of free communication within human societies, Woolf uses her novel to illustrate the extent to which contemporary modes of communication are inextricably tied to the inherently suppressive structures of patriarchy.

For most readers, dialogue in *The Years* appears strikingly stale and repetitive. Phrases often break off with dashes or trail off with ellipses; characters recite clichéd platitudes or parrot back each others' words; and the Pargiters regularly express open frustration with their inability to communicate effectively. In a characteristic exchange between Maggie and Sara, for example, Maggie informs her sister that "Rose is coming" for lunch:

"Rose is coming?" she repeated.

"I told you," said Maggie. "I said to you, Rose is coming to luncheon on Friday. And it is Friday. And Rose is coming to luncheon. Any minute now," she said. ...

"It is Friday, and Rose is coming to luncheon," Sara repeated.

"I told you," said Maggie. (155)

The sisters communicate as if trapped in a recurring temporal loop. John Whittier-Ferguson observes that such passages seem rendered by a narrator "determined to describe things without becoming distracted by the temptations of lyricism, rhetorical constructions, or complex speculations about the inner lives of the characters." While such torpid dialogue could be—and has been—interpreted as a failure of artistry, Whittier-Ferguson astutely remarks that it is "not easy to write sentences that fall so carefully flat."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Whittier-Ferguson, "Repetition," 237.

Interestingly, although dialogue in *The Years* is emphatically wooden, the novel also insists on the notion that human beings possess an innate *desire* for meaningful and reciprocal communication. In a suggestive recurring motif, numerous characters—including Eleanor, Rose, Sara, Crosby, and various passersby of both sexes—are observed to be publicly talking to themselves, the compulsion for self-disclosure overwhelming the mild social stigma attached to the habit. In a “1914” scene set at Kensington Park, Martin and Sara similarly observe “speakers... holding forth” in vigorous orations despite the fact that their speeches fail to reach an audience: the crowd attending one speech stares at the speaker with “their eyes gazing blankly” (227), while nearby, another orator’s “voice was hardly audible” (228). Human beings, Woolf suggests, possess a desire to communicate, to “get at something, something deeper, deeper” (169), which persists despite the lack of adequate means to do so successfully. Woolf frequently reports characters inwardly craving to know what other people are thinking or saying, a pattern particularly evident in the minds of the female characters, who are often prevented from entering discursive spaces. In “1880,” for example, Kitty hears the laughter of Oxford undergraduates and longs to be privy to their conversation, noting with some pique that they “never laugh like that when they come to tea at the Lodge” (59).

Language within *The Years* is, in this way, depicted as fundamentally bereft, lacking the ability to carry the meaning or emotion that all individuals universally yearn to convey. And yet, as Kitty’s example implies, Woolf more specifically binds language’s anemic state to the social-psychological expression of sexual difference. Indeed, the connection between language and sexual difference is a topic Woolf briefly

raises in *Three Guineas*. As a logical extension of her claim that women and men “think differently according as we are born differently” (*TG* 13), Woolf attests in her essay that men and women likewise interpret words differently. She rhetorically asks, “what does ‘patriotism’ mean to [a woman]? Has she the same reasons for being proud of England, for loving England, for defending England?” A woman’s distinctive experience of citizenship means “her interpretation of the word ‘patriotism’ may well differ from [a man’s]” (12). Just as women and men see “the same world... through different eyes” (22), they speak the same language with different accents and associations. Women are limited to the language of “the private house” while men have access to the language of “the public world” (90). The “difficulty of communication” between men and women, she insists, is an inevitable outcome of psychological sexual difference (6).

In *The Years*, Eleanor alludes to a similar understanding of the relationship between language and patriarchy when she observes Morris arguing a case at the Law Courts. Witnessing Morris in “his public life,” she is discomfited to find that “his voice was unfamiliar,” and she struggles to “fix her mind upon the argument” (104). The speech of the Court is “urbane yet awful” (104), forming a “tide of oblivion” that Eleanor finds oppressive (105). Occasionally she discerns “a tone in [Morris’s] voice that made her smile; it was his private voice” (104). Limited as she is to the private sphere, Eleanor regards Morris’s private voice as genuine (“How like Morris!” [104]), while the public voice seems so foreign as to be intolerable (“How could Morris stand it?” [106]). This scene, like the scene of Kitty overhearing the undergraduates’ laughter, illustrates a language barrier created by sexual difference, the gendered division of public and private spaces functioning to inhibit communication and reinforce society’s factions.

Woolf returns to this theme repeatedly over the course of *The Years*, with a consistency and frequency that ultimately serves to forge a connection between the gendered language barrier and the novel's bankrupt communications more broadly. In "1880," for instance, Eleanor laments that "the worst of growing up" is that she and her brothers "couldn't share things as they used to share them" before they entered the public sphere (32). Similarly, while visiting with his brother Digby and sister-in-law Eugénie in "1891," Colonel Abel is gripped by the desire to "talk with Eugénie alone," yet he instead cedes to the inertia of social habit. Abel and Digby discuss politics (they "always talked politics"), while Eugénie listens quietly (she "always let them talk" and "never interrupted" [118]). The repetitions of *always* and *never* underscore the inevitability Abel attaches to this behavior: as he leaves, Abel feels "depressed and disappointed. He had not seen her alone; he had not told her anything. Perhaps he never would tell anybody anything" (120). Woolf's language establishes a correspondence between the communication gap between women and men and the failures of human communication more broadly, as Abel escalates immediately from his stymied talk with Eugénie ("had not told her anything") to a global inability to self-disclose ("never would tell anybody anything").

"1914" offers another extended illustration of this dynamic: in that chapter, Martin and Sara meet by chance outside St. Paul's and decide to have lunch together. After exchanging initial pleasantries, their conversation stalls. Sara begins to speak "in her ordinary voice," but Martin silences her—"Hush!" he stopped her. "Somebody's listening"—and "[i]n deference to him she assumed the manner of a lady lunching with a gentleman in a city restaurant" (217). Sara then asks what brought Martin to St. Paul's,

and when Martin speaks “emphatically” in response, Sara silences him in an ironic reversal of the previous moment: “‘Hush!’ she whispered. ‘Somebody’s listening’” (217). In subsequent paragraphs, both cousins internally voice their frustration: “Conversation in a restaurant was impossible,” Sara reflects; “it was broken into little fragments” (218). “But it was impossible to talk,” Martin thinks moments later. “Too many people were listening” (219). When they leave the restaurant, the problem persists: walking along Fleet Street, “Conversation was impossible” (221); it “was impossible to talk because of the crowd” (222); in the “roar of the traffic,” it “was impossible to talk” (222). Interweaving these moments within a single social encounter, Woolf vividly dramatizes how the cousins’ shared desire to enjoy “conversation” in an “ordinary voice” is thwarted by the need to adhere to the roles of “lady” and “gentlemen,” roles enforced by social surveillance (“people were listening”).

Notably, Woolf incorporates into *The Years* brief moments of genuine exchange; however, such moments are consistently rare, fragile, and fleeting. In keeping with *Three Guineas*’ assertion that patriarchy admits only “furtive[]” acts of passive resistance which must by necessity “dodge[] and disappear[]” (TG 136), satisfying communication in *The Years* is preciously scarce and doomed to be short-lived. In one such instance, occurring immediately after Sara and Martin’s frustrating luncheon, Maggie and Martin are permitted an ephemeral “privacy” when they find themselves secluded in Kensington Park (233). Thus “encircled” in a “ring of solitude,” Martin perceives that life “resumed its ordinary proportions” and he shares with Maggie an “ordinary story” (232–3). While gendered mores previously silenced Sara’s “ordinary voice,” the repetition of *ordinary* here implies Maggie and Martin’s ability to capture the authentic communication

previously deemed “impossible.” But the moment is vanishingly brief: in the next second, Maggie’s baby stirs and “[t]heir privacy was over” (234). In the “1917” chapter, Eleanor and Nicholas’s visionary conversation about the New World is made possible by a similar moment of intimacy that is too quickly violated. In that scene, Eleanor and Nicholas seize the opportunity “to be talking, privately, together” as Renny, Sara, and Maggie otherwise occupy themselves (280). But this privacy, too, is swiftly and jarringly broken when Maggie reveals that she is listening to their talk: “they had been overheard. Their privacy was ended” (280). Eleanor resultantly reflects that even “talk in private was impossible.” Fleeting moments of secretive exchange are no substitute for “be[ing] free” (281).

To understand the significance of *The Years*’ representations of communication—and how it relates to the novel’s broader evolutionary perspective—we must examine the role of free communication within the discourses of evolutionary social psychology, particularly when it comes to the theory of social-psychological perfectibility. As noted in the previous section, Huxley, McDougall, and Trotter commonly envision the human species progressively evolving into a “gregarious unit” (*IH* 162) guided by what McDougall calls a “carefully and skillfully supervised” manipulation of the social-psychological dynamic (*SP* 224). Importantly, both McDougall and Trotter stress that perfected communication—that is, communication which is simultaneously free, open, complex, clear, and complete—is the linchpin within this dynamic, without which progressive evolution cannot proceed. As McDougall attests, without the “freedom of communication... there can be no vivid consciousness of a common welfare and a common purpose” (*GM* 132). Trotter likewise contends that the “success and extent” of

human evolutionary development “clearly depend on... the capacity for communication,” given that social conditioning “is a consequence of the power of intercommunication amongst the individual constituents of the new unit” (*IH* 61). To enjoy “the full advantages of the gregarious habit”—to achieve the perfect social-psychological dynamic—human beings must develop “a power of intercommunication of absolutely unprecedented fineness.” Speech—humanity’s dominant method of communication—serves as case in point for Trotter; the present flaws of human communication “give[] to society the characteristics which are the contempt of the man of science and the disgust of the humanitarian” (62).

As the foregoing suggests, Trotter is severely critical of the inadequacies of language. Finding basic human conversations analogous to the “primitive olfactory greeting common to so many of the lower animals” (118), Trotter stresses how far human intercommunication methods must evolve as humans strive for social-psychological perfection. Intercommunication, Trotter suggests, will evolve in tandem with qualities like sympathy, understanding, and harmony, as “the degree of sympathy” within social units “varies directly with the amount of intercommunication” (123). *Instincts of the Herd* concludes, in fact, with a passage not unlike *Three Guineas*’ utopian climax, with Trotter placing intercommunication at the center of the reciprocal social-psychological evolutionary process that leads to lasting peace:

The flock, the herd, the pack, the swarm, new creatures all, flourished and ranged the world. ...As long as intercommunication was limited the full possibilities of the new experiment were concealed, but at length appeared a creature in whom this capacity could develop indefinitely. ...Puny as were his individuals, man’s capacity for communication soon made him master of the world. ...All combination [however] was irregular, inco-ordinate, and only very slowly progressive. ...Nevertheless the needs and capacities that were at work in the primeval amoeba are at work in him. In his very flesh and bones is the impulse

towards closer and closer union in larger and larger fellowships. To-day he is fighting his way towards that goal, fighting for the perfect unit which Nature has so long foreshadowed, in which there shall be a complete communion of its members, unobstructed by egoism or hatred, by harshness or arrogance or the wolfish lust for blood. (212–3)

This passage—which cites the “primeval amoeba” and other “creatures” which “flourished and ranged the world” in humanity’s ancestral past—places the communication abilities of human beings on the same, vast evolutionary scale as the human species itself. Language, Trotter declares, is the product of a species that has become “master of the world” but nevertheless remains plagued by “egoism,” “hatred,” and “the wolfish lust for blood.” If human beings are to achieve “the perfect unit which Nature has so long foreshadowed,” the capacity for intercommunication must “develop indefinitely,” transcending the present, rudimentary capabilities of human communication in favor of, as he elsewhere writes, a “communion of interest and sympathy far closer than anything yet dreamed of as possible” (163).

Contextualized in this way, we can see how *The Years* modifies the evolutionary social-psychological framework regarding the role of communication in humanity’s progressive evolution. Although Woolf shares Trotter’s belief that jealousy and competitiveness are obstructions to “complete communion,” she attributes humanity’s bloodlust to the divisiveness of sexual difference. *The Years* expands on Trotter’s theorization, more specifically dramatizing the ways in which the flaws in human intercommunication are inextricably bound to the gendered language barrier, to the “gulf... of silence inspired by fear” (*TG* 142). The narrative mode of Woolf’s novel enables her to articulate the notion that language evolved as a product of a human species corrupted by sexual difference—a product of a world divided, as Eleanor observes, into

“public” and “private voice[s]” (Y 104)—rendering language similarly and intrinsically corrupted. Reading *The Years* in relation to evolutionary social psychology thus illuminates the way in which the novel ties its exploration of the “gendered language barrier” to the concept of progressive human evolution and, ultimately, to Woolf’s feminist-pacifist vision: To mend the gulf in human intercommunication, to develop the “capacity of the human spirit to... make unity out of multiplicity” (TG 169), the human species must transcend language, with the evolutionary process yielding new methods of intercommunication that will enable the emergence of the “human figure” (168). This, I posit, is the radical concept explored in *The Years*’ final chapter, “Present Day.”

Even more overtly than in the previous chapters, the literary strategies of “Present Day”—a chapter mostly given over to the lively party attended by all surviving Pargiters—coalesce around the theme of linguistic failure. At the party, Peggy derisively dismisses the bulk of talk as “such complete nonsense” (333) and “a bit of a farce” (334). Numerous family members are reported to be repeating the same stories and phrases to each other, “the same thing over again” (341). Characters regularly mishear or misunderstand one another, “stop[] talking... at the wrong moment” (370), or say things that are “not what [they] had meant to say” (370). Towards the end of the party, Nicholas attempts to give a speech but is stymied by multiple interruptions (“How can one speak when one is always interrupted?” he wonders [403]). When Martin invites the children of the caretaker to sing, their song is tuneless and incoherent (“Etho passo tanno hai, / Fai donk to tu do... That was what it sounded like” [407]). North reflects outright that there is “a gap, a dislocation, between the word and the reality” (384). The novel ends with Eleanor repeating “And now? ...And now?” (412), a finale that one critic grimly

interprets as “the stammerings that remain when no one is strong enough to hold... a single vision.”⁷⁵

Indeed, for Whittier-Ferguson, “Present Day” exemplifies the “demolition of language,” the natural endpoint of a novel dedicated to exploring a spiritually impoverished world that will “allow articulation to go on, even when there's not much new to say.”⁷⁶ Christine Froula similarly characterizes the chapter as insisting on language’s “impotence,” which is movingly contrasted to the characters’ enduring but abortive “longing to ‘tell someone.’”⁷⁷ Notably, both critics agree that *The Years* concludes with a vision of futility, with Woolf essentially ceding to the limitations of her literary craft. Whittier-Ferguson posits that the novel ends with a defeated “silence that tells us either that there is not yet language that can describe a new future, or that the same words we have heard before will do just as well as they ever have.”⁷⁸

Reading “Present Day” in relation to the discourses of evolutionary social psychology, however, allows us to recognize the existence of a third option: the failure of language may be received as a necessary and welcome step on the path to evolutionary progress, a step that heralds a future “unobstructed by egoism or hatred, by harshness or arrogance” (*IH* 213). And indeed, “Present Day” embraces this notion. In series of key passages involving Peggy and her brother, North—the youngest generation of Pargiters and the characters most representative of “the future as Woolf understands it”⁷⁹—Woolf renders language giving way to an experience of communication grounded not in

⁷⁵ Whittier-Ferguson, “Repetition,” 246.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 238, 248.

⁷⁷ Froula, *Bloomsbury*, 225.

⁷⁸ Whittier-Ferguson, “Repetition,” 247.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 240.

language but in transcendent emotional understanding, discursively gesturing to a vision of a future humanity endowed, perhaps, with the capacity for free intercommunication.

In “Present Day,” Peggy spends much of the party inwardly lamenting the “nonsense” of the party’s inane chitchat (*Y* 333), an annoyance that Woolf associates with a broader dissatisfaction with language and which Peggy shares with numerous other characters. She reflects at one point that “Each person had a certain line laid down in their minds... and along with it came the same old sayings. One’s mind must be criss-crossed like the palm of one’s hand” (340), a sentiment that Peggy returns to a moment later when she looks out the window and up at the night sky. She muses, “Then the stars. Inscrutable, eternal, indifferent—those were the words; the right words. But I don’t feel it, she said, looking at the stars. So why pretend to?” (341). Peggy finds the words “[i]nscrutable, eternal, indifferent” objectionable for the same reason she dislikes “the same old sayings” of her aunts and uncles: in both cases, language is exposed to be bound by stale and intractable patterns that function as a suppressive force. Even when “the words” are “the right words,” they fail to convey what things are “really like” or elicit genuine feeling; communicating via language is thus an errand in futility, a matter of “pretend.”

Peggy’s particular relationship to language’s hollowness takes on additional significance, though, when she overhears her aunt Delia relating a compliment about her to her father, Morris. This overheard compliment sparks a visceral response in Peggy, and Woolf renders the scene in a way that places Peggy’s experience of potent emotion outside the bounds of language:

The nerve down her spine seemed to tingle as the praise reached her father. Each emotion touched a different nerve. A sneer rasped the thigh; pleasure thrilled the

spine; and also affected the sight. The stars had softened; they quivered. Her father brushed her shoulder as he dropped his hand; but neither of them spoke. (344)

Noticeably, Peggy's spine "seem[s] to tingle" not as the words of praise reach *her*, but as "the praise reache[s] her father," as if her nerves are activated by his sense-perception in some kind of shared psycho-physiological experience. Whereas Peggy "felt nothing" when attempting to verbally describe the stars (341), here the stars spontaneously "soften[]" and "quiver[]" as a result of her emotional reaction "affect[ing] the sight," a development seemingly contingent on the absence of language ("neither of them spoke"). Woolf dartingly relates Peggy's somatic reactions—a tingling spine, a touched nerve, a brushed shoulder—in a terse and mildly disorienting manner that conveys the force of Peggy's interior experience while maintaining a conspicuous ambiguity: the fact that Peggy's thoughts and feelings remain obscure in this moment implies that they are quite literally beyond words. Resonating with the evolutionary social-psychological idea that evolved intercommunication will entail the "progressive extension of the sphere of imaginative sympathy" (*GM* 294), Peggy's experience contrasts the stiltedness of language with the potent power of raw emotional response, the power of, in McDougall's words, "pity and sympathetic sorrow and tender regard" (297).

In subsequent passages, Woolf more directly relates the thrilling potency of Peggy's response not only to the failure of language but also to the vision of a progressively evolved humanity. Pages later, while engaging in cheerful conversation with Eleanor, Renny, and North, Peggy begins to laugh, and her laughter has "some strange effect on her. ... She felt, or rather she saw, not a place, but a state of being, in which there was a real laughter, real happiness, and this fractured world was whole;

whole, vast, and free. But how could she say it?” (370). Crucially, when Peggy attempts to “say it,” she “[gets] it wrong,” and instead of communicating this transcendent “state of being,” she snarls at North: ““You’ll marry. You’ll have children. What’ll you do then? [...]. You’ll write one little book, and then another little book,’ she said viciously, ‘instead of living... living differently, differently”” (371). The narration continues:

There was the vision still, but she had not grasped it. ... Yet there it hung before her, the thing she had seen, the thing she had not said. But as she fell back with a jerk against the wall, she felt relieved of some oppression; her heart thumped; the veins on her forehead stood out. She had not said it, but she had tried to say it. (371)

More explicitly than in the previous passage, this scene ties linguistic failure to both the divisions of sexual difference and the vision of a utopian future. Prompted by the nonverbal and instinctual experience of laughter, Peggy experiences a “vision” of a world “whole, vast, and free”—a vision that becomes distorted when filtered through language in a way that throws the gendered language barrier into sharp relief. While Peggy’s vision is a “state of being” characterized by “real laughter, real happiness,” language perverts this transcendent experience into a list of gendered grievances, as Peggy “viciously” predicts that North will embrace a life sustaining the patriarchal status quo rather than “living differently” (371). This passage revisits Peggy’s previous emotional experience, as she “felt, or rather saw” an inexpressible “thing” that sends “her heart thump[ing]” and “the veins on her forehead [standing] out.” Further, in plainly paralleling Peggy’s vision to Eleanor’s vision of a “New World”—and, intertextually, to her own “dream of peace”—Woolf connects Peggy’s experience to the idea of humanity’s evolutionary future. The New World glimpsed by both Peggy and Eleanor entails, Woolf suggests, the evolved capacity for intercommunication that transcends the gendered language barrier

and thus language itself. While Peggy's attempt to relate her vision in words inevitably fails ("she had not grasped it"), the presence and emotional potency of Eleanor and Peggy's shared vision alludes to the distant possibility of future intercommunication ("Yet there it hung before her").

If Peggy's narrative in "Present Day" aesthetically gestures to a future of evolved intercommunication that bridges the communicative "gulf" of sexual difference, then her final scene in the novel concludes that project in an attitude of hopefulness, in keeping with the utopian optimism that concludes *Three Guineas*. As the party draws to a close, Peggy and North find themselves sitting side by side, and North is reminded of the moment earlier in the evening when she spoke sharply at him:

Her face was gay;... But he saw it as he had seen it upstairs—scarlet, puckered—as if she were about to burst into tears. It was her face that was true, not her words. But only her words returned to him—to live differently—differently. [...] Peggy was watching him over the rim of her ham sandwich.

"What you said was true," he blurted out, "...quite true." It was what she meant that was true, he corrected himself; her feeling, not her words. He felt her feeling now; it was not about him; it was about other people; about another world, a new world... (401)

The human beings who populate this scene are not the evolved creatures of a theoretical future humanity, and what occurs in this passage is not a Trotterian instance of "communion of interest and sympathy far closer than anything yet dreamed of as possible" (*IH* 163). North's epiphany occurs several hours after Peggy's initial attempt at communication, sparked by the chance memory of Peggy's "puckered" face, while Peggy herself remains unaware of her brother's insight. Nevertheless, the exhilaration of the moment is palpable. Just as Woolf, in the conclusion of *Three Guineas*, seeks to "release [the] emotions such as the human figure... arouses in us who are human beings" as a means of recognizing that we "can ourselves change that figure" (168), North's wordless

sympathy for Peggy's emotional state ("he felt her feeling now") functions as the conduit that enables him to access her vision of the "new world." Peggy's previous expression of feeling—the fact that she embraced the gregarious instinct to communicate and "tried to say it" (Y 371)—enables her to unwittingly succeed in communicating her "vision" to her brother. As in the previous passage, Woolf renders this scene in a way that stresses the necessity of language's failure for this cross-gender communion to occur, even as she expertly wields language as her own literary tool. Woolf renders the key to North's understanding—the fact that "It was her face that was true; not her words... It was she meant that was true... her feeling, not her words"—in a flat, repetitive prose that exemplifies the veracity of his sentiment. While North's epiphany is articulated through such vague and banal phrases as "it was not about him; it was about other people," Woolf allows readers to discern the contours of the intercommunication that has occurred, as North sympathetically accesses Peggy and Eleanor's feminist-pacifist vision of a "new world."

Overall, then, Woolf adapts evolutionary social-psychological discourse in *The Years*—as in *Three Guineas*—to examine the reciprocal relationship between psychological sexual difference and the socialized structures of patriarchy, and to theorize how the processes of progressive evolution may be leveraged to intervene in this relationship. But unlike *Three Guineas*, *The Years* explores the role of language in this dynamic. Developing literary strategies that prompt readers to place her characters at a species-level register of human behavior and social practices, Woolf renders the everyday lives of the Pargiter family to illuminate what I have called the gendered language barrier and to expand on her evolutionary social-psychological theorization of mind, using the

“Present Day” chapter to develop experimental literary techniques that anticipate an evolved humanity that has transcended language’s limits. While critics have reasonably assumed that the “impotence” of language at the conclusion of *The Years* implies a resignation on Woolf’s part,⁸⁰ reading the novel in relation to evolutionary social-psychological theory enables us to discern the utopian energy that Woolf in fact attaches to language’s failure. If, as Woolf writes at the end of *The Years*, “it was impossible to find one word for the whole” (408), she encourages us to understand this as a hopeful development, as “the future,” necessarily beyond words, is itself “whole, bright, deep with understanding” (406).

In closing, I return to the observation that opened this chapter, regarding the way in which critics have historically interpreted Woolf’s literary experiments with psychological theory, as an exploration of individual selfhood that culminates with *The Waves* in 1931. In that supposedly consummate psychological novel, Woolf takes up the notion of social-psychological identity formation, using her characters, as Brook Miller attests, to explore how “[s]ubjects exist in mutually dependent social systems that produce emergent identity as a socializing form.”⁸¹ Critics find *The Waves* dramatizing the ways in which human psychology emerges as a product of social influences—a stance that Craig A. Gordon discursively connects to contemporary social-psychological thought, and one that implies a certain unavoidable determinism.⁸² If the social environment imposes behavioral patterns that subsequently become entrenched within

⁸⁰ Froula, *Bloomsbury*, 225.

⁸¹ Miller, *Self-Consciousness*, 140.

⁸² Such a process entails “the habitual production of discrete individual who are left at the mercy of the increasingly rigid physical organization of their nervous systems.” Gordon attests that in *The Waves*, Woolf seeks to explore “the consequences of those processes for the formation and understanding of the self,” particularly to “suggest that these processes are substantially predicated on determining modes of somatic organization, which are directed toward the formation of increasingly discrete individuals whose bodies render them progressively less free.” Gordon, *Bioscience*, 159–60.

individuals by the neurological mechanisms of habit, then radical sociopolitical change is essentially impossible. Within such a framework, no individual is capable of meaningfully resisting the determining power of social conditioning. Although he is reluctant to conclude that Woolf would authorize such a fatalistic stance, Gordon admits that *The Waves* inscribes no clear means of egress, as the novel ends with the primary character, Bernard, coming to grips with “a world seen without a self.”⁸³

As we have seen, however, *The Waves* does not mark the conclusion of Woolf’s engagement with psychological thought. In both *Three Guineas* and *The Years*, she continues to utilize psychological discourses to fuel her formal experimentation and interrogate contemporary sociopolitical issues. Even further, we may now also appreciate *The Years* as a work of fiction that participates in the particular developmental arc that critics perceive in Woolf’s career: the novel effectively builds upon and responds to the determinist dilemma that Gordon identifies in *The Waves*. If Woolf utilized the social-psychological premises of *The Waves* to grapple with the fact that social conditioning is too powerful a force for an individual to adequately resist within a lifetime, in *The Years* and *Three Guineas* she taps into the transformative potential inherent in the scale of evolutionary time. Intent on attending to the urgent problems of patriarchy and sexual difference, these late-period texts capitalize on the evolutionary component of McDougall and Trotter’s social-psychological model to posit the means by which determinism may be evaded, by which even the most inveterate evils of humanity may be relieved. While *Three Guineas* and *The Years* are often regarded as among the most cynical texts of Woolf’s career, evolutionary social psychology provides the context by which we might appreciate them as works that insist that women—and indeed all people,

⁸³ Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (1931; repr., Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), 213.

who regardless of gender suffer under the miseries wrought by sexual difference—“have reason to hope” (*TG* 169).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abel, Elizabeth. *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Alt, Christina. *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Anastasi, Anne. "The Nature of Individual Differences." In *Fields of Psychology*, edited by J. P. Guilford, 251–311. New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1939.
- Armstrong, Tim. *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Bahun, Sanja. "Woolf and Psychoanalytic Theory." In *Virginia Woolf in Context*, edited by Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman, 92–109. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Barber, Stephen M. "States of Emergency, States of Freedom: Woolf, History, and the Novel." *Novel* 42, no. 2 (2009): 196–206.
- Bartkowski, Frances. *Feminist Utopias*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.
- Bishop, Edward. *A Virginia Woolf Chronology*. London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Black, Naomi. *Virginia Woolf as Feminist*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Bonikowski, Wyatt. "The Return of the Soldier Brings Death Home." *Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 3 (2005): 513–535.
- . *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination: The Death Drive in Post-World War I British Fiction*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013.
- Bowlby, Rachel. *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.
- . *Still Crazy After All These Years: Women, Writing and Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1992.

- Boyd, Brian. *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Brennan, Teresa, ed. *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Briggs, Julia. "The novels of the 1930s and the impact of history." In Sellers, *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, 70–88.
- Buckley, Kerry W. *Mechanical Man: John Broadus Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism*. New York: Guilford, 1989.
- Burstein, Jessica. *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012.
- Bush, Clive. *Halfway to Revolution: Investigation and Crisis in the Work of Henry Adams, William James and Gertrude Stein*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Calkins, Mary Whiton. "The Truly Psychological Behaviorism." *Psychological Review* 28, no. 1 (1921): 1–18.
- Cattell, James McKeen. "A Statistical Study of American Men of Science: The Selection of a Group of One Thousand Scientific Men." *Science* 24, no. 621 (1906): 658–665.
- Caughie, Pamela L. *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991.
- Chan, Evelyn Tsz Yan. *Virginia Woolf and the Professions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Chessman, Harriet Scott. *The Public is Invited to Dance: Representation, the Body, and Dialogue in Gertrude Stein*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.
- Childs, Donald. *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Chisholm, Dianne. *H.D.'s Freudian Poetics: Psychoanalysis in Translation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Cobley, Evelyn. *Modernism and the Culture of Efficiency: Ideology and Fiction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Cohen, Debra Rae. "Sheepish Modernism: Rebecca West, the Adam Brothers, and the Taxonomies of Criticism." In Schweizer, *Rebecca West Today*, 143–56.
- . *Remapping the Home Front: Locating Citizenship in British Women's Great*

- War Fiction* Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002.
- Covington, Elizabeth. "The Return of the Soldier and Re-Appropriated Memories." *Journal of Modern Literature* 37, no. 3 (2014): 56–73.
- Cowan, Laura. "The Fine Frenzy of Artistic Vision: Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* as a Feminist Analysis of World War I." *Centennial Review* 42, no. 2 (1998): 285–308.
- . *Rebecca West's Subversive Use of Hybrid Genres: 1911–41*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Crile, George W. "A Mechanistic View of Psychology." *Science* 29 (1913): 283–295.
- Cuddy-Keane, Melba. *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Davis, Thomas S. "The Historical Novel at History's End: Virginia Woolf's *The Years*." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 60, no. 1 (2014): 1–26.
- DeKoven, Marianne. *A Different Language: Gertrude Stein's Experimental Writing*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983.
- . *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Easterlin, Nancy. *A Biocultural Approach to Literary Theory and Interpretation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.
- Eliot, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In *The Sacred Wood*. London: Methuen, 1920.
- Ellmann, Maud. *The Nets of Modernism: Henry James, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Sigmund Freud*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Evans, Elizabeth F. "Air War, Propaganda, and Woolf's Anti-Tyranny Aesthetic." *Modern Fiction Studies* 59, no. 1 (2013): 53–82.
- Farland, Maria. "Gertrude Stein's Brain Work." *American Literature* 76, no. 1 (2004): 117–148.
- Fawcett, Millicent Garrett. "The Appeal Against Female Suffrage: a Reply." *The Nineteenth Century* 26 (1899): 86–96.
- Feldman, Yael S. "From Essentialism to Constructivism?: The Gender of Peace and War—Gilman, Woolf, Freud." *Partial Answers* 2, no. 1 (2004): 113–145.
- Felski, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

- Forster, E.M. *Aspects of the Novel*. Orlando: Harcourt, 1927.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex." In *The Freud Reader*, edited by Peter Gay, 661–666. New York: Norton, 1989.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Wartime Cosmopolitanism: Cosmofeminism in Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 32, no. 1 (2013): 23–52.
- Frigerio, Francesca. "Under West(ern) Eyes: Rebecca West Reads Joyce." *Journal of Modern Literature* 26, no. 1 (2002): 66–72.
- Fromm, Gloria G. "Re-inscribing *The Years*: Virginia Woolf, Rose Macaulay, and the Critics." *Journal of Modern Literature* 13, no. 2 (1986): 289–306.
- Frost, Elisabeth. *The Feminist Avant-Garde in American Poetry*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003.
- Froula, Christine. *Modernism's Body: Sex, Culture, and Joyce*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- . *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Fuchs, Alfred H. and Rand B. Evans. "Psychology as a Science." In *Handbook of Psychology: Volume 1: History of Psychology*, 2nd ed., edited by Donald K. Freedheim and Irving B. Weiner, 1–26. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013.
- Galow, Timothy W. "Gertrude Stein's *Everybody's Autobiography* and the Art of Contradictions." *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no. 1 (2008): 111–128.
- . "Literary Modernism in the Age of Celebrity" *Modernism/Modernity* 17, no. 2 (2010): 313–329.
- Galton, Francis, F.R.S. "Psychometric Experiments." *Brain* 2 (1879): 149–162.
- Gardener, Helen Hamilton. Remarks. In *Report of the International Council of Women*. 369–382. Boston: Rufus Darby Printers, 1888.
- Garrity, Jane. *Step-Daughters of England: British women modernists and the national imaginary*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- Gätgens, Marie-Luise. "Three Guineas, Fascism, and the Construction of Gender." In Pawlowski, *Virginia Woolf and Fascism*, 21–38.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century: Volume 2: Sexchanges*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

- Goldman, Jane. *The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . “From *Mrs Dalloway* to *The Waves*: New elegy and lyric experimentalism.” In Sellers, *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, 49–69.
- Gordon, Craig A. *Literary Modernism, Bioscience, and Community in Early 20th Century Britain*. New York: Palgrave, 2007.
- Gottlieb, Julie V. and Richard Toye, eds. *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender, and Politics in Britain, 1918–1945*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Greenwood, John D. *A Conceptual History of Psychology: Exploring the Tangled Web*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
- Häggglund, Martin. *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Hale, Jr., Matthew. *Psychology and the Social Order: An Intellectual Biography of Hugo Münsterberg*. College Park, MD: University of Maryland Press, 1978.
- Hamblin, Kimberly A. *From Eve to Evolution: Darwin, Science, and Women's Rights in Gilded Age America*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014.
- Hawkins, Mike. *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Hearnshaw, L.S. *A Short History of British Psychology, 1840–1940*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986.
- Heffernan, Laura. “Reading Modernism's Cultural Field: Rebecca West's *The Strange Necessity* and the Aesthetic 'System of Relations.'” *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 27, no. 2 (2008): 309–325.
- Henry, Holly. *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science: The Aesthetics of Astronomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Holton, Sandra Stanley. *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900–1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Hothersall, David. *History of Psychology*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.
- Huxley, Julian. “Eugenics and Society.” *Eugenics Review* 28, no. 1 (1936): 11–31.
- . *Essays of a Biologist*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923.

- . Introduction to *The Phenomenon of Man*, by Pierre Teilhard De Chardin. New York: Harper, 1959.
- James, William. *The Principles of Psychology, Volume 1*. 1890. Reprint, New York: Dover, 1950.
- Johns, Alessa. "Feminism and Utopianism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, 174–199. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- . *Women's Utopias of the Eighteenth Century*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- Johnson, George M. *Dynamic Psychology in Modernist British Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2006.
- Jones, Clara. *Virginia Woolf: Ambivalent Activist*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.
- Kavka, Misha. "Men in (Shell-)Shock: Masculinity, Trauma, and Psychoanalysis in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*." *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 22, no. 1 (1998): 151–171.
- Kent, Susan Kingsley. *Gender and History*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- . *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- . *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860–1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- Knapp, James F. *Literary Modernism and the Transformation of Work*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988.
- Kohlmann, Benjamin and Rosalyn Gregory, eds. *Utopian Spaces of Modernism: British Literature and Culture, 1885–1945*. New York, Palgrave, 2012.
- Laffey, John F. "Social Psychology and Political Ideology: The Case of Wilfred Trotter and William McDougall." *Historical Reflections* 12, no. 3 (1985): 375–402.
- Laing, Kathryn. "Versions and Palimpsests: Rebecca West's *The Sentinel*, *Adela*, and *The Judge*." In Schweizer, *Rebecca West Today*, 170–185.
- Lambert, Elizabeth G. "'And Darwin Says They Are Nearer the Cow': Evolutionary Discourse in *Melymbrosia* and *The Voyage Out*." *Twentieth Century Literature* 37, no. 1 (1991): 1–21.
- Landy, Frank J. "Münsterberg: Victim or Visionary?" *Journal of Applied Psychology* 77,

- no. 6 (1992): 787–802.
- Linett, Maren. “The Jew in the Bath: Imperiled Imagination in Woolf’s *The Years*.” *Modern Fiction Studies* 48, no. 2 (2002): 341–361.
- Lorde, Audre. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007.
- Malane, Rachel. *Sex in Mind: The Gendered Brain in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Mental Sciences*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
- Mandler, George. *A History of Modern Experimental Psychology: From James and Wundt to Cognitive Science*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007.
- Mao, Douglas. “Rebecca West and the Origins of *A Room of One’s Own*.” *Modernist Cultures* 9, no. 2 (2014): 186–212.
- . *Fateful Beauty: Aesthetic Environments, Juvenile Development, and Literature, 1860–1960*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Marcus, Jane. Introduction to *Three Guineas*, by Virginia Woolf. 1938. Reprint, Orlando: Harcourt, 2006.
- . *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Maudsley, Henry. “Sex in Mind and Education.” *Fortnightly Review* 15 (1874): 466–83.
- McCarthy, Helen. “‘Shut Against the Woman and Workman Alike’: Democratizing Foreign Policy Between the Wars,” in Gottlieb and Toye, *The Aftermath of Suffrage*, 142–158.
- McDougall, William. *The Group Mind*, 2nd ed. London: Cambridge University Press, 1927.
- . *An Introduction to Social Psychology*, 2nd ed. Boston: John W. Luce, 1909.
- McLaurin, Allen. “Consciousness and Group Consciousness in Virginia Woolf.” In *Virginia Woolf: A Centenary Perspective*, edited by Eric Warner, 28–40. New York: Macmillan, 1984.
- Meyer, Steven. *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001.
- Micale, Mark. “The Modernist Mind: A Map.” In *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America, 1880–1940*, edited by Mark Micale, 1–19. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Miller, Brook. *Self-Consciousness in Modern British Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2013.

- Minow-Pinkney, Makiko. *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject: Feminine Writing in the Major Novels*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1987.
- Mix, Deborah M. *A Vocabulary of Thinking: Gertrude Stein and Contemporary North American Women's Innovative Writing*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2007.
- Moi, Toril, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, 2nd edited by London: Routledge, 1985.
- . “Patriarchal Thought and the Drive for Knowledge.” In *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, edited by Teresa Brennan, 189–206. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Moore, George B. *Gertrude Stein's The Making of Americans: Repetition and the Emergence of Modernism*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998.
- Moses, Omri. *Out of Character: Modernism, Vitalism, Psychic Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- Münsterberg, Hugo. “Finding a Life Work.” *McClure's Magazine* 34, no. 4 (1910): 398–403.
- . Letter to Gertrude Stein. 10 June 1895. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
- . *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913.
- . “Psychology and the Market.” *McClure's Magazine* 34, no. 1 (1909): 87–93.
- Murphet, Julian. “Gertrude Stein's Machinery of Perception.” In *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing After Cinema*, edited by Julian Murphet and Lydia Rainford, 67–81. New York: Palgrave, 2003.
- Neverow, Vara S. “Freudian Seduction and the Fallacies of Dictatorship.” In Pawlowski, *Virginia Woolf and Fascism*, 56–72.
- Olson, Liesl. *Modernism and the Ordinary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Pavlov, Ivan P. *Conditioned Reflexes: An Investigation of the Physiological Activity of the Cerebral Cortex*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927.
- Pawlowski, Merry M., ed. *Virginia Woolf and Fascism*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.
- Paxton, Nancy L. “Renegotiating the Public and Private Divide: Reconsidering Rebecca West's *The Judge*.” In Schweizer, *Rebecca West Today*, 189–205.
- Peppis, Paul. *Sciences of Modernism: Ethnography, Sexology, and Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

- Peterson, Shirley. "Modernism, Single Motherhood, and the Discourse of Women's Liberation in Rebecca West's *The Judge*." In *Unmanning Modernism: Gendered Re-Readings*, edited by Elizabeth Jane Harrison and Shirley Peterson, 105–116. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997.
- Pinkerton, Steve. "Trauma and Cure in Rebecca West's 'The Return of the Soldier.'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no. 1 (2008): 1–12.
- Pulsifer, Rebecah. "Reading Kitty's Trauma in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*." *Studies in the Novel* 45, no. 1 (2013): 37–55.
- Radin, Grace. *Virginia Woolf's 'The Years': The Evolution of a Novel*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981.
- Ray, Phillip E. "The Judge Reexamined: Rebecca West's Underrated Gothic Romance." *Literature in Transition, 1880–1920* 31, no. 3 (1988): 297–307.
- Richardson, Joan. *A Natural History of Pragmatism: The Fact of Feeling from Jonathan Edwards to Gertrude Stein*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Richter, Harvena. *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Rizzuto, Nicole. "Toward an Ethics of Witnessing: Traumatic Testimony in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*." *College Literature* 39, no. 4 (2012): 7–33.
- Rodden, John. *Between Self and Society: Inner Worlds and Outer Limits in the British Psychological Novel*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016.
- Rollyson, Carl. *The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West*. Bethesda, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1998.
- Ruddick, Lisa. *Reading Gertrude Stein: Body, Text, Gnosis*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Ryan, Derek. *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Ryan, Judith. *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Saloman, Randi. *Virginia Woolf's Essayism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- Sargisson, Lucy. *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Schechter, Patricia A. *Exploring the Decolonial Imaginary: Four Transnational Lives*. New York: Palgrave, 2012.

- Schiebinger, Londa. *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Schoenbach, Lisi. *Pragmatic Modernism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Schweizer, Bernard, ed. *Rebecca West Today: Contemporary Critical Approaches*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006.
- Scott, Bonnie Kime. *Refiguring Modernism: The Women of 1928*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- . “Refiguring the Binary, Breaking the Cycle: Rebecca West as Feminist Modernist.” *Twentieth Century Literature* 37, no. 2 (1991): 169–191.
- Sherry, Vincent. *The Great War and the Language of Modernism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- . *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Shiach, Morag. *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Simpson, Jeffry A. and Douglas T. Kenrick. *Evolutionary Social Psychology*. New York: Psychology Press, 1997.
- Snaith, Anna. *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.
- Southworth, Helen. *The Intersecting Realities and Fictions of Virginia Woolf and Colette*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004.
- Spolsky, Ellen. “Narrative as Nourishment.” In *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, edited by Frederick Luis Aldama, 37–60. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.
- Stec, Loretta. “Dystopian Modernism vs Utopian Feminism: Burdekin, Woolf, and West Respond to the Rise of Fascism.” In Pawlowski, *Virginia Woolf and Fascism*, 178–193.
- Stein, Gertrude. “Degeneration in American Women.” Reprint, *Sister Brother: Gertrude and Leo Stein*, by Brenda Wineapple, 411–414. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- . *Everybody’s Autobiography*. New York: Random House, 1937.
- . *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family’s Progress*. 1925. Reprint, Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995.

- . *Three Lives*. 1909. Reprint, London: Peter Owen, 1970.
- . “The Value of College Education for Women.” 1899. Claribel Cone and Etta Cone Papers. Archives and Manuscripts Collections, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD.
- Stephens, Paul. “‘Reading at It’: Gertrude Stein, Information Overload, and the Makings of Americanitis.” *Twentieth-Century Literature* 59, no. 1 (2013): 126–156.
- Stephens, Rebecca. “Virginia Woolf’s *The Pargiters* and the Dialogue of Genre.” *Genre* 28, no. 1–2 (1995): 171–184.
- Stetson, Charlotte Perkins. *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1898.
- Stetz, Margaret. “Drinking ‘The Wine of Truth’: Philosophical Change in West’s *The Return of the Soldier*.” *Arizona Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1987): 63–78.
- Stonebridge, Lyndsey. *The Destructive Element: British Psychoanalysis and Modernism*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Taylor, J. Lionel. *The Nature of Woman*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1913.
- Taylor, Frederick Winslow. *The Principles of Scientific Management*. 1911. Reprint, New York: Norton, 1967.
- Taylor, Melanie. “A Poetics of Difference: *The Making of Americans* and Unreadable Subjects.” *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (2003): 26–42.
- Transue, Pamela. *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Style*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1986.
- Tratner, Michael. *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Trotter, Wilfred. *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1921.
- Van Dusen, Wanda. “Portrait of a National Fetish: Gertrude Stein’s ‘Introduction to the Speeches of Marichal Pitain’ (1942).” *Modernism/Modernity* 3, no. 3 (1996): 69–92.
- Waddell, Nathan. *Modernist Nowheres: Politics and Utopia in Early Modernist Writing, 1900–1920*. New York: Palgrave, 2012.
- Watson, John B. *Behavior: An introduction to comparative psychology*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1914.
- . *Behaviorism*. New York: Norton, 1925.

- . “Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It.” *Psychological Review* 20, no. 2 (1913): 158–77.
- . *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1919.
- Weininger, Otto. *Sex and Character*. 1906. Reprint, New York: GP Putnam’s Sons, 1908.
- Wells, Robin Headlam and Johnjoe McFadden, eds. *Human Nature: Fact and Fiction: Literature, Science, and Human Nature*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- West, Rebecca. “Cause of Women’s Restlessness.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 376–380.
- . Correspondence between Mrs Hobson and Miss West. In *The Young Rebecca*, 38–42.
- . “The Gospel According to Mrs Humphry Ward.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 14–17.
- . “Indissoluble Matrimony.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 267–289.
- . *The Judge*. 1922. Reprint, London: Virago, 1983.
- . Letter to Richard Ellmann, 7 November 1958. In *Selected Letters of Rebecca West*, edited by Bonnie Kime Scott, 326–328. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- . Letter to SK Ratcliffe, Christmas 1917. In *Selected Letters of Rebecca West*, 34–36.
- . Letter to SK Ratcliffe, summer 1922. In *Selected Letters of Rebecca West*, 52–53.
- . Letter to the Editor of *The Freewoman*. In *The Young Rebecca*, 47–49.
- . “Mr Chesterton in Hysterics: A Study in Prejudice.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 218–222.
- . “The Nature of Woman: Every Home a Little Earlswood.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 161–166.
- . “A New Woman’s Movement: The Need for Riotous Living.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 130–135.
- . “An Orgy of Disorder and Cruelty.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 97–101.
- . “The Position of Women in Indian Life.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 12–14.
- . *The Return of the Soldier*. 1918. Reprint, New York: Penguin, 1998.
- . “The Sin of Self-Sacrifice.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 235–238.

- . “Spinsters and Art.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 42–47.
- . “The Strange Necessity.” In *The Strange Necessity: Essays and Reviews*. 1928. Reprint, London: Virago, 1987.
- . “Woman Adrift.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 28–31.
- . “Women and Wages.” In *The Young Rebecca*, 101–105.
- . *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West, 1911–1917*. Selected and introduced by Jane Marcus. London: Viking, 1982.
- West, Rebecca and G.E. Hutchinson. “On ‘The Return of the Soldier.’” *The Yale University Library Gazette* 57, no. 1 (1982): 66–69.
- Whittier-Ferguson, John. “Repetition, Remembering, Repetition: Virginia Woolf’s Late Fiction and the Return of War.” *Modern Fiction Studies* 57, no. 2 (2011): 230–253.
- . “Stein in Time: History, Manuscripts, and Memory.” *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 1 (1999): 115–151.
- Will, Barbara. *Gertrude Stein, Modernism, and the Problem of “Genius.”* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
- . *Unlikely Collaborations: Gertrude Stein, Bernard Fajó, and the Vichy Dilemma*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
- Wineapple, Brenda. “Gertrude Stein and the Lost Ark.” In *The Critical Response to Gertrude Stein*, edited by Kirk Curnutt 344–352. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000.
- . *Sister Brother: Gertrude and Leo Stein*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996.
- Wood, Alice. *Woolf’s Late Cultural Criticism: The Genesis of ‘The Years,’ ‘Three Guineas’ and ‘Between the Acts’*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Woolf, Virginia. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume 4: 1931–1935*, Edited by Anne Olivier Bell. London: Hogarth Press, 1982.
- . *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume 5: 1936–1941*, Edited by Anne Olivier Bell. London: Hogarth Press, 1984.
- . “Modern Fiction.” In *The Common Reader*. Orlando: Harcourt, 1925.
- . “The New Biography.” In *Collected Essays of Virginia Woolf: Volume 4*, edited by Leonard Woolf. London: Hogarth Press, 1967.

- . *A Room of One's Own*. 1929. Reprint, Orlando: Harcourt, 1981.
- . *Three Guineas*. 1938. Reprint, Orlando: Harcourt, 2006.
- . *The Waves*. 1931. Reprint, Orlando: Harcourt, 2006.
- . *The Years*. 1937. Reprint, Orlando: Harcourt, 2008.
- Wright, Almroth E. *The Unexpurgated Case against Women's Suffrage*. New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1913.
- Ziarek, Ewa Płonowska. *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Zickar, Michael J. and Robert E. Gibby. "Four Persistent Themes Throughout the History of I-O Psychology in the United States." In *Historical Perspectives in Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, edited by Laura L. Koppes, 61–80. New York: Psychology Press, 2007.
- Zox-Weaver, Annalisa. *Women Modernists and Fascism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Zwerdling, Alex. *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.