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Puzzling Modernity

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

Laura Beth Lorhan

2016

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2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Puzzling Modernity

by

Laura Beth Lorhan

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Michael A. North, Chair

Puzzling Modernity approaches key issues in modernist scholarship, such as fractured subjectivity and modernism's notoriously vexed relationship with popular culture, from a distinctly new vantage point by situating American modernism within a previously unrecognized pattern of nationwide fascination with puzzles dating back to the 1880s. I argue that puzzles appealed to modernist authors as aesthetic models because they offer a framework for acknowledging the grim realities of modern life without sacrificing the possibility for reconnection and regaining a sense of wholeness, no matter how provisional. Yet, while puzzles offer a safe environment in which to test out solutions to life's dilemmas, they also participate in exclusionary discourses and advance regressive agendas, particularly when administered as intelligence tests. Far more than aesthetic models, then, puzzles serve modernist writers as tools for revealing and frequently subverting the rhetorical ends to which these seemingly innocent and trivial pastimes have been put. In the first chapter, I argue that the "cross-word puzzle

school" label that detractors of modernism appended to T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound during the 1920s serves as a useful point of departure for reconsidering their poetics because it brings their abiding concern for order rooted in language into sharp focus. In part two, I contend that Djuna Barnes burlesques sexological formulations of homosexuality as a riddle to be solved through riddling prose of her own in *Ladies Almanack* (1928). She renders definitive statements about queer being impossible, and in so doing, restores the archaic definition of the verb "to queer" meaning to puzzle or flummox. Part three considers puzzling in relation to race. I track the convergence of degeneration theory, Positivist criminology, eugenics, and anthropology to their fixation on "abnormal" physiognomy and demonstrate how each of these disciplines encodes deviance in racial terms. Building off of this foundation, I analyze how Jean Toomer redeploys the central premise of the Changing Faces puzzle by crafting a series of portraits of African American and multiracial individuals in *Cane* (1923) that undercut and denaturalize the criminalization of facial features along racial lines enacted by anthropometry and eugenics.

The dissertation of Laura Beth Lorhan is approved.

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Kathleen Komar

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2016

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VITA

Laura Beth Lorhan is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research interests include modernism, visual culture, gender studies, detective fiction, and folklore. She earned a Master of Arts in English from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2012, and a Master of Arts in Literatures in English from the University of California, San Diego in 2005. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Literatures in English, graduating *summa cum laude* with departmental distinction, from the University of California, San Diego in 2002.

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"Games, like women's fashions, are better clues to an epoch than its laws and statesmen."
—William Bolitho (1924)

Introduction

"My time is too valuable to waste on such childish balderdash" Oliver Hardy exclaims before succumbing to the allure of piecing together a jigsaw puzzle with Stan Laurel in the short film *Me and My Pal* (1933). One would be hard-pressed to imagine a less dramatic situation for a comedy duo to exploit than sitting at a table assembling a jigsaw in silence, yet it forms the premise for the entire film. Hardy becomes so immersed in the puzzle that he fails to attend his wedding to an heiress and each of the supporting characters, from the taxi driver hired to take them to the church to a Western Union employee tasked with delivering an important message, quickly overcomes his compunction and joins in the fun. By film's end, a raucous crowd has gathered, each jockeying for position around the puzzle until a fight breaks out and the nearly completed jigsaw crashes to the floor. Police arrive to break up the "riot," and seemingly everyone, including the bride's father, gets arrested. In the aftermath, Laurel and Hardy emerge from their hiding places. Laurel spots the missing puzzle piece and drops to his hands and knees to begin the labor anew. An enraged Hardy chases his friend from the room, kicks and tosses the offending puzzle pieces into the air, and the picture fades to black accompanied by the jaunty strains of their theme song.

In this film, the duo artfully undercuts the chief objections to the "jig-saw puzzle craze" that swept the nation during the Great Depression. Contrary to the belief that jigsaw puzzles are childish nonsense, a trivial diversion unworthy of a serious businessman's time or notice, Laurel and Hardy highlight the puzzle's appeal to all walks of life and demonstrate, through the collaborative efforts of an increasingly frantic group of grown men to assemble the pieces, that they are not so easy to complete. Hardy and the policeman, the main exponents of cultural

critiques of jigsaw puzzles in the film, become the most obsessed with finishing the puzzle (that is, prior to the arrests that reinstitute social pressures to conform), suggesting the hypocrisy of the viewpoint that they espouse. The policeman's abrupt about-face—he trails off in mid-sentence while chastising Hardy for indulging in the pastime as he, too, becomes mesmerized by the jigsaw puzzle—elicits a laugh from the audience at his all too human foibles. Only a concern for appearances prevents these men from participating in an innocent diversion that they clearly enjoy. Laurel and Hardy indicate that there is no reason to feel embarrassed about engaging in the so-called guilty pleasure by directing the viewer's laughter at the men's self-important, futile efforts to restrain themselves rather than at the puzzle itself. They also deliver a message of hope to people struggling to get by when Stan Laurel speaks squarely to camera, urging Ollie not to "worry. Prosperity is just around the corner."

At the time that *Me and My Pal* was made, Americans were buying an estimated two and a half million puzzles a week and the economic downturn "helped rather than hurt sales" (Copeland 8; Sigourney 42).¹ Jigsaws were everywhere. Women wore hats and bracelets with detachable jigsaw puzzle pieces, "jig-saw patterns" saturated the clothing market, merchants handed out complimentary puzzles with their name and product line printed on them, newspapers featured pictures of bathing beauties forsaking the water to work the weekly jigsaw puzzle, and festivities for FDR's fifty-second birthday included two jigsaw themed routines.² In an example of life imitating art, the *Los Angeles Times* gleefully reported that a burglar had spotted a jigsaw

¹ Jigsaw puzzle authority Anne Williams places the figure even higher. She claims that ten million puzzles sold each week during the first few months of 1933.

² At the Waldorf Astoria, fifty-two young women armed with artificial candles arranged themselves on stage in the shape of a birthday cake while singing happy birthday to the president. During the "Jig Saw Puzzle Dance" that followed, the curtains parted to reveal "a gigantic picture frame, which was quickly filled with irregularly cut pieces of cardboard carried by sixteen debutantes The jig-saw was worked out in full view of the audience" to reveal a picture of the president wearing his "sailing togs" ("40 Parties" A4).

puzzle and could not resist assembling it, leaving the finished puzzle displayed "on a dressing table," before fleeing the crime scene with forty-two dollars in cash ("Burglar" A5).³ Numerous cultural commentators astutely identified the psychological factors fueling the "jig-saw puzzle epidemic" during the 1930s. Puzzles offer a welcome distraction from personal cares when forces beyond an individual's control seem to conspire to throw the world into chaos. The constructive activity of building something with one's hands provides a sense of accomplishment, if only on a very small scale, and completing the puzzle reaffirms the self-worth of individuals whose confidence had been shaken by persistent unemployment (Williams). As George Copeland sardonically put it, "[t]he world is in pieces. No one knows how to fit it together. The jig-saw will fix everything," or at least that was how it seemed to millions of Americans, who desperately hoped that "a little thing like fitting together the bits of a shattered economic system will be as easy as was taking the jig-saws away from the baby" (16).

Jigsaws and crossword puzzles are the most recognizable examples of puzzles that spawned a nationwide craze during the first half of the twentieth century, but they are part of a much larger, previously unremarked pattern of sustained interest in puzzling that dates back to at least the 1880s in the United States. The fifteen puzzle was the first to court an adult audience, and the apparent simplicity of this sliding numerical puzzle belied an almost fiendish difficulty.⁴ The object of the puzzle is to arrange all fifteen numbered pieces in sequential order horizontally on the four by four grid, but only half of the staggering 20,922,789,888 possible configurations are soluble ("Science" 6). Undaunted by these odds, everyone "[f]rom the Judge on the bench to the bootblack on the sidewalk" purchased the puzzle for a mere quarter in the spring of 1880

³ The article refrains from speculating whether the victims regarded the theft or the completion of their jigsaw puzzle as the worse violation.

⁴ When the puzzle was revived in the 1930s, it was marketed under the fittingly diabolical name of Imp. During the original craze of 1880, the fifteen puzzle was also known as the "Gem" or "Boss" puzzle.

("Latest" 1).⁵ By 1889, Pigs in Clover had dethroned the fifteen puzzle, and the *Chicago Daily Tribune* declared in hyperbolic fashion that the "puzzle has fastened its fangs on Chicago as if it were the fabled hydra come from the lake on land" ("Obstinate" 1). A dexterity puzzle composed of three concentric rings each with a hole through which four marbles (pigs) must pass in order to reach the covered central circle (pen), Pigs in Clover became a favorite of senators, and reputedly the president, during the 1889 Congressional session. At the peak of the craze, the Waverley Toy Works, which owned the patent for Pigs in Clover, was producing fifty thousand puzzles a day and estimated that one million had been sold ("Pig" 1).

During the twentieth century, puzzles continued to exert an unbreakable hold over the American imagination. The Changing Faces puzzle (see Part III) was an unexpected hit at the Pan-American Exposition in 1901, and America went "jig-saw puzzle mad" in 1908. Shortages occasioned by the outbreak of World War I put a damper on the vogue for jigsaws and also disrupted publication of the newly invented crossword puzzle in *The New York World*.⁶ Mah Jongg became such a deeply entrenched facet of American life in the post-war years that William Bolitho speculated in January 1924 that for future generations the 1920s would conjure up a mental image of "thin, elegant women with close-cropped hair, playing a Chinese game, by shaded electric light, just out of the hearing of the throb of saxophones" (184). He could not have predicted then that crossword puzzles would displace Mah Jongg as the "national pastime" later

⁵ A close cousin of the fifteen puzzle and precursor to Sudoku, the Thirty-four puzzle was also played on a four by four grid. Enterprising toymakers manufactured Fifteen puzzles with a removable sixteenth piece in order to sell it as two games in one. The objective of the Thirty-four puzzle is to arrange all sixteen numbered pieces in such a way that they total thirty-four in all directions. The thirty-four puzzle was "all the rage" in Cincinnati in the summer of 1894 ("Catches" 6).

⁶ Hand-cut wooden jigsaw puzzles were luxury items that many families in the United States and Britain could ill afford during the war. Parker Brothers sold their popular Pastime Puzzles for about a penny a piece, which means that a jigsaw puzzle with three hundred pieces cost three dollars, or roughly the equivalent to fifty-five dollars today (Orbanes 46- 47). By the time that jigsaws became popular again in the 1930s, they were much less expensive due to changes in the manufacturing process (i.e., most companies substituted cardboard for wood and replaced individual artisans with mechanized production lines).

that year, or that they in turn would lose ground to the trivia game Ask Me Another in 1927. Crosswords experienced a second vogue in America and Britain during World War II when the British people used them as a means of whiling away the time in bomb shelters or underground stations during the Blitz; both nations utilized crosswords as tools for identifying and recruiting potential intelligence officers. In recent years, puzzles have expanded to digital platforms and social media, leading to the revival of a few old standards (e.g., crosswords and Mah Jongg) while also inaugurating a new wave of puzzle fads, including Sudoku, Candy Crush, and Words with Friends. This brief chronology demonstrates that while the puzzle of choice varies from year to year, almost as quickly as one becomes passé, another emerges to take its place.

Modernists were not immune to the siren song of puzzles. Quite the contrary, and they were attracted to various types of puzzles for many of the same reasons as the general public. Mina Loy, T.S. Eliot, Ben Hecht, Noel Coward, Kathleen Norris, Stephen Vincent Benet, and the members of the Algonquin Round Table were avid crossword fans. A study conducted by psychologists at Columbia University in 1925 traced the crossword craze back to "a group of well-known writers of New York" whose enthusiasm for the puzzle encouraged others "to try them too" (Arnot 55; "Why the Cross-word" 21). Although the study does not specifically identify the Round Tablers by name, their newspaper columns, especially F.P.A.'s "Conning Tower," played an instrumental role in publicizing the New York literati's devotion to the word puzzle. Likewise, the puzzle-loving Round Tablers were the driving force behind Ask Me Another. Robert Benchley penned the introduction to *Ask Me Another: The Question Book* (1927) that launched the trivia game, and contributors to the volume included Dorothy Parker, Heywood Broun, Ruth Hale, F.P.A, Marc Connelly, and Anita Loos. Djuna Barnes and T.S. Eliot were devoted fans of Sherlock Holmes, and Eliot knew the Holmes corpus so intimately

that he could recite the novels from memory (Gordon 437). Numerous modernist authors, from Gertrude Stein to William Faulkner, tried their hand at writing detective fiction. Even Ezra Pound claimed to have come up with "the idea, scheme, plot, for THE spy-detective communication with the foe story" but confessed himself to be "too bleating green in the form" to write it without the assistance of a collaborator (*Letters* 123). Modernist texts are, in many respects, puzzles themselves that require an active reader to make sense of their fragmentation, experiments with non-linear chronology, disorienting lack of connective links between episodes, and fluctuating perspectives or unreliable narration.

I argue that puzzles appealed to modernists because they offer a framework for acknowledging the grim realities of modern life without sacrificing the possibility for reconnection (on a variety of levels from personal to global) and regaining a sense of wholeness. Like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that combine to form a unified image, modernist texts hold out the hope that their seemingly disparate parts can be assembled into a cohesive whole, that the reader can manipulate the pieces in her mind's eye until they fit together into a coherent narrative, or an orderly poetic utterance. Yet in both instances, signs of the initial separation, whether jagged lines within the seemingly perfect picture or the stubbornly unaltered body of the text, serve as a constant reminder of the contrived, artificial quality of the unity achieved. In this sense, the affective response elicited by puzzles and modernist literature is very similar. Both impel their audience toward a solution that always bears a trace of its provisional quality, marking the completion of the puzzle or reordering of the text as a temporary, tenuous victory against the forces of disorder that constantly threaten to knock the pieces loose once again. To complicate matters further, literary puzzles rarely have a singular solution; while substantial overlap may occur between readings, each response to a given work of literature will differ based

upon the reader's background, familiarity with the author's canon, knowledge of the literary and historical milieu in which the text was produced, and a score of other factors that cannot be quantified. My point is not that interpreting these texts as puzzles or identifying their puzzling content will resolve all the difficulties and "unlock" their meaning (modernists were understandably hostile to this simplistic approach to their poetry and prose), but rather that situating modernism's engagement with puzzling within the contemporaneous series of nationwide puzzle fads offers new insights into modernism's notoriously vexed relationship with popular culture as well as modernist contributions to debates about American identity.

In "Puzzling Modernity," I contend that modernists were attracted to puzzles not only as aesthetic models, but also as instruments for subverting the rhetorical ends to which these seemingly innocent and trivial pastimes have been put. Puzzles, their marketing, and applications reflect cultural anxieties about questions of inclusion and exclusion that dominated American politics and society during the first half of the twentieth century. These questions have recently taken on renewed urgency in the wake of the resurgence of nativism and continuing struggles to achieve parity for peoples of all races, genders, sexual orientations, and religions. Who fits in the national puzzle? How do we forge connections with each other that respect differences without permitting them to obscure our shared humanity and commitment to the national welfare? Puzzles also broach questions of personal identity. Are individuals collections of shifting parts that recombine into new configurations over time, or is there a stable, underlying essence that remains constant throughout these transformations whether we call it a soul, the speaking subject, or something else altogether? Puzzles offer a safe, consequence free environment in which to explore issues of identity and test out solutions to life's dilemmas, yet during modernism's heyday puzzles could not be divorced from the exclusionary discourses and

regressive agendas that they were made to serve, especially when administered as intelligence tests. For a number of groups, a person's performance on puzzles had very real and far-reaching consequences. The speed and accuracy with which an immigrant at Ellis Island completed modified jig-saw puzzles, such as The Healy Frame Test or Construction Puzzle B, designed to assess intelligence and weed out "mental defectives," determined whether he or she would be granted citizenship or turned away after a long, fruitless voyage. In their quest to breed a "better" America, eugenicists also drew upon puzzles as tools for justifying forced sterilizations of persons determined to be "feeble minded." In short, puzzles provided a convenient pretext for denying equal privileges to disenfranchised populations based upon findings of their intellectual inferiority.

Beyond their function as intelligence tests, puzzles contributed more broadly to projects that sought to differentiate normal from aberrant individuals and behaviors as well as to separate insiders from outsiders, often through charges of deviancy from an assumed norm. Sexologists figured homosexuality as a riddle to be solved, Americans grappled with the race "problem" or "puzzle," and psychiatrists drew upon puzzles as diagnostic aids for identifying and treating personality disorders prior to the onset of psychosis. I will return to a consideration of puzzles in relation to sexuality and race in parts II and III. However, a brief discussion of one of the most influential and enduring applications of puzzles within the field of psychology, Rorschach's inkblot tests, lays the groundwork for my exploration of questions of identity pertinent to each of the authors and texts examined in this project. In 1921, Swiss psychologist Hermann Rorschach published *Psychodiagnostik*, which introduced his perceptual test to the scientific community by providing an overview of his empirical findings as well as the apparatus (ten inkblots) necessary for replicating his experiment. He acknowledged that his sample size for specific subsets of the

population, such as "uneducated normals," was too small to be reliable, because the majority of his test subjects were occupants of the asylum in Herisau where he served as assistant director (20). Unfortunately, Rorschach did not live long enough to rectify these problems. Within ten months of the publication of his controversial volume, he died suddenly from complications arising from a ruptured appendix; he was only thirty-seven years old (Piotrowski 35). American scientists, who had a long tradition of their own of using inkblot analysis as a gauge of imaginative ability and memory, quickly adopted Rorschach's methods. Dr. Samuel J. Beck's experiments during the late 1920s and early 1930s corroborated that the inkblot test is "a reliable indicator of abnormal personality types," but he challenged Rorschach's finding that the number of wholes an individual perceives directly correlates to his or her level of intelligence ("Ink" 146). Instead, Beck demonstrated that "material is more easily organized into meaningful wholes the less broken up it is," and he concluded that the "analysis-synthesis process" according to which subjects break apart the image and recombine the pieces into a meaningful whole "is by far the most difficult" (439, 441). Consequently, "'striving towards a whole,' without it being achieved" is not necessarily a sign of intellectual inferiority and may in fact be an indicator of a creative mentality since the subject seeks out "non-obvious relationships" (434, 439, 442).

Beck's analysis of the organizational energies necessary for making meaning out of the puzzling images that confront respondents during the Rorschach test offers a vivid example of the schema of rupture, restoration, and/or recombination that unifies all of the puzzles and texts examined in this project. On an emotional level, the unfamiliar image creates a sense of troubling uncertainty and dislocation (rupture) that must be overcome through the process of naming, of making meaning out of the "suggestive" design by equating it with figures one has seen in the past (restoration) or by constructing a narrative that brings the image's component parts into a

newly defined relation with each other (recombination). Restoration is the more conservative tendency because it responds to change by rearranging the pieces back into a familiar order; for those who crave stability, restoration offers a refuge from threats posed by ruptures of various kinds, whether on the micro or macro level, by striving to regain a comforting sense of normalcy. Recombination, on the other hand, represents the more difficult and daring approach because it involves reconceptualizing existing wholes or manipulating unfamiliar pieces in order to achieve a new synthesis. Since the agent of recombination does not work from an existing blueprint, the danger remains that he or she might be inadequate to the task of synthesizing the materials into a unified whole or that the new order achieved may be inferior to the old one. However, for those willing to take the gamble, the potential for creating startlingly innovative, groundbreaking combinations that may form the basis for the next dominant order is well worth the risk.

The formal differences between puzzles and the ideological freight attached to them has implications for how an author adapts them as a framework for interrogating cultural preoccupations or exploring the puzzle of identity. Traditional jigsaw puzzles foreclose the possibility of recombination. Their pieces can only be arranged in one way and the puzzle player's task is simply to restore the order lost through the arbitrary and seemingly senseless act of cutting an image to pieces. It is logical that jigsaws would become popular during a time, like the Great Depression, when a nostalgic desire to return to a seemingly easier past and a yearning for security were paramount.⁷ Crosswords are a more sophisticated type of puzzle because they encourage restoration *and* recombination. Although only one solution to a crossword puzzle is possible, its difficulty depends upon the likelihood that multiple words will fit both the riddling

⁷ One particularly perceptive journalist writing at the height of the Depression critiqued the political conservatism with which jigsaw puzzles are aligned, remarking that "[i]n other countries, in time of want and woe, the people rush to the parks making speeches of revolution . . . But in America . . . [t]hey take up something like jig-saw puzzles" (Phillips R12).

clue and the number of spaces provided and therefore the only way to determine the correct one is through the overlap between the letters forming the interconnected words. The crossword puzzle is a tightly structured, carefully ordered system that, like language itself, is also arbitrary since the words chosen are often determined by expediency (e.g., to fit a tight corner) and the letters that recombine to form new wholes have no direct connection to the things that they signify. Riddles are even more open-ended than crosswords. Utilizing misdirection and linguistic sleight of hand, riddles dislocate expected meanings and identify affinities between seemingly unrelated terms, forging relationships between them that may have residual effects beyond the parameters of the riddle itself. There are no limitations to the number of possible answers to riddles beyond those determined by custom or group consensus.⁸ Although the Changing Faces puzzle operates on the simple mechanical principle of a pull tab, which produces two competing outcomes in an alternating loop, thereby defeating the either/or modality of a singular answer in favor of the inclusiveness of variability. Each of these puzzles provides a different, albeit fruitful starting point for examining troubling issues in the wake of the dissolution of cultural master narratives and offers a safe intellectual space in which to deal with the pressures of forging new models for making meaning out of modern experience.

In the first chapter, "T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and the 'Cross-word Puzzle School,'" I track the similar reception histories of crossword puzzles and the poetry of Eliot and Pound, arguing that we should not dismiss the moniker out of hand because it points not only to shared formal attributes between crosswords and "the new poetry," but also to their shared commitment to maintaining order. The tensions within the crossword puzzle between the conservative forces of restoration that seek to delimit potential outcomes to a single solution and the revolutionary,

⁸ In Part II, I will explore the differences between probabilistic and deterministic riddles. The former has unlimited potential answers whereas the latter has a prearranged solution that the riddlee must know in advance.

disruptive potential of recombination play out in the crossword poetics of Eliot and Pound through conflicting impulses toward contraction and expansion. Guided by an ethos of fair play, Eliot revels in the game-like aspects of allusion, which require the reader to recognize his source text in order to appreciate the changes that he has wrought to it. Yet, this one-to-one correlation breaks down through branching allusions that invoke multiple sources simultaneously as well as logopoeia that plays off of a range of historical meanings of a word, thus replacing the certainty and orderliness of restoration with the messily productive multiplicity of recombination. In Pound's *Cantos*, the extreme contraction enabled by his use of luminous details (time-saving devices that succinctly evoke the features of a historical period or literary movement) frequently leads to confusion rather than enlightenment since his faith in the reader's ability to identify the connective links between episodes encourages him to forego an infrastructure that would indicate how they fit together. Contraction produces disorder, rather than clarity, as the reader is overwhelmed by a staggering number of obscure references and esoteric materials that, like the inkblots of the Rorschach test are suggestive, yet cannot be reduced to a single solution. Perhaps that is the purpose of the *Cantos*--each person will find within them what he or she needs, a uniquely individual order that Pound, like Master Kung in Canto XIII, would smile upon "equally," stating "They have all answered correctly, / That is to say, each in his nature."

Part II considers puzzling in relation to sexuality and sexual orientation. In *The Riddles of Djuna Barnes*, I destabilize dominant readings of Barnes's engagement with sexology in *Ladies Almanack* (1928) by demonstrating how deeply versed she was in the medical literature of sexual difference. Widening the focus beyond the accepted trio of Sigmund Freud, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and Havelock Ellis, I contend that Barnes draws upon the dominant formulation of same-sex attraction in the medical literature as a riddle to be solved, an idea that

dates back to the influential writings of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, in order to reclaim the enigmatic mode and deny that a singular solution to the "riddle" of human sexuality can ever be achieved. In contrast to the deterministic views of the sexologists, she promulgates a more fluid model of sexuality that corresponds with Ulrichs's own late writings in which he defined sexuality as a spectrum with a nearly infinite number of gradations. Whereas the French sexologist Julien Chevalier and his hate-filled rants about lesbian "vice" elicit scorn and incisive parody from Barnes, her handling of Ulrichs and his theories is far more complex. She pokes fun at his naive generalizations and the damage they continue to do as reflected in the writings of Marcel Proust and Radclyffe Hall, but she ultimately redeems Ulrichs by acknowledging how his theories evolved over time. Through close readings of the riddling Foreword, speeches made by riddlers like Masie-Tuck-and-Frill, the riddle of the origins of the first woman "born with a Difference," and the riddling contest between Musset and the Madame in Mittens, I trace Barnes's riddling aesthetic and the motivations behind it back to her dialogue with sexology.

Chapter Three, "Outrunners in the Thickets of Probability," posits that Barnes restores the Sapphic genealogy denied by Richard von Krafft-Ebing and masculinized by Havelock Ellis through riddling accounts of the hidden history of lesbian desire. In contrast to the confident assertions about the sexual predilections of historical figures advanced by well-intended sexologists, such as Ulrichs or Magnus Hirschfeld, Barnes offers a probabilistic chronicle that implies, but refuses to make definite statements about the sexual orientation of the women that she hints were likely lesbian foremothers. Barnes's teasingly indirect, riddling method of filling historical lacunae, the omissions in the official record that attest to the erasure of "women born with a Difference" rather than their non-existence, pays tribute to the scores of anonymous women who have loved women. Her handling of named female figures, many of whom are

riddlers in their own right (e.g., the Queen of Sheba and Sappho), also raises questions about the authenticity of historical accounts, demonstrating that the strict line of demarcation between fact and fiction is illusory and that all history is a matter of storytelling. Yet, until history loses its vaunted reputation for truthfulness, it will remain necessary, Barnes suggests, to challenge the veracity of received accounts of the past by making visible what they have erased or distorted.

Part III, *The Changing Faces of Jean Toomer*, widens the focus of this study to consider puzzling in relation to race. In Chapter Four, I argue that the *Changing Faces* puzzle, which on the surface appears to be little more than an inconsequential bit of advertising ephemera, offers a valuable window into late nineteenth and early twentieth century studies of physiognomy and their tendency to collapse the categories of race and deviancy. Through careful readings of scientific literature produced between 1850 and 1930, I track the convergence of degeneration theory, Positivist criminology, eugenics, and anthropological studies of race to their fixation on "abnormal" physiognomy and demonstrate how each of these disciplines encodes deviance in racial terms. For audiences steeped in Social Darwinism, the *Changing Faces* puzzle would evoke the teleological model of human progress from ape to the classical perfection of the Apollo Belvedere, which casts peoples of minority populations as mid-way points on the scale. The puzzle's marketing and distribution at the Pan-American Exposition reaffirm its evolutionary subtext. Indeed, the J.B. Williams Company's advertisements for the puzzle play upon fears of degeneration in order to sell their products, invoking the racial other in simian form and suggesting that vigilant action is necessary on the part of their white, male clientele in order to maintain their position atop the social hierarchy.

Chapter Five takes up questions of racial representation in visual culture by exploring how Jean Toomer sought to transform his physical body into a work of art via his involvement

with the physical culture movement as well as his efforts to shape his public image as an author. After noting how deeply entrenched bodybuilding was with the eugenics program, I analyze the ways in which eugenic ideals filter into a scrapbook that Toomer assembled during his college years by close readings its contents. I contend that Toomer took the eugenic rhetoric that he learned from the physical culture movement and twisted it to serve his own ends by arguing in favor of racial hybridization and hailing the emergence of a superior class of mixed race Americans. Although his most overtly eugenic remarks date to the late 1920s, I identify a pattern of figurative miscegenation in *Cane* that illustrates his theory of the American type in incipient form. I also posit that Toomer's racial affiliation at the time of the scrapbook's composition is far more complex than the absence of athletes of color would suggest by claiming that Toomer's most enduring nickname, The Black Prince, pays homage to the black pugilist Peter Jackson. In the second half of the chapter, I contest the pervasive belief that Toomer renounced his black heritage shortly after writing *Cane*. By recovering a portrait bust of the author sculpted by May Howard Jackson (signed and dated by the artist June 1921) and reading it against Winold Reiss's unauthorized portrait of Jean Toomer (c. 1925), I maintain that Toomer's stance on race was far more complex than this simplistic view, which buys into the binary racial framework that Toomer sought to deconstruct, cares to acknowledge.

Finally, Chapter Six offers an extended reading of *Cane* through the lens of the Changing Faces puzzle. *Cane* explodes the puzzle's bimodal loop into a kaleidoscopic proliferation of faces that transform as the narrative moves through its circular orbit. I argue that Toomer's vague, impressionistic portraits of multiracial individuals in Part One combats racist applications of anthropometry by denying purchase for physiognomic readings and forcing the reader to engage with people of color on a deeper spiritual plane. Part Two abruptly changes tack by highlighting

the characters' full lips and wooly hair in a move that suggests that the representational strategy employed in the first section is inadequate for living beings subjected to dehumanizing stares. The greater degree of realism and emphasis on spectatorship in the second section hints that self-acceptance comes through an awareness, but not necessarily agreement with how others perceive physical appearances. By focusing on affect in all three sections of the book, Toomer weighs in on debates about the role that environment plays in determining an individual's development, demonstrating that the wistful eyes and wryly twisted mouths of his characters are the result of adverse social circumstances, rather than a biological mandate. Toomer's adoption of changing faces as the chief structural principle of *Cane* enables him to combat racial stereotypes without erecting a new, potentially delimiting image of blackness to take its place. Flux offers an alternative to monolithic conceptions of race and enables each individual the freedom to embark on a path of self-exploration, punctuated by internal breakups and daring acts of recombination.

While several other modernist writers, such as Gertrude Stein or Marianne Moore, also engage with puzzling dynamics and would serve as viable candidates for inclusion in this study, my selection criteria privileges diversity, striving to encompass a range of backgrounds, subject matter, and aesthetic modes. Taken jointly, Eliot, Pound, Barnes, and Toomer demonstrate the versatility of the puzzle form and the wide range of issues that it encompasses as they try to make sense of the shattering experience of modernity. It is essential to trace connections between modernism and puzzles because, unlike other aspects of popular culture that have been reclaimed as literary influences (e.g., vaudeville, jazz, advertising, freak shows and the carnivalesque), puzzles continue to be dismissed as unworthy of serious study. Very few scholars have pursued, or even identified, a relationship between modernism and puzzles. Two notable exceptions are Karen Zumhagen-Yekplé and Leonard Diepeveen. Zumhagen-Yekplé treats the novels of

Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Franz Kafka as "elaborate puzzle[s]" that participate in a quest for spiritual sustenance and meaning. Since she focuses on European modernism and her bent is philosophical, reading her selected texts through the lens of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, my cultural historical study of American modernism complements hers by covering entirely different terrain. Leonard Diepeveen's excellent book *The Difficulties of Modernism* (2003), while incisive and meticulously researched, considers puzzles only insofar as they play a role in critical debates about modernism. My project builds from the groundwork laid by his discussion of the critical discourse by analyzing the role that puzzling plays in specific modernist texts.

The ubiquity of puzzles during the first half of the twentieth century and the fervor with which Americans pursued each of the successive puzzling crazes indicate that they were satisfying underlying emotional needs (e.g., for control, closure, and order), needs also fulfilled by modernist literature, albeit for a smaller, more highly educated group. Since puzzles appeared in most leading periodicals, were available for purchase alongside newspapers at train stations and stands, and were regularly used to advertise other products, they were nearly impossible to avoid. Consequently, it is important to understand how American modernists, many of them self-proclaimed puzzle aficionados, fit within this cultural climate in order to gauge their influences as well as how their texts redefined what a puzzle could be and mean.

Chapter One: T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and the "Cross-word Puzzle School"

In December 1922, Edmund Wilson presciently foretold that detractors of T.S. Eliot's poetry and of modernism more broadly would object that *The Waste Land* is "a puzzle rather than a poem," a literary curiosity akin to "a full-rigged ship in a bottle" (614). Although he found fault with the poem's "lack of structural unity" and showy allusions, Wilson was quick to defend Eliot against charges that his verse lacked emotional depth, countering that not only does the poet "feel intensely" but his poignant lines express "the starvation of a whole civilization" (616). Yet, having promoted Eliot to the level of a cultural spokesperson, he derides Ezra Pound as a mere "imitator," whose "ill-focussed" [sic] *Cantos* mimic the technique of "piling up stratum upon stratum of reference" without establishing an emotional "key" necessary for rendering the poem intelligible (612, 616). Wilson's review offers a concise overview of the terms that would dominate critical debates about the relative merits of Eliot and Pound's poetic output for the next two decades.

Just as Wilson had predicted, critics seized upon the puzzle metaphor as a means of deprecating "the new poetry." In January 1923, Louis Untermeyer denounced *The Waste Land* as a "pompous parade of erudition" and insinuated that the poem's "willful obscurity" provided its advocates with the "same sort of gratification attained through having solved a puzzle, a form of self-congratulation" (94). Relative unknowns, such as Clyde Pettus of *The Atlanta Constitution*, quickly followed suit and vowed that *The Waste Land* would meet a swift demise "after the first curiosity of the seeker of the bizarre in literature has been satisfied" because the poem "appeal[s] only to those who delight in solving puzzles" (4). During the mid-1920s when the crossword fad was at its height, comparisons between modernism and puzzles were so commonplace that literary critics (following Untermeyer's lead) declared Eliot and Pound to be the leading

proponents of a "cross-word puzzle school" of poetry, whose unofficial membership included Marianne Moore, e. e. cummings, and H.D. The derisive crossword designation operated as a shorthand for opponents of modernism to critique what they perceived as its elitism, unnecessary or unrewarding difficulty, and triviality. By likening the new poetry to a crossword puzzle, critics hinted that erudite allusions and obscure terminology geared toward the highly literate few created an imposing facade that concealed very simple meanings; that modernist poetics was all style and no substance; and efforts to decode it would not fare well in the final cost-benefit analysis.

Given the convenience and vast reach of this multi-purpose tool for skewering modernist pretensions, it should come as no surprise that the crossword puzzle analogy endured long after the crossword fad had subsided. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, references to "the crossword puzzle school" continued to crop up in the writings of numerous commentators, including Pound's arch-nemesis Henry Seidel Canby, Max Eastman, and Elizabeth Atkins, but crosswords reached a critical flashpoint in the spring of 1941 when *The Times* published "Eclipse of the Highbrow." In this unsigned review, the anonymous author derogates the "habitual clever triviality" and "deliberate obscurity" of writers between the wars, whose lack of social commitment reduced literature "to the level of esoteric parlour games," adding with a sneer that, "To be a poet needed much the same qualities as to be a maker of acrostics" since "an admired stanza was scarcely distinguishable from an ingenious clue in a crossword puzzle" (5). *The Times* review occasioned a flurry of indignant responses, yet even Eliot's efforts to dismiss "the now familiar comparison of modern poetry to the cross-word puzzle" could not break the tenacious hold that it had upon the critical imagination (115). Instead, some advocates of modernist poetry began drawing the parallel themselves in an effort to diminish its power. For instance, Malcolm

Cowley conceded in 1943 that reading Eliot's poems is "a little like working over a crossword puzzle that will never be completely solved," but he parried that full comprehension is not necessary for enjoyment (473).

Despite the numerous parallels reviewers have drawn between modernist poetry and crossword puzzles over the decades, no one has seriously considered whether the crossword label so frequently appended to Eliot and Pound actually applies to their poetry in any meaningful way. Leonard Diepeveen has contended that the frequent accusation that "the pleasures of difficult modernism were at best trivial, akin to those of solving a crossword puzzle" posed serious problems for modernism's defenders and necessitated creative solutions, ranging from claiming that all great art is initially difficult to understand to depicting reading difficult poetry as a virile act, yet his insightful analyses of the critical literature do not extend to the poetry itself, which his study leaves unaddressed (145). Rather than assuming, as Louise Morgan did in 1926, that the crossword analogy is "grotesquely irrelevant" simply because it had been advanced by critics of the modernist establishment, I call for us to take the "cross-word puzzle" designation seriously and evaluate its merits (136).

My willingness to assess the aptness of the crossword label does not, however, signal agreement with the ways in which the term has been defined in the past. I reject the impoverished understanding of crossword puzzles as nothing more than meaningless entertainment, a bit of ephemera that the fickle American public would cast aside in favor of a new, equally faddish diversion. The enduring popularity of the crossword puzzle alone, which remains a staple of newspapers and online gaming worldwide, should give us pause before uncritically acceding to that line of argumentation. I regard crosswords as a sophisticated form of word play that draws attention to the inner workings of language itself. Through riddling clues

that offer unconventional ways of thinking about a familiar word or phrase, crossword puzzles denaturalize the seamless transmission of information through words. The sheer number of potential answers for any given clue calls the semantic fit between signifier and signified into question, even forging new associational matrices (e.g., standard cluing practices for particular terms) that hold true within the confines of the crossword puzzle and threaten to destabilize conventional meanings. As a format highly sensitive and responsive to changes in the cultural milieu, crosswords incorporate acronyms, slang, and new coinages (e.g., terms originating from technological advancements or minority groups whose usage has entered the mainstream) and in so doing makes the constant evolution of language readily discernible. Despite its black and white color palette, crosswords do not offer clear-cut distinctions between terms, and instead thrive on the messy overlap between them, forcing the puzzle player to attend to the flexibility of language as well as the processes behind the construction of meaning.

I argue that crosswords serve as a useful point of departure for reconsidering Eliot and Pound's poetics because they bring into sharp focus an abiding concern, shared by the poets and puzzle alike, for order rooted in language and expressed within the framework of rupture, restoration, and/or recombination. Crossword puzzles dramatize how autonomous units (words) can be broken into their component parts (letters) and recombined in order to create new patterns. The interlocking grid of answers treats rupture as the occasion for creative acts of recombination in which the original order is not lost; the word from which others branch does not lose its structural integrity, nor do the resulting words differ qualitatively from the source one. Instead, crosswords remind us that words are composed of symbols whose rearrangement forms the basis for our system of communication; each new word coined enriches the expressive power of language to convey ideas and emotions, yet since these symbols are arbitrary, only

custom (i.e., repeated use) can imbue them with meaning. Likewise, the schema of rupture, restoration, and recombination undergirds Eliot's and Pound's attitude toward tradition and governs their worldview.

Despite their vaunted emphasis on technical innovation, Eliot and Pound thought of themselves as writers working within the bounds of a tradition that provided culturally resonant material to be repurposed and a backdrop against which individual efforts could be measured. Originality is not so much a matter of providing new insights but of expressing them in a way that speaks to the mindset of the present moment, or, as Eliot put it in "The Frontiers of Criticism" (1956), "poetic originality is largely an original way of assembling the most disparate and unlikely material to make a new whole" (531). Even Pound's famous dictum "make it new" tacitly acknowledges that every insight has already been had before, that "Most human perceptions date from a long time ago" (*ABC* 64), and artistry depends upon *how* one expresses these sentiments, namely in a poetic style. Or, to approach the matter somewhat differently, "it" is not inherently new and has to be *made* that way by the poet, who is not a "maker" in Sidney's sense of a creator, but rather a shaper of existing materials, an agent of recombination. Yet, at a time when civilization seemed to be falling to pieces, the poet's self-appointed role as a synthesizer was challenging to maintain and a current of anxiety that neither restoration nor recombination will occur haunts Eliot and Pound's poetry and prose. Similar anxieties fueled the crossword puzzle fad and the almost compulsive way in which Americans turned to the puzzle for comfort and a sense of control during a period of profound change.

Cryptic Crosswordese

Prior to enumerating the chief points of commonality between crossword puzzles and modernist verse as practiced by Eliot, Pound, and the adjunct members of the "cross-word puzzle

school," it is first necessary to provide a brief synopsis of the crossword puzzle's origins and early design features. The first crossword puzzle appeared in the *New York World* on December 21, 1913.⁹ Arthur Wynne, editor of the Fun section of the *World*, designed the puzzle in the shape of a hollow diamond and instructed readers to "Fill in the small squares with words which agree with the following definitions" (Arnot 28; Amende 8). The signature black squares, riddling clues, and square grid of the modern crossword puzzle are later developments; during the first few years of exclusive publication by the *World*, Wynne and his readers experimented, often wildly, with the crossword format. Wynne was astounded by the sheer "variety of sizes and shapes" that "Cross-word" puzzle fans submitted to him for publication (Tausig 26). Many of these designs would be impossible by modern standards, which prohibit "islands" and require all-over interlock, yet during the teens and early 1920s, crossword grids came in a dazzling array of abstract geometric shapes, ranging from rhombuses to pyramids; featured seasonal designs like a Maltese cross and Christmas tree; engaged in promotional campaigns, such as spelling out "Fun" in capital letters; and even inclined toward the bizarre with a grid modeled after the "double platform" of New York City's elevated railway! (Arnot 30-39; Tausig 24-34).

The rules for crossword construction began to codify under the direction of Margaret Petherbridge, who replaced Wynne as puzzle editor, and by the summer of 1923, the re-designed crossword puzzle was poised to take off as a national craze. With the publication of Simon and Schuster's *The Cross Word Puzzle Book* (edited by Petherbridge and two other *World* staffers) in April 1924, the fad began in earnest. The volume topped the best-seller lists and sold in excess of one hundred fifty thousand copies on a single day during the Christmas shopping season of 1924 (Arnot 50). Crossword puzzle competitions, crossword themed clothing and accessories, and an

⁹ Crosswords appeared under the title "Word-Cross" until mid-January 1914 when a typographical error led to the puzzle being rechristened a "Cross-word." The hyphenated spelling remained standard until the 1930s (Arnot 30).

unprecedented demand for reference materials followed as the nation went "cross word puzzle mad" ("Eighth" ix). Although *The Times* wrote witheringly about the time-wasting "menace" that had "enslaved America," the vogue for crossword puzzles quickly crossed the Atlantic ("Enslaved America" 17). By February 1925, it had developed into a "mania" of equally "devastating" proportions that would give rise to a distinctly British variant of the crossword puzzle, the "cryptic" ("Craze and Maze" 13). Despite the extraordinary popularity of crossword puzzles in America and abroad during the height of the fad (1924-6), a small number of vocal detractors wrote surprisingly vehement denunciations of the puzzles, which they dismissed as a trivial form of entertainment that trafficked in obscure words and useless knowledge and distracted attention from more valuable pursuits. As we shall see, many of the criticisms levied against crossword puzzles also dogged modernist poetry.

One of the most overt similarities between crossword puzzles and the members of the "cross-word puzzle school" is their recondite language and obscure content. For those conversant with poetry written by Pound or Eliot, the charge that reading their verse requires not only a wide "knowledge of words in everyday use but [also] a command of obsolete and slang words and words from the Latin whose existence he never before suspected" comes as no surprise. What might, however, raise a few eyebrows is that this particular criticism by the *Los Angeles Times* was directed at crossword puzzles, rather than targeting the poets famed for their abstruse diction, colloquialisms, and unglossed words from foreign languages ("Word Hunters" A8). Crossword puzzles rapidly developed a reputation for employing obscure or esoteric language, particularly little known terms that were expedient for filling tight corners of the grid because they contain a high ratio of vowels to consonants or a regular alternation between them. Dubbed "crosswordese" or "crossword clichés," these short words, generally ranging from two to five

letters in length, derive from various fields of specialized knowledge, including architecture (e.g., apse, stoa, and ogee), geography (Po, Baek, tor), numismatics (tael, yen), chemistry (abbreviations from the periodic table of elements), maritime jargon (proa, xebec, and alee), ancient history (Asa, Nero, Eli), mythology (Isis, Loki, Nyx), and a score of other subjects. As a journalist for the *Washington Post* quipped in 1924, only those Renaissance men and women "equipped with a general knowledge of all trades and industries; a post-graduate course in law, medicine and theology; and at least a cursory familiarity with Egyptology, anthropology, pedagogy, and post office business" would be able to "excel" at crossword puzzles without access to a sizeable reference library ("Cross-word Craze" 6). Zoology was by far the most common source of "crosswordese" and also one of the worst offenders as far the puzzle's advocacy of seemingly useless knowledge is concerned. An extensive catalogue of exotic and extinct animals from around the world populated crossword grids during the mid-1920s. The crossword bestiary included such rare specimens as a three-toed sloth (ai), an Indonesian wild ox (anoa), emus and their extinct cousins from New Zealand (moa), a Chinese antelope (goa), the South African wildebeest (gnu), a mythical bird of prey (roc), a Hawaiian goose (nene), a venomous snake from Bengal (krait), European flatfish (plaice), and a nocturnal lemur from Madagascar (ayeaye). Crossword puzzles and modernist verse alike contain "rare, and even obsolete, words" found in the remotest and "most inaccessible parts of the dictionary," and their unfamiliarity contributes to the difficulty of both formats ("Word Hunters" A8; "Enslaved America" 17). Yet, while the crossword puzzle's straightforward challenge to identify these often quite formidable terms appealed to all ages and walks of life, the obscure language present in modernist verse produced an estranging sensation of inaccessibility, as if the poet were engaging in a pedantic display of learning that the common reader could not hope to match.

Contemporary reviews of the writings of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound repeatedly stress their obscurity and "recondite erudition" as features of an uncommunicative poetics that erects barriers between the reader and the poet. J. C. Squire, who professed himself "unable to make head or tail" of *The Waste Land*, traced the obscurity of Eliot's poetry in part to his learned vocabulary, concluding that it "might be richer if it were poorer, for it is stuffed with terms drawn from obscure *penetralia* of learning which are no assistance to his toiling reader" (115, 141). While one might be disinclined to trust the judgment of a critic who engages in the same practice that he chastises in another ("obscure *penetralia*," indeed!), the "charge of obscurity" continued to plague Eliot throughout his career (460). In her review of *The Waste Land*, Elinor Wylie observes that Eliot's "detractors say that he is obscure," an allegation that she tacitly affirms by referring to the poem's "ensorcelled mazes," but what is peculiar is how frequently his closest friends and supporters agreed with this verdict (95). Eliot's mother confessed to a relative that she had been "puzzled" by *The Waste Land*, but (in a move that would horrify the New Critics) she found that his life experiences at the time of the poem's composition helped to elucidate it. Even Henry Eliot confronted his brother with what he regarded as the poem's deliberate "obscurantism," and his close friend Charles Whibley conceded, in an otherwise glowing recommendation in support of Eliot's application to the publishing firm of Faber and Gwyer, that "as a poet he is obscure and allusive, but I have faith that he will come out of his obscurity and write something really fine" (*Letters* II, 75, 124, 621). While Whibley's disapproval of Eliot's poetic technique could conceivably be chalked up to the older generation's hostility to the new poetry, Geoffrey Faber, Eliot's peer in both age and education, also found his verse baffling, but he had no such illusions of the poet ever growing out of his obscurity. In an extraordinarily frank letter to Eliot written in the spring of 1925, Faber describes himself as "excitedly groping" in *The*

Waste Land and explains "You *are* obscure, you know!" (*Letters* II, 662). He warns Eliot that he taxes the reader "a bit high: only those who have trod the same path as yourself can follow the clue. The others must put too much detective-work into their reading," and he ruminates, "I wonder if you know how difficult you are? and alternatively I wonder if I am specially stupid" (*Letters* II, 662). Like many of Eliot's advocates, Faber defends the greatness of a poem that he does not pretend to understand fully, informing his friend that while he has not "yet got the key to your poetry," he is nonetheless aware "of a meaning not the less truly there because I can only grasp it fragmentarily" (*ibid.*).

Pound stood accused of obscurity even more frequently than Eliot. Due in part to his flamboyant and abrasive persona, critics seized upon Pound's "involved, obscure, and pedantic" style as proof of his emotional impoverishment, charging him with substituting "book-learning" for living, as well as compensating for insecurities with a showy flourish of "obscure learning."¹⁰ His first published volume of poetry, *A Lume Spento* (1908), made very few ripples on the literary scene despite a shameless piece of self-promotion, yet even at this early stage in his career, the reviewers who did take notice of the young poet remarked upon his obscurity. Antonini recognized Pound's talent, but deplored the academicism that "bristles over all his work," finding the "French phrases and scraps of Latin and Greek [that] punctuate his poetry and prose" especially off-putting. He diagnosed Pound's "obscurity" and love of "the abstruse" as affectation and urged him to forego these poses in favor of simplicity (4). Pound's sometime friend and fellow Imagist F.S. Flint also took issue with his poetic "hotchpotch" of "words from divers tongues," complaining that Pound seemed to prefer writing poetry in any language other

¹⁰ I have combined excerpts from a few different reviews here in the interest of offering a concise synopsis of the most common arguments made about Pound in the early criticism. For the full reviews, see *Ezra Pound: The Contemporary Reviews* edited by Betsy Erkkila. My quotations come from the anonymous review that appeared in *Literary Digest* in 1910 (pp. 23-4) and Allen Tate's "Ezra Pound's Golden Ass" (pp. 179-183), both of which are generally sympathetic but voice the concerns of their peers.

than English (23, 46). Flint also justly observed that "[i]f Mr. Pound can find a foreign title to a poem, he will do so" (46). Even a cursory examination of *Personae: The Collected Poems of Ezra Pound* (1926), which contains poems bearing such titles as "Ἰμέρω" and "Surgit Fama," corroborates this claim. Similarly, Joseph Wood Krutch accused "the disgruntled Mr. Pound" of writing "a sort of oblique jargon" (139). In 1922, Krutch recognized that Pound was the bearer of "an unusually original intelligence," but worried that he would alienate his readers and end up writing for an audience of one. And what might be the cause of this estrangement? "[H]e is often unnecessarily crabbed and obscure out of mere contempt for the reader" (139). Fearing that something of great value would be lost, he urged Pound to use his "great love of words" to bridge the distance between readers and himself, warning that if he remains aloof then he runs the risk of betraying his poetic gifts since "he has achieved phrases which undoubtedly mean a great deal to him, but fail to communicate that meaning to his readers" (140). All of these examples demonstrate that the difficulty of Pound's poetry, like Eliot's own, can be traced to his rarefied language, not just the increasingly esoteric source materials that would comprise his *Cantos*.

While I disagree with many of the conclusions that critics reached about the motives behind Eliot and Pound's obscure poetry, especially the supercilious argument that the upstart American poets mistook "out-of-the way erudition" for culture, there is a grain of truth to the claim that they "abandoned" the "common language."¹¹ Like the "[o]bsolete words and unusual

¹¹ The first quote comes from Desmond MacCarthy's article on "modern poetry" for *The New Statesman* published on January 8, 1921 (reprinted in Brooker 30-34). It provides an excellent example of the high-handed manner that many British commentators took toward Eliot and Pound's nationality. MacCarthy claims that "they both share the national love of bric-à-brac. A half forgotten name, an echo from a totally forgotten author, a mossy scrap of old philosophy" are to Eliot or Pound as valuable as the material objects amassed by "their more frivolous compatriots" (31). I have taken the second quote from an American reviewer who also worried that their poetry inclined toward pedantry - Edmund Wilson. See his discussion of "post-war literature" for the *New York Evening Post* (reprinted in Brooker 77-81).

technical terms" that filled crossword puzzles, Eliot's poetry contains a high proportion of abstruse terminology, much of it derived from French or Latin (MacDoweld 12). Obscure polysyllabic words litter his poems. "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" alone can furnish a host of examples, beginning with a word that he coined "Polyphiloprogenitive" and continuing through "sapient sutlers," "superfetation," "the Paraclete," "piaculative" (another new coinage based upon a Latin root), and "epicene" (OED). Admittedly, the obscure diction in this particular poem is an artistic choice consonant with its larger message; in an elaborate play on "the Word," Eliot mocks the Church fathers who have distorted Christ's teachings by concealing them within a proliferating and inaccessible language, which he likens to a cancerous growth, then utilizing the confusion to fleece their unwitting parishioners. He indicts these "religious caterpillars," treating them to a dose of their own medicine by invoking a secondary sense of the word meaning "a rapacious person" who "preys on society," as an unremitting drain on the community for failing to serve any useful purpose, unlike the fructifying bees to which he contrasts them. However, "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" is far from the only poem in Eliot's canon to attest to his predilection for obscure terminology. "Whispers of Immortality" contains such oddities as "circumambulate," "effluence," "pneumatic," and "maisonette" plus an escapee from the crossword zoo, "the scampering marmoset," as well as a line that could be mistaken for a crossword clue, "the couched Brazilian jaguar" (replete with archaism). The Sweeney poems offer up "maculate giraffe" and "anfractuous," one of many words for which Eliot's poetry provides the first attested usage in the OED. Other curiosities include: "concitation" (an archaism), "multifoliate," "viaticum" (one of the many theological terms that populate his poems) and maritime jargon, such as "garboard strake." Examples could be multiplied indefinitely, but suffice it to say that the well-read Eliot had an extensive vocabulary at his

command that grew continuously as a result of his favorite pastime when ill: reading the dictionary (*Poems* 1250).¹²

A comparatively low percentage of rarefied English words appear in Pound's poetry, but the ones to his credit, such as chrysoprase (a green precious stone), capriped (goat-footed), orfevrerie (the work of a goldsmith), and "poluphloisboious" (indefinable), are humdingers. Instead, Pound's chief vice during his early years as a poet was archaism. Flipping through the pages of his first few books, one finds obsolete terms and spellings like recking wold, syne, bodykins, traist, foison, and other testaments to the Celtic Twilight's influence on Pound and his apprenticeship under Yeats. In a review of Pound's poetry written in 1909, Rupert Brooke attributed these "foolish archaisms" to inexperience, and, despite the rival poet's judgmental tone, his was one of the more charitable constructions (13). Edward Thomas of *The English Review* likened "the old and foreign words and old spellings" to a form of poetic evasion, a means of concealing his faults from the "ordinary reader" while the reviewer for *The Nation* dismissed Pound's archaism as mere affectation, writing damningly that "[o]ne may tolerate such Chaucerian words in modern use as 'swevyn' for 'dream,' and 'evrychone' for 'everyone.' But 'ellum' for 'elm,' and 'mine fashion' for 'my fashion' are merely silly" (9-11). Obsolete English words gradually disappeared from Pound's writing, but what remained constant are the dauntingly obscure proper nouns (i.e., the names of people and places from world mythology, history, and literature) and snatches of poetry (ranging from a few words to several lines) written in at least ten foreign languages with no translations provided. Instead, Pound insisted, with increasing stridency as the *Cantos* met with general befuddlement, that knowledge of foreign

¹² In this chapter, I utilize the following abbreviations for parenthetical citations in-text: *The Poems of T. S. Eliot* edited and annotated by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (*Poems*), *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (*Literary*), *ABC of Reading* (*ABC*), *Selected Prose, 1909-1965* (*Prose*), and *Guide to Kulchur* (*Guide*).

languages is not necessary to comprehend his poetry, a stance at variance with his statement in 1920 that "obscurities due not to the thing but to the wording are a botch" (*Literary* 269). Apparently lines written in Latin or Provençal were exempt and it was the reader's fault, not his own, if they could not understand them. Firm in his uncompromising elitism, Pound assured anyone who would listen that it is "All tosh about *foreign words* making it difficult," adding derisively, "If reader don't know what an elephant IS, then the word is obscure" (*Letters* 250-1). Beneath the bravado, however, Pound was cognizant that he had not "explained" each quotation "at once by repeat" as he had claimed to do and he admitted as much to one correspondent, yet sardonically rejoined that he was doing the reader a favor by compelling her to learn enough Greek to get by in his poems, since he "can't conceal the fact that the Greek language existed" (251). Pound's superior airs and love of esoterica made him a prime target for parody as indeed were all of the members of the "cross-word puzzle school."

In fact, humorists and cultural commentators of the mid-1920s drew direct links between modernist obscurity and crosswordese. During the winter of 1924, when Simon & Schuster's crossword puzzle books (then in their second series) topped the best-seller lists, *Life* magazine published a skillfully written parody of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" that satirized the crossword puzzle vogue and also took a jab at modernist poetry by attributing the poem to H.D. Entitled "Ballad of a Three-Letter Word Meaning 'Lunatic,'" the parody updates the situation of Coleridge's poem for modern audiences by reimagining the Mariner as a man who had been "marooned" on a deserted island with only a book of crossword puzzles to keep him company. Driven mad by his inability to complete one of the puzzles, he confronts the speaker with his tale of woe and begs her to help him find the puzzle's solution. In eight stanzas that maintain Coleridge's internal rhyme scheme, he gleefully recounts how he correctly guessed several

examples of crosswordese: "All came *ad lib* -oh, I was glib / With 'emu,' 'auk,' and 'roc'," until another crossword beast leaves him stumped (l. 19-20). "Undictionaried and alone," he can only ponder endlessly the two-letter word for "That Jugo-Slavic bird. . ." (l. 28). Taking pity on the poor, raving man, his auditor racks her brain for the answer, and in a surprise twist, we learn that she too has been driven insane by the puzzle and recites her poem from Bloomingdale Asylum. By attributing the ballad to H.D., the parodist not only takes aim at her abstruse diction, equating it with crosswordese, but also suggests that the modernist fascination with esoterica is itself a form of madness, a compulsive behavior that will lead to institutionalization if left unchecked. While all very tongue-in-cheek, the parody succeeds in taking the wind from modernist sails by comparing the new poetry to a passing fad, an insignificant form of entertainment. Yet, a far worse indictment lurks in the ballad's charge of isolated cerebralism—even when attempting to connect with others, as "H.D." tries to do with the puzzle addict, they remain trapped within the circuit of their own minds.

Crossword constructors also strengthened the cultural associations between "the new poetry" and puzzles by playfully cluing the word "code" as "a short poem" on a regular basis ("Cross Words Gone Wrong" 6). Despite the angry letters from a few outraged pedants, the clue was a fair (if somewhat misleading) one since the association had become so pervasive by 1922 that journalists felt comfortable issuing off-hand remarks, like "I think all modern poets should wear muzzles / Since they've discarded poetry for puzzles" without fear of a backlash (Minnigerode 67). Faber and Faber even got in on the action by publishing a promotional crossword in the *Times* as part of their advertising campaign for the holiday season of 1933 ("Faber and Faber's" 20). In a symmetrical grid featuring parallel capital "Fs" arranged in black squares and bearing clues about Faber books and authors, the puzzle was part of an advertising

ploy that promised to reward the first ten people to submit the correct solution with "one guinea's worth of Faber and Faber books." If Eliot and Pound wanted to distance themselves from the crossword label, then permitting their names to appear in an actual crossword puzzle—the clue for five down was "Mr. Eliot's initials" (2) and "Canto" was defined as "We publish this and XXIX more by Ezra Pound (5)"—was not the way to go about doing it! Eliot was a crossword aficionado, who routinely worked *The Times* puzzle, as well as a member of the board of directors at Faber, so it is highly unlikely that he would have been unaware of the "Faber & Faber Crossword Puzzle." Perhaps he enjoyed seeing his name clued in *The Times* but Pound's dismissive attitude toward crossword puzzles virtually guaranteed that he would have regarded it with scorn. The point here is that not only did book reviewers and other members of the scholarly elite draw parallels between modernism and crossword puzzles; the average reader, who laughed at the jokes in *Life* magazine, worked the daily crossword puzzle, or perused *The Times*, participated in this activity as well.

Rather than dismissing their poetry as a case of "willful obscurity," I propose that Eliot and Pound's often baffling diction participates in a larger concern for the maintenance of order by virtue of their self-appointed role as guardians of language.¹³ As early as 1915, Pound argued that "when words cease to cling close to things, kingdoms fall, empires wane and diminish" ("Affirmations VI" 410). He called for "hard, concise statement" as a corrective to the imprecision and empty rhetoric that he believed led to the fall of Rome and the end of the Renaissance. Phallic terminology aside, Eliot made a similar claim in "The Social Function of Poetry" (1945) when he asserted that as soon as a nation stops "producing great authors, and especially great poets, their language will deteriorate, their culture will deteriorate and perhaps

¹³ "Willful obscurity" is Louis Untermeyer's phrase. See his outraged reaction to *The Waste Land* winning The Dial Award, reprinted in Brooker 93-95.

become absorbed in a stronger one" (*On Poetry* 10). As Eliot's dire prediction suggests, he concurred with Pound about the "public utility" of "accurate language" and felt that writers alone had been entrusted with the duty of safeguarding the language from "deteriorating or from getting ossified" (Pound, *Literary* 409; Eliot, *Poems* 1226-7). They agreed that a writer keeps "words living and accurate" by "us[ing] the right words in the right order," that is through precise diction that preserves the language's integrity and through rigorous selection, picking the best word, even if rarely used by others, for the occasion (*ibid*). In a linguistic equivalent to the king's two bodies, both poets equated the health of the nation with the health of the language, arguing that without writers to diagnose illnesses and dispense the necessary physic, the consequences would be calamitous since when language "goes rotten . . . the whole machinery of social and of individual thought and order goes to pot" (Pound, *Literary* 21).¹⁴ As this self-aggrandizing line of argumentation suggests, Pound and Eliot favored an entropic theory of language *because* it allowed them to envision themselves as champions, knights fighting to safeguard a beleaguered lady (their mother tongue) and to "restore" her virtue. This masculinist stance helps to explain the notoriously phallic language that Pound used to describe the act of writing (advocating for "hard," virile prose and likening creative mental processes to an "upjut" of semen) as well as Eliot's unexamined assumption that great poets must necessarily be male (i.e., his persistent use of the masculine pronoun, which sadly was not unusual at the time) ("Translator's" n.p.).¹⁵ If any

¹⁴ Eliot made a very similar remark eleven years later in a radio broadcast entitled "The Writer as Artist" (1940). He stated that "[w]hen the language degenerates, the capacity of the people for thinking, feeling, and adapting itself to new conditions also degenerates" (*Poems* 1226-7). While Pound's brashness can make his ideas sound ludicrous at times, Eliot often repeats much the same thing, down to the metaphors, in his sedate, mannered prose and it goes down like a tonic. (The cultural authority that Eliot wielded in the 1940s didn't hurt either.) Pound recognized and to a certain extent encouraged these differing strategies (as befitting their personalities and social positions) by likening his own shock tactics to throwing a brick through a window while Possum snuck in through the back door.

¹⁵ "Hard" is one of the watchwords of Pound's literary criticism from the mid-teens through the 1920s, and he tends to equate "hardness" with poetic excellence. In his essay "The Hard and Soft in French Poetry" (1918), he declares that hardness is "nearly always a virtue" in poetry, adding "I can think of no case where it is not" (*Literary* 285).

further proof were needed that the poet's ego was deeply invested in his role as a guardian of language, Eliot's grandiose claims about poetry's wide-reaching effects, akin to trickle-down cultural economics, should leave no doubt. Figuring himself as an unsung hero who benefits those who do not even know his name (the closing lines of Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* come to mind), Eliot wrote that in the final analysis poetry "makes a difference to the speech, to the sensibility, to the lives of all the members of a society . . . whether they read and enjoy poetry or not: even, in fact, whether they know the names of their greatest poets or not" (*On Poetry* 12).¹⁶

Eliot and Pound's sexual politics and self-serving rhetoric aside, their use of "archaic and obscure words and phrases" (the definition of crosswordese) in their poetry conforms with their belief that it is the poet's duty to "extend and improve" the language in which he writes (*On Poetry* 9). According to their logic, by bringing disused words back into circulation, they contribute to the health of the language and enhance its utility as a tool for engaging in complex thought. For Pound, precision also served as a guarantor of individual liberty because "we are governed by words, the laws are graven in words" and if they are "slushy and inexact" then the individual has no protection against an unfeeling bureaucracy or against demagogues, who sway

Although he concedes that softness is "not always a fault," Pound can think of very few examples "where softness is tolerable" (*Literary* 285-7). His distinction between hardness and softness, never clearly drawn, also extends to prose. Pound praises James Joyce in 1914 for writing "clear hard prose," adding "Mr. Joyce does not flop about" (*Literary* 399-400). The phallic overtones of poetic and prosodic hardness become even more pronounced when used in conjunction with terms like "sterile," "impotent," "castrated," and "tumidity" that litter his critical writings (*Literary* 18, 23, 64, 418). However, these remarks pale in comparison to his Translator's Postscript to Remy de Gourmont's *The Natural Philosophy of Love*. Pound maintains that the brain is "a sort of great clot of genital fluid" and claims for spermatozoa the role of "form-creator," which "compels the ovule to evolve in a given pattern." He states that "creative thought is an act like fecundation, like the male cast of seed." While he makes token gestures toward a female corollary to the creative force of "the spermatozoid," Pound has been justly criticized for the sexist comments that he makes throughout this essay, including his well-known comparison of "the male feeling in copulation" to "driving any new idea into the great passive vulva of London."

¹⁶ In the final lines of the film, Jim Gordon explains to his young son (and, by extension, the audience) why Batman must become a scapegoat: "he's the hero Gotham deserves, but not the one it needs right now. So we'll hunt him. Because he can take it. Because he's not our hero. He's a silent guardian. A watchful protector. A Dark Knight."

through the force of rhetoric or crass emotional appeals rather than logic (*Literary* 409, 21). In this sense, Eliot and Pound's obscurity is willed, not "willful," and they count themselves among the agents of order battling against the omnipresent threat of chaos. However, whether the obscure words they "resurrected" served any useful purpose for the society that they claimed to be protecting is a different question altogether and one that the parallel case of the crossword puzzle craze helps to elucidate. During the mid-1920s, debates raged about the educational merits of the crossword puzzle. Supporters claimed that the puzzle encouraged greater familiarity with the English language and opened up "an almost endless vista of words and their meanings" while detractors claimed that the crossword's educational effects were negligible since puzzle fans look up words with the "single purpose" of completing the grid and "promptly forget" them after completing their task (Mme. X G1; McIntyre C3). More moderate voices concluded that crossword puzzles did "enrich" the "national vocabulary," but only within a very limited range that, as one journalist joked, was largely comprised of words made up of "two or three letters ending in a vowel" ("Words, Down" 18). The most balanced assessment came from Arthur Maurice, former editor of *The Bookman*, who estimated that crossword puzzles had "restored" fifty simple words that had fallen into disuse as a result of "mental laziness" ("Forty" 34).¹⁷ Although Maurice expresses his admiration for the "constructive work" that crossword puzzles have accomplished by "awakening the mind and tongue to the thousand and one words that have so long been dormant," he admits that not all of these newly revived words are equally well-suited for conversational purposes and drives home this point by scripting a ludicrous exchange between two women whose vocabulary has been "embellished by the puzzle." The obscure words contained within Eliot's and Pound's poetry were probably about as useful for the common

¹⁷ Among the words that he credited the crossword puzzle with "resurrecting" were "mar," "cite," "terse," "curtail," and "aroma."

reader as the vocabulary learned from crossword puzzles; while a few words were likely (re)adopted, the vast majority fell on deaf ears because they did not serve a useful purpose in the daily life of the average person. It is a symptom of Eliot and Pound's elitism that they imagined that such abstruse diction had wide "public utility." Beyond the narrow class of the well-educated, there would be little call for words like "carbuncular" and to expect Eliot's typist to take it up as readily as she took home the house agent would be about as likely as "Miss Mahler, the boss' secretary" in the cartoon (Fig. 1) finding the occasion "to use OBI, BOA, and their synonyms in the firm's correspondence" (Hill J1).

"The Pattern in the Carpet"

The second major commonality between the poetry of the "cross-word puzzle school" and crossword puzzles is a structural one. Both Eliot and Pound conceived of rhythm as a "framework" or "scaffold" akin to the crossword grid, which provides the underlying structure for seemingly free verse. Just as crossword constructors must select words to populate the grid based upon the constraints imposed by symmetry and all-over-interlock, rhythm predetermines the shape of the poetic line, creating blanks that the poet must fill with language that conforms to the movement of the verse. In both instances, the meaning of the word is secondary to one of its formal properties, whether it be the sequence of its letters or the place where the accent falls. The poet, like the crossword constructor, thinks of words in spatial terms and seeks to arrange them in the most efficacious manner possible. Eliot succinctly articulated his views on rhythm in a review of Marianne Moore's poetry published in *The Dial* in December 1923. Whilst praising her unique cadences, he announces that rhythm "is always the real pattern in the carpet, the scheme of organization of thought, feeling and vocabulary, the way in which everything comes together" (595). Eliot's remark is illuminating because not only does he defend a fellow member of the

crossword puzzle school, but he also identifies rhythm and the central role it plays in establishing a "pattern" or design that unifies the whole poem as a shared feature of their poetics.¹⁸ By alluding to Henry James's "The Figure in the Carpet" (1896), he takes a jab at the critics who could not discern the formal structure governing his own poems, and hints that they accuse him of carelessly dashing off unruly verse out of a sense of their own inadequacy. Frustrated by their inability to see the "figure in the carpet," they cannot bear to ascribe the fault to their own lack of vision, and lash out spitefully, as the critic in the story does, when he declares that he "detested" the author and "simply couldn't read him," knowing in his heart that nothing could be further from the case. Eliot expatiated on the importance of rhythm to his compositional process in a letter to Stephen Spender in May 1931; he explained that "my theory of writing verse is that one gets a rhythm, and a movement first, and fills it in with some approximation to sense later" (*Letters V*, 579).¹⁹ Instead of an overarching idea motivating his selection of words, melody dominates to such a degree that the meaning may be impaired; after all, Eliot himself admits that the best that he can achieve is "some approximation to sense," rather than sense itself. Like a librettist, who writes lyrics to a tune that has already been composed, Eliot fills in the blanks left by the rhythm. His conception of the shape of a poem also mirrors the grid-like musical notation used to convey that melody; Eliot consistently referred to a poem's formal structure as a "frame," "scaffold," or "framework" all of which reinforce the sense of writing within a grid, akin to the

¹⁸Eliot and Pound resisted the crossword label and denied that any such "school" existed. However, Pound offered to use his considerable skills as a promoter to get a volume of Marianne Moore's poems published, and he warned her against repeating a term ("pneumatic") that Eliot had used memorably in one of his poems because the reading public already assumed that they were members of the same "circle." Although he denied that there was any validity to this claim, attributing it to the stupidity of the average reader, he ended his cajoling letter to her with the partly facetious, partly genuine plea: "we *must* defend the camp against the outer damnations" (*Letters* 142).

¹⁹ Cf. Pound's assertion in 1911, three years prior to meeting Eliot, that "the true economy lies in making the tune first. . . . To set words to a tune one has but to let the musical accents fall upon words strong enough to bear them" (*Prose* 37).

crossword puzzle's own.

Pound also acknowledged the structural importance of rhythm, but like all good crossword constructors, he warned against using too much filler. In order to convey "the art of poetic rhythm" to the readers of *The New Age*, Pound explained that a "rhythm-structure may be built up of parts which are homogenous or of parts which differ among themselves" and offered an analogy to help them visualize the differences between a poem written in a single meter, "think of a geometrical pattern made up of homogenous units," versus one employing metrical variation, picture "a design made up of a half dozen kinds of unit arranged symmetrically" ("Approach to Paris II" 578). His description of metrical regularity sounds remarkably like a crossword puzzle grid, and his injunction against using "a symmetrical form" if you plan on "put[ting] in what you want to say and then fill[ing] up the remaining vacuums with slush" strengthens this association ("A Few Don'ts" 205). Although the crossword puzzle is often regarded as a disposable form of popular entertainment, there is an art to constructing them and learning the craft takes careful study, a knack for "divergent thinking," and practice (Amende 96). Numerous regulations govern the composition of these puzzles, and some of the strictures are quite similar to Pound's own. For instance, one of the cardinal rules of crossword construction is coming up with "lively fill" (ibid). If a crossword compiler were to populate a grid with crossword clichés or words chosen purely for their utility, he or she would be reviled for laziness. Fill should never just be filler, or, "slush" as Pound termed it; any word added to the grid, like each of the words in a poem, should be meaningful in its own right and contribute to the artistry of the overall design.

That said, Pound assumed that a certain amount of filler exists in all poetry, even in the creations of the world's greatest poets. However, he urged that this "padding" be kept to a

minimum and specified that "blank words" used purely for "the timing" or "the movement" should be limited to "say 4%" (*Letters* 269). Crossword editors take a similar view of the aptly named "cheaters," or black squares added to the grid for the sole purpose of easing the technical challenges posed by the grid's design. While black squares are necessary for separating words, cheaters do not increase the total number of words in a grid and serve no other function than to "make constructing easier" (Amende 206). Crossword "queen" Margaret Petherbridge-Farrar developed one of the cornerstones of crossword construction during her tenure as puzzle editor of *The New York World* and Simon & Schuster's *The Cross Word Book* series before taking her place in history as the first person to edit *The New York Times* crossword puzzle. During the 1920s, she issued the mandate that no more than one sixth, or roughly sixteen percent of the total number of squares may be black and they must exhibit one hundred eighty degree rotational symmetry (Tausing 112). The reasoning behind this ruling was twofold: a grid containing a limited number of symmetrically arranged black squares maximizes the puzzle's visual appeal and satisfies the fans' innate desire for order; she observed to Will Shortz that experience had long since taught her that "[s]olvers tend to be drawn to things that are orderly" (qtd. in Campbell 15). No hard and fast rule developed to regulate the number of cheaters, but they are frowned upon because they "detract from the elegance of the grid design" and diminish the artistry involved (Amende 206). Cheaters, like Pound's "blank words," are anathema to the ethos of puzzling because they provide an easy out, a way of getting around a difficult challenge rather than finding a clever solution to it. In short, careless construction was and continues to be just as much of a sin in the crossword world as it was for the "cross-word puzzle poets."

Compositional rules place a high premium on order, and the symmetrical grid of the crossword puzzle is emblematic of this desire for stability. Yet, if a system becomes too highly

regulated, it threatens to become boring or oppressive, which is one of the reasons why Pound encouraged poets to be flexible, even when writing in traditional meters. Citing the Romantic composer Chopin as a model worthy of emulation, Pound touted the value of heeding the melody of words and allowing a rhythmic "shape" to develop based upon how they are arranged, rather than feeling compelled to write "to a metronome" (*Literary* 421). He disdained the "anarchy" of entirely free verse, but also chafed under the restriction of writing in conventional forms that he found inadequate for conveying reality because "Life for the most part does not happen in neat little diagrams and nothing is more tiresome than the continual pretence that it does" (*Literary* 400). Consequently, greater realism can be achieved by treating "musical bars" as "a sort of scaffold to be kicked away when no longer needed" (*Literary* 439). For Pound, traditional metrical forms are like poetic training wheels that can be cast aside in favor of more authentic rhythms approximating to real speech once the poet has mastered his or her craft. Since writing by ear more closely mirrors the conditions of real life, emphasizing the melody present within a seemingly haphazard arrangement of words offers the hope that there is likewise an underlying order regulating the chaos of modern existence.

Pound begins to question the clear division between regularity and irregularity, order and disorder in the essay "Vers Libre and Arnold Dolmetsch" (1918), when he hints that each is never entirely separable from its opposite. He makes the case that *vers libre* is not a new innovation and that irregularity was present in the classical music of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, citing manuals that urged performers to vary the speed or timbre to avoid monotony and praised the "irregularities of the beautiful human voice" (*Literary* 438-9). He even goes so far as to argue that the "irregularity underlying classical forms" may be a "fundamental irregularity," which would suggest that disorder is present in order and may even be constitutive

of it (*Literary* 440). The underlying irregularity adds interest and highlights the beauty of the regular rhythm (or pitch) once it is reestablished after a brief interruption (i.e., rupture followed by restoration). Irregularity is not perceived as threatening in this instance because it is kept within definite limits and provides the occasion for the dramatic reassertion of order, the return of the familiar melody. Eliot also reached the conclusion that order is present in disorder and vice versa. He asserted that there are two types of free verse: one in which an author develops his or her own unique rhythm and another where "established metres are broken up almost—not quite—out of recognition. The pleasure one gets out of the irregularity . . . is due to the shadow or suggestion of regular metre behind it" (*Poems* 362). Here, in the opposite scenario to the one envisioned by Pound, the regularity present in irregular verse also produces a pleasurable sensation for the audience, but why is this the case if disorder outweighs order? Why isn't the listener disconcerted by irregularity's predominance?

The answer, as Eliot rightly inferred, has to do with pattern recognition and the (faulty) human belief that anything exhibiting a pattern cannot be random and therefore must be meaningful. Referred to variously as apophenia or patternicity, the natural human tendency to discern patterns in the world around us developed because it conferred an evolutionary advantage; identifying patterns enables humans and animals alike to recognize and avoid potential threats or to make predictions that increase the odds of survival and reproduction (Shermer). The cost of believing in a "false pattern" is generally much lower than failing to identify a real one (e.g., steering clear of a harmless spider because it bears the tell-tale markings of a poisonous one may cause you to expend more energy but avoids a potentially serious bite), which explains why humans have developed the innate belief that "most patterns are real" (Shermer). As "pattern seekers," we struggle to come to terms with the fact that any randomly

generated set of data will contain patterns and that the ones we interpret as significant may just be the result of chance. Members of Eliot and Pound's extended social circle were working on the question of randomness during the 1920s. Frank Plumpton Ramsey, a Cambridge mathematician and the protégé of John Maynard Keynes and Bertrand Russell, completed a mathematical proof in 1928 that demonstrated "complete disorder is an impossibility" because any "structure will necessarily contain an orderly substructure" (Graham and Spencer 112). Or to express the same idea more concretely, we see constellations in the sky because these shapes were bound to occur given a large enough number of stars. To return to the question of why regularity within free verse is pleasing, the "priming effect" conditions us to "interpret stimuli according to an expected model," so we approach the new verse form through the familiar framework of the old one, measuring the differences between them by listening for moments when our expectations align with what actually does occur, and this conjunction produces a pleasant sense of recognition and perhaps of inevitability (i.e., what was supposed to happen did).

Crossword puzzles tap into the same part of the brain that governs pattern recognition, allowing us to indulge in the pleasure of anticipating and correctly identifying the word that corresponds to the clue, fits the number of spaces provided, and contains the letters already entered into the grid from intersecting answers. When called upon to think of words in terms of their component parts and to visualize them laid out in a grid, our pattern recognition center goes into overdrive, striving to make sense of the information that we do have by offering educated guesses about the missing letters based upon a knowledge of how the English language works (e.g., using the wording of the clue to determine the answer's part of speech or tense in order to fill in the appropriate ending when a word remains elusive). For example, while searching for a

six-letter word for "perturbation" that fulfills the pattern D _ _ _AY, one's mind quickly runs through the possibilities, discarding those that do not fit until realizing that the word must be "dismay." Everything clicks, the word fits tidily into its designated place on the grid; order has been restored. The hunt begins again, as the letters unlocked by the answer provide clues to the next word, branching off of the first in a manner that highlights the interconnectedness of all words. Crossword puzzles vividly demonstrate that language is a symbolic system composed of a limited number of letters (representing sounds) that can be arranged into different combinations to form words that correspond to generally agreed upon meanings. In day to day usage, we take for granted that a certain combination of letters (or sounds) equates to a particular concept, and this type of pattern recognition is essential for communication.

Studies have shown that apophenia is closely linked to creativity, a fact which Pound seems to have intuited when he defined genius as "the capacity to see ten things where the ordinary man sees one," but the desire to find patterns can become pathological and in this distorted form is a hallmark of mental illness.²⁰ Indeed, the term "apophany" (from which apophenia derives) was first used in Klaus Conrad's study of schizophrenia to designate a delusional state in which individuals ascribed "abnormal meanings" to their "experiential field," such as imagining that they were constantly "being observed, spoken about," and "followed by strangers" (Mishara 10). Referred to as the Type II error, or seeing patterns where none exist, this is the dark flip side of a natural human need for meaning and order, an idea that we will revisit in the context of Eliot and Pound's efforts to achieve a new synthesis and the threat that their receptivity to stimuli posed to their internal coherence.

One might object that the formal similarities I have noted between crossword puzzles and

²⁰ Think, for example, of conspiracy theories, or, in its more benign form, superstition.

modernist verse are applicable to all poetry and, indeed, that metrically regular poetry bears a closer resemblance to the uniformity of the crossword puzzle's checkered grid. It is true that the frequent use of enjambement, uneven line and stanza lengths, irregular or entirely absent rhyme schemes, and repudiation of many of the typographical conventions for transcribing poems, which characterize modernist poetry seem to defy the orderly universe of the modern fifteen by fifteen grid. However, not only did early crossword puzzles come "in all shapes and sizes" as we have seen, amounting to an experimental freedom rivaling modernism's own, but comparing the interior contents of a poem to the exterior of the crossword grid is like comparing apples and oranges. The poem is to the grid as the poem's lines are to the keyed answers; even in the case of the uniformly square grid, its interior contents are highly variable and therefore more closely resemble the freedom of modern verse than the end-stopped, metrical regularity of traditional poetry. The words within the crossword grid vary in length, creating banks of white squares set off by black ones that form various shapes in different quadrants of the grid, or if you recall Pound's analogy for a poem utilizing metrical variation, the crossword's interior is "a design made up of a half dozen kinds of unit[s] arranged symmetrically." Just as the length of the words inside the crossword grid vary, so too does the degree of their formality, ranging from slang and abbreviations to highly technical jargon. Neither in terms of the content nor the layout does the interior of the crossword puzzle approach the level of uniformity expressed by its exterior frame.

An "Undifferentiated Dumpling"

The third, and final, commonality that I will discuss between crossword puzzles and poems written by Pound and Eliot is difficulty. As Leonard Diepeveen has shown, critics of modernism tended to polarize on the question of difficulty. Some argued that these seemingly formidable poems were not actually difficult, they just required a significant amount of research

before they could be unraveled, while others complained that modernist poetry was too challenging and that their "knowledge-based difficulty" diminished the reader's pleasure by drawing his or her focus outside of the poem (Diepeveen 134). Both camps agreed that research is necessary for full comprehension of "the new poetry," but developed differing strategies in order to justify their unwillingness to conduct it. Critics who wrote off modernist poetry as easy advanced the somewhat elitist argument that source hunting was not worth their while because anyone who went to the trouble would achieve the same results (have cipher, will decode) whereas those who condemned it as difficult claimed that doing the research was not a good return on investment either because there is nothing beyond the level of allusion to be unlocked—the poems are just a "hotchpotch," a "ragbag without synthesis" decorated with stolen jewels. The prevailing sentiment at the time of the crossword puzzle "craze" was that they too required "dictionaries, encyclopedia, and atlases" in order to be solved, yet that fact elicited nowhere near the level of vehemence that difficult modernist poetry did ("Why They Do Puzzles" SM20). Taking the consensus that both crossword puzzles and modernist poems have to be "worked" using a dictionary and other reference materials as a starting point, I interrogate why the same "requirement" provoked such divergent responses. While contemporary critics were content to attribute Eliot and Pound's learned allusions to showboating, a display of erudition reinforced by their use of obscure or archaic terminology, this defensiveness blinds them to textually motivated reasons behind the poets' allusiveness. Contrary to the contemporary critics who discerned a void at the heart of modernist poetry, I suggest that Eliot and Pound's allusions are in the service of restoring and maintaining a tradition that they felt was under siege.

"Every stenographer has a dictionary hidden in her desk and workmen have one in their dinner pail," concluded the bemused reporter for *The Atlanta Constitution* of the crossword craze

that was sweeping the nation in 1924, adding with mock regret, that he too had recently succumbed to "the nonsensical pastime that keeps your head in a whirl and your nose in a dictionary" (McIntyre C3). Since many of the early crossword clues were relatively straightforward definitions, the sale of dictionaries and thesauruses went through the roof as the crossword puzzle fad gained steam. A correspondent for *The Los Angeles Times* joked that if "Mr. Crabbe, author of the 'Synonyms,' and Mr. Roget, compiler of the Thesaurus which bears his name, [were] alive today they would be driving about in limousines bought from their royalties" while another predicted that "They'll be selling thesauruses at the groceries next" ("Word Hunters" A8; "Cross-word Craze is Contagious" G7). Sellers of normally slow-moving reference volumes, such as encyclopedias and rhyming dictionaries, were quick to court the crossword puzzle fan in the hopes of making a profit. Webster's promised success to any "Word Puzzlers" who used their *New International Dictionary*, claiming that it offers the "Best Opportunity" to arrive at "a Correct Solution," drew in potential customers with the lure of financial gain by printing a suspiciously anonymous testimonial by a crossword competitor who had won two thousand dollars in prizes using their dictionary (Arnot 60). In England, Cassell's also promised to aid beleaguered solvers, urging them never to "be baffled by difficult words!" when their dictionaries will "give the words you'd never guess" (8). One company even sold a miniature dictionary that could be worn on the wrist for crossworders on the go (Amende 11). Libraries in large cities experienced unusually high demands on their reference materials; the New York Public Library had so many requests for dictionaries that they had to bar crossword puzzle fans from using them,²¹ while librarians in Los Angeles limited patrons' access to five

²¹ In the winter of 1924, a small sign in the main reading room of the New York Public Library stated that dictionaries were only available for "legitimate reference purposes." By February 1925, librarians had "temporarily

minutes. Railway lines installed dictionaries on their commuter trains, there was talk of them being added to the subway as well, and even gleeful whispers that it would replace Gideon Bibles in hotel nightstands! ("Gossip" 793). Fueling this newfound obsession with dictionaries was the fact that, even amongst advanced solvers, "it is seldom that every square can be correctly filled without recourse to some reference volume" (MacDoweld 12). Nor was America the only nation held in the thrall of "a restless intellectualism" ("Why They Do Puzzles" SM20). A similar situation prevailed in London where the Tube and omnibuses were full of puzzle fans gamely trying to beat the notoriously quick time posted by the Dean of Eton, who completed his daily crossword puzzle while soft-boiling his breakfast egg. No one described the craze and its pervasive appeal more charmingly than the journalist for *The Times*, who wrote "[i]n every walk of life the modern Theseus plunges day after day into the self-sought labyrinth whilst his Ariadne deftly manipulates a string of dictionaries by way of guiding thread" ("Craze and Maze" 13).

Literary critics, such as Louis Untermeyer and J. A. Spender, asserted that reference materials were equally essential for comprehending Eliot and Pound's poetry, but whereas the crossword puzzle's difficulty aroused occasional cries of indignation that puzzle "addicts" were wasting their time, the poetry elicited a much stronger and more consistently disparaging reaction. In the Introduction to his *Modern American Poetry* (1921), Untermeyer takes a swipe at the expatriates Eliot and Pound by praising the unaffected poetry of Vachel Lindsay, Robert Frost, and Carl Sandburg for teaching readers that "it was not necessary to have at their elbows a dictionary of rare words and classical references" (xxx1). Although he does not identify Pound or Eliot directly by name, he makes doubly sure that his intended referents are clear by trotting out all of the old criticisms against them: they live through books, rely too heavily on Latin and

withdrawn" all of the dictionaries from their shelves and a new, more direct sign explained they "may not be used for solving cross word puzzles."

Greek, and neglect the language of the common people.²² In short, their poetry is difficult and not accessible for those without a substantial education, unlike the direct, expressive power of the poetry he celebrates for appealing to "people who never before had read verse" and "found they could not only read it but relish it" (ibid). Untermeyer even seizes the phrase "the new poetry," so closely associated with modernism, and re-deploys it to praise a native American renaissance, one that pointedly does not include the poets whom he believes turned their backs on their homeland as well as the average reader. Like Untermeyer before him, John Shand chastises Eliot and his contemporaries for their difficult, uncommunicative poetry, and he scorns the high-handed manner in which "these poets disregard the unlearned. If you are not a scholar, they will not speak to you" (547). Hinting that Eliot's ostentatious display of learning necessarily limits his readership to "a small circle," he warns that "the unlearned and the impatient may well be tempted to dismiss all such poetry as a new kind of complicated cross-word puzzle" (551). If Eliot does not tear down the "formidable apparatus of investigation" necessary for readers to follow his thought process, then he will become "so heavy with erudition" that he alone will "understand what he is saying" (551).²³ As Shand's pointed repetition of "unlearned" suggests, he uses the term sarcastically in order to demonstrate just how out of touch with the common person Eliot has become. Nor is the gender-bending metaphor of pregnancy accidental. Shand admonishes the poet that his literary legacy depends upon reaching a large audience since "to exclude the common reader is to exclude posterity," or, to extend the metaphor, to remain heavily pregnant without hope of issue.

²² Untermeyer makes triply sure by repeating these charges in the headnotes for both poets, accusing Pound, for instance, of "drawing life not from itself but from books," "an impoverishment of emotion," and "erudition" that "degenerate[s] into pedantry" (301-2).

²³ Joseph Wood Krutch advanced the same line of argumentation against Pound twenty years earlier.

Despite their annoyance, these critics expressed their frustration far more temperately than the numerous reviewers who issued staggeringly vehement indictments of the difficulties presented by Eliot and Pound's poetry. J. A. Spender, former editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, wrote a blistering dismissal of Eliot's poetry in 1940. Seemingly unfazed by the belatedness of his attack, Spender stated that "Eliot, on his own showing, requires the reading of a whole reference library for the understanding of his *Waste Land*" and vociferously denied (in an apostrophe to the poet no less) that the ensuing "literary product" merits the title of poetry (Poems 1170). Bound up in his complex, yet concisely articulated assault, is the conviction that Eliot's poetry cannot stand on its own, an idea that Spender traces back to the extensive textual apparatus that the poet appended to *The Waste Land*. Eliot had unwittingly stoked the fire by stating in his Notes that he believed consulting the sources he listed would "elucidate the difficulties of the poem"—a frankness that he would come to regret when critics pounced upon it as proof, from the horse's mouth, of the poem's unintelligibility. As Hugh Kenner succinctly puts it, Eliot would pay for his presumption by being immortalized "as the man who had written an unintelligible poem, and *with notes*" (*Invisible* 182). By referring to Eliot's poetry as a "literary product," Spender also alludes to the charges of plagiarism frequently directed against Eliot during the teens and 1920s. Drawing upon the resonances of the term "product" in mathematics and manufacturing, he accuses Eliot of assembling materials produced by other poets, and having the temerity to call these manufactured goods poetry. While cruel rumors raged that *The Waste Land* was a hoax, Pound's poetry was under fire as an "impenetrable mass," "choked with learning," and likened to a motley "patchwork." Clearly, the anger that their difficult poetry elicited was disproportionate to any affront that either poet had committed by publishing it. Critics acted as if they had been wounded by the poems, and their reaction is different in degree

as well as kind from the playful remarks made about the crossword "menace." What accounts for the difference?

Wounded pride is certainly a factor, and the crossword puzzle offered those who had been stumped by it an outlet denied by modernist poetry: it is only a game, nothing serious, and its "victims" could, therefore, even be magnanimous in defeat. Those injured by difficult poetry had no recourse but to conceal their wounds or lick them in public. Unless, of course, they could convince others that "the new poetry" was only a "complicated crossword puzzle." I do not deny that one of the motivating factors behind the "cross-word puzzle school" label is its convenience, a veritable Swiss army knife in the pocket of modernist detractors, yet as we have seen, they could not have made this charge stick unless there were numerous points of contact between crossword puzzles and the poetry written by Eliot and Pound; no smoke without fire, as the proverb goes.

Many of the subsidiary reasons why difficulty in crossword puzzles and modernist poems was perceived differently are the result of the formal protocols governing the ways that the reader engages with these texts. As a game, crossword puzzles clearly articulate the rules of engagement. Players know exactly what to expect and whether they have won or lost. The puzzle offers certainty and finality that poetry cannot, due in large part to the fact that crossword puzzles have a single correct solution. Although crossword puzzles have been crafted by another person, there is less of a sense of direct engagement with him or her. Generally, the author is not regarded as an opponent, instead one plays against one's self in a test of wits. That is not to say that people did not compete for the fastest times, they did, and there have been sponsored competitions since the mid-1920s, but players have only themselves to blame if they cannot complete the puzzle. Crosswords are designed in such a way that they can be solved from

various points of entry in order to increase the likelihood of the solver's success—this is the reason behind the prohibition against islands and unkeyed answers. In contrast, poems are an all or nothing affair. Either you understand a poem, or you do not. Contrary to source hunters who believe that there is a skeleton key or cipher that will unlock the poem's meaning, identifying allusions or defining difficult terms is just the first step. Comprehending a poem requires an understanding of how each of its component pieces work together to produce meaning, and that meaning need not be singular nor will the poem necessarily yield the same "solution" for each reader. Many writers do engage in forms of word play, but they do not generally signal the presence of a puzzle overtly, nor do they provide clearly demarcated clues to help the reader deduce it. If a riddling author presents a puzzle, part of the test of worthiness is identifying the invitation to play.

Yet, at the root of these differing protocols is a key similarity, one that informs the way in which writer and reader alike approach the text. Both crossword puzzles and the "Cross-word puzzle poets" postulate an active reader, one who (in Eliot's parlance) is willing "to take some trouble" and does not merely treat texts as the occasion for "REPOSE" (Pound, *ABC* 88). Simon & Schuster marketed their crossword puzzle books as "the real literature of escape" yet also, paradoxically, emphasized the reader's active role as a key selling point. Instead of experiencing the "second-hand thrills" of reading about the adventures of others, one can "be a Sherlock Holmes himself, giving battle single-handed to all the words in the language" because "one does not *read* The Cross Word Puzzle Books—*one writes in them; one lives in them*" ("Eighth" ix, original emphasis). The novelty of writing inside of a book appealed to the early solvers as did Simon & Schuster's rhetoric, and some puzzle aficionados repeated it verbatim. Petherbridge herself extended the analogy between crosswords and detective fiction, while a journalist at the

Los Angeles Times explained the puzzle's allure by paraphrasing the advertisement: "In novels one is the hero in fancy, in cross-word puzzles, one is hero in fact" ("Cross-word Craze is Contagious" G7). Pound was notoriously critical of the short attention span, limited powers of comprehension, and laziness of the average reader, whom he referred to uncharitably as "sapheads," and he raged against popular literature for catering to pedestrian desires, growling that "the art of popular success lies simply in never putting more on any one page than the most ordinary reader can lick off it in his normally rapid, half-attentive skim-over" (*Literary* 32). Crossword puzzles complicate his clear demarcation between popular literature (passive) and serious art (active), but Pound was too skeptical of popular entertainment in general to realize that crosswords were in alignment with many of his own ideals.²⁴ Instead, he dismissed famed British crossword constructor Torquemada's cryptics as "abominations" and punctuated one of his points with the colorful remark that even "the nastiest addict of crossword puzzles shd. be able to solve this or see this" (*ABC* 95; *Guide* 48). Yet, despite Pound's unwillingness to acknowledge the crossword puzzle's merits, this popular form of entertainment exhibited the requisite difficulty and cultivated the nimble, active intellect that both Eliot and Pound believed were the hallmarks of serious, modern literature.

Having had to "sweat" to achieve their "historical sense," Pound and Eliot expected readers to be willing to make an effort to understand their poetry. If this involved having to consult a dictionary, learn a bit of Greek, or revisit tales from classical mythology, then so be it, they rationalized, because they had already gone to the trouble of winnowing the sprawling,

²⁴ Popular culture is one of the topics on which Eliot and Pound disagreed most emphatically. Eliot argued that "fine art is the refinement, not the antithesis, of popular art" and challenged modern writers "to take a form of [popular] entertainment, and subject it to the process which would leave it a form of art" ("Moore" 595; "Possibility" 14). Pound, on the other hand, averred that "Great Art is NEVER popular to start with" and was deeply skeptical of anything trendy (*Letters* 101). This difference of opinion plays out in their stance toward the crossword puzzle--Eliot was "almost ostentatiously addicted" to it and incorporated *The Times* crossword puzzle into his daily commute, whereas Pound referred to them frequently in his critical writings, but always with a sneer (Chinitz 155).

chaotic mass of existing knowledge and laid the spoils, artfully packaged in poetry that imbued them with new meaning, at the reader's feet. The difficulty of their poetry, then, served two purposes: it fought against the forces of disorder by giving a manageable shape to the "undifferentiated dumpling" or "indiscriminate bolus" of human knowledge by isolating materials worthy of preservation and cutting them free from the chaotic mass, and in the process shored up the classical tradition that they felt was under attack. However, their rationalization naturalizes the subjective character of their selection process; although they insinuate that they choose items based purely upon technical merit, their selections do unquestionably advance a particular agenda, the rehabilitation of a tradition that is for them synonymous with "civilization"—a tradition written by and for history's victors. Pound offers us a glimpse of that tradition in the process of formation in his essay "The Prose Tradition in Verse" (1914). Drawing upon Yeats's poetic authority to support his claim, Pound asserts that "the highest poetry is so precious that one should be willing to search many a dull tome to find and gather the fragments" (*Literary* 371). What goes unsaid here is how he determines which "fragments" are worthy of being rescued from the dusty tome and given renewed life. In his quest for the "shreds and patches" of "the highest poetry," Pound discards the bulk of the volume's contents, insinuating that they deserve to be consigned to the dust heap of history because of their dullness, yet we have only his judgment to go on, and these excluded materials could form the basis for a rival tradition given differing selection criteria. An offhand remark that Pound made in an article for *The New Age* in 1919 suggests whom this tradition benefits. He states that "for five centuries a series of intelligent men have written intelligently, have collected the fragments of earlier civilization for reinforcement" ("Pastiche XII" 32). Pound envisions himself as part of a long lineage of intellectuals—women need not apply—whose task is to keep knowledge of the past

alive. Tellingly, his phrasing does not make clear whether the "fragments" serve as "reinforcement" for the civilization or for the "intelligent men" who have selected them; in the end, it amounts to much the same thing since they alone possess the authority, explicitly denied to women, to make decisions about the contents of the dominant tradition. Instead, Pound imagines himself in the role of the good doctor, diagnosing the ills of society and benevolently dispensing knowledge of "the classics, 'ancient and modern'" as "antiseptics against the contagious imbecility of mankind" (*Letters* 113).

Eliot likewise envisioned himself fighting an "endless battle to regain civilization," and he explained that a poet's duty is "as much to regain, under very different conditions, what was known to men writing at remote times and in alien languages" as it is "the struggle to conquer the absolutely new" (*Poems* 953). Eliot once again casts himself in the role of a brave knight, but this time the stakes are much higher. He is the last defender of a civilization that has already fallen and must be re-won. Even if he were to succeed in restoring the old order, there would be no end to his labors because it will remain embattled. His is an "endless" task of conservative retrenchment. The poet-knight proves himself worthy by heeding and recovering the wisdom of the past, again pointedly limited to innovations made by men, or through new conquests of his own. He figures poetic invention as violent acts of domination, of bending "the new" to his will. Eliot's tradition, like Pound's, is one crafted and safeguarded by men, and as the violence of his analogy suggests, he is prepared to defend it against interlopers. Part of Eliot's anxiety derives from his realization that the tradition he champions is one of many possible configurations of the past, one tradition among many. In "Wordsworth and Coleridge," he passionately declares that "[s]urely the great poet is, among other things, one who not merely restores *a* tradition which has been in abeyance, but one who in his poetry re-twines as many straying strands of tradition as

possible" (emphasis added). Almost immediately after acknowledging that multiple traditions of poetry are possible, Eliot deploys a metaphor that once again reasserts its singularity, figuring tradition as a fraying tapestry that the poet restores to its former, undamaged condition by weaving together the "straying" threads. Through his knowledge of past masters, the poet exercises a unifying force and his poem serves as a bulwark against the disorder that continuously pulls apart the "strands." A tradition that is "in abeyance" is temporarily inactive or disused and, in legal terminology, without an owner, so the poet's weaving is also a bid for ownership, seizing unguarded goods for the beautification of his tapestry.

Confronted on a daily basis with the impossibility of reading everything that had been published during an age of unprecedented proliferation of information, Eliot and Pound worried that great works of literature would be lost or forgotten amid a sea of print media. This information overload underscored the importance of selectivity. If only a small percentage of what was being written could actually be read, then how could artists ensure that their texts made their way into the hands, and more importantly, in front of the eyes of the reading public? Eliot was uncomfortably aware that "in a world crammed with reading-matter" much of value would be overlooked, but he reassured himself that "only *necessary* poems count, and only the necessary poems will be read" (Poems 890). Yet, while Eliot could distinguish between a "necessary" and merely "good" poem, how was the average reader supposed to know the difference? Pound and Eliot each made a bid to determine this criteria for the reading public by constructing an authoritative tradition.²⁵ While some of the writers in their pantheons differed and their techniques of selling the average reader on them certainly varied, they were united in

²⁵ *The Criterion*, the name of the scholarly journal that Eliot founded and edited, takes on a new resonance within this context, as does Pound's concerted efforts in the late 1920s and early 1930s to teach the masses "How to Read" (1929) and the *ABC of Reading* (1934). They both felt compelled to offer readers a baseline for assessing great literature, a means of paring down the unwieldy bulk of published texts to a manageable list of essentials.

their belief in the importance of educating "the intelligent, over-busy public" to choose "the highest poetry," even in its "shreds and patches" (*ABC* 22). However, as we have seen, theirs was not a purely altruistic endeavor; the tradition that they constructed elevated a particular type of writing at the expense of others. By publicizing their views on literature, Pound and Eliot attempted to shape public opinion into conformity with their own standards and foreclose the possibility that the reading public would develop criteria inimical to the tradition they favored. Thus, while they may genuinely have believed that they were doing a public service, it is impossible to detach their efforts to share the joys of "great" literature from self-interest.

Their own poems deal with the challenges of living in an age where information has become untethered from its source and floats freely "in the air" by creating a new frame of reference in which to anchor experience, to make meaning out of the fragments they collected (Pound, *Prose* 23). Rigorous selection is once again essential to this enterprise. A poem can only contain a finite amount of material before it becomes unwieldy and loses its shape, or in Pound's terminology becomes "slime." Formlessness defeats the purpose of the poem because it is the structure, or frame, that forges meaningful connections between phenomena. If the poem becomes too inclusive, then the contents appear to be random, an arbitrary sampling instead of an artful selection that teases out previously undiscovered relationships by bringing materials into close contact with each other. One of Pound's favorite metaphors for describing the process of composing poetry was "If you clap a strong magnet beneath a plate full of iron filings, the energies of the magnet will proceed to organize form. It is only by applying a particular and suitable force that you can bring order and vitality and thence beauty into a plate of iron filings" ("Affirmations II" 277). The poet, like a magnet, attracts disparate pieces of experience, perceives relations between them, and arranges them into a meaningful shape through the force

of his intellect. Order is synonymous with beauty, and the poem, like "the rose pattern" that forms among the filings, is beautiful because it imposes a shape upon otherwise chaotic materials, turning a pile of cast off bits of iron into a lovely and meaningful design.²⁶ Eliot extended and refined this analogy by suggesting that each poet's mind is "magnetised in its own way" and the materials that he unconsciously attracts "from picture papers and cheap novels, indeed as well as serious books" form a stockpile of fragments awaiting recombination (*Poems* 393). Although he was frequently accused of acting like a magpie and gathering shiny tidbits for their own sake, Eliot collected with the objective of weaving these items, like the fraying threads of the tapestry of tradition, into a definite shape (i.e., the magpie's nest). Eliot resolved in 1923 that "the chaos must be faced: we cannot return to sleep and call it order, and we cannot have any order but our own" ("John Donne" 331-2). Both poets sought to achieve that order by reducing the "undifferentiated dumpling" to a piece of music, a small ordered universe in which themes echo and re-echo in orderly succession, and by plucking "from the air a live tradition" (Pound, Canto LXXXI).²⁷

²⁶ Pound mentions "the rose pattern" produced by the magnet in an earlier article for *The New Age* ("Through Alien Eyes I" 252).

²⁷ My thinking about the relationship between poetic structure to order and disorder has been influenced by Rita Dove's extraordinary rumination on the sonnet form entitled "An Intact World" in the opening pages of *Mother Love*.

Part II: The Riddles of Djuna Barnes

Chapter Two: "They Took to Gaming and Swapping that 'Other' of the Mystery, the Anomaly that Calls the Hidden Name"

In *Ladies Almanack* (1928), a post-menopausal Dame Evangeline Musset resolves to share the wisdom she has acquired with all of the women of her town in the hopes of saving them from the torments of love. "Riddle me this" she asks the first, a girl in her twenties, what is "halt" and fast, soft and hard, bitter and sweet, light and dark, and "always present yet never in Sight"? (75). Despite her use of the traditional "interrogative formula," Musset does not pause long enough to permit the young woman to respond (Bryant 13). She supplies the answer (love) herself, then launches directly into a second riddle, asking her to "riddle me the other" (75). Convinced of her superior knowledge, Musset does not envision the riddle contest as a dialogue between potential equals, but as the occasion for instructing others and demonstrating her own cleverness. Barnes parodies this dogmatic didacticism by staging an encounter between Musset and a riddlee older and wiser than she, the Madame in Mittens, whose wry response takes the wind from Musset's sails. However, rather than mocking riddling, which is an essential part of Barnes's own enigmatic aesthetic, she utilizes riddles as a means of attacking the deterministic views of sexologists, who insistently framed same-sex attraction as a riddle, mystery, or enigma to be solved.

Much of the scholarship written about *Ladies Almanack* concentrates on Barnes's sexuality and how it informs the veiled portrait of Natalie Clifford Barney's Parisian coterie in this *roman à clef*, or approaches the text from a formal perspective by examining her adaptation of the almanac genre. Barnes was a well-known journalist and author of a chapbook of poems, *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915), as well as a collection of short stories, *A Book* (1923), by the time that she met Barney and became involved in her *Académie des Femmes*. Barnes's

tempestuous love affair with the silverpoint artist Thelma Wood to whom she dedicated both her novel *Ryder* (1928) and *Ladies Almanack* was entering its final throes when she began composing the latter for private circulation among the ladies of the coterie. During the first wave of critical reevaluation of Barnes's literary output that took place between the 1970s and early 1990s, many scholars debated whether her portrayal of lesbian Paris should be understood as laudatory or disparaging. Suzanne Rodriguez succinctly summarizes the terms of the debate when she asks, "was Barnes celebrating lesbianism, or exposing it to ridicule?" (284).²⁸ In the intervening years, scholarship on Barnes has developed a more nuanced view of her stance on sexuality, including her engagement with sexology, than such binary formulations permit.

Inspired in part by Natalie Barney's unconcealed disdain for the sexologists Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) and Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) and their medicalization of the myth of the mannish lesbian, numerous scholars have interpreted *Ladies Almanack* as a parody of sexology. In "A Nose-Length Into the Matter: Sexology and Lesbian Desire in Djuna Barnes's *Ladies Almanack*," Christine Berni argues that Barnes stages "an intervention into medical codifications of sexual normalcy" by mocking "the era's most pervasive model for homosexual desire, the 'sexual invert'" (83). According to Berni, Barnes cannot avoid reproducing damaging, socially engrained stereotypes about lesbians, such as the narcissism of same-sex attraction and "the trope of lesbian love as tortured and doomed," despite her resistance to sexological configurations of lesbian desire (99). Julie Taylor claims that Barnes draws upon features of the

²⁸ Susan Sniader Lanser's "Speaking in Tongues: *Ladies Almanack* and the Language of Celebration" argues that the text offers "a vision of women turning to women in pleasure and joy" in which "lesbian sexuality itself emerges triumphant" (41, 44). At the other end of the spectrum, Karla Jay's "The Outsider among the Expatriates: Djuna Barnes' Satire on the Ladies of the *Almanack*" contends that Barnes never embraced a lesbian social identity and instead takes out her resentment against the wealthy, entitled members of Barney's circle by depicting their persons and love affairs in "unflattering" terms, "verging on viciousness" (185-6). In a revised version of "Speaking in Tongues" written for the anthology *Silence and Power* (1991), Lanser modifies her position slightly by asserting that *Ladies Almanack* is a coded, yet laudatory work written "to delight" its original audience, "Barnes's own friends" (166).

astrological almanac, including its association with discredited medical practices and hybrid form, in order to "satirize and discredit the moral authority of the contemporary sexologist" (717). However, by concentrating exclusively on the well-known theories of Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and Sigmund Freud, these scholars discount the relevance of the writings of continental sexologists, such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Julien Chevalier, whose influential works were less readily available in English language translations. This is a significant oversight because not only did Ulrichs play a pivotal and often overlooked role as a pioneering figure in the field of sexology, but his theorization of human sexuality as a spectrum, which anticipates Kinsey's findings by nearly a century, is essential to understanding why the Pope of Lesbos must be humbled during her riddling session in *Ladies Almanack*. By casting a wider net, we gain a greater appreciation of how deeply immersed in the scientific study of human sexuality Barnes actually was, and we are better equipped to answer questions about this notoriously difficult text that have perplexed scholars whose analyses have not ventured beyond the accepted trinity of Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and Freud.

Despite the prominence of riddles in *Ladies Almanack*, surprisingly little critical attention has been paid to their function or larger significance within the text. Daniela Caselli, the only scholar to take Barnes's riddling seriously up to this point, has astutely observed that riddles are "central" to *Ladies Almanack* (45). Her cursory discussion of riddling in *Improper Modernism* (2009) focuses on the ubiquitousness of riddles within the almanac tradition, then touches on how riddling plays into Barnes's own "aesthetics of ineffability" (ibid). Thus, while Caselli makes a valuable contribution to studies of *Ladies Almanack* by acknowledging the relevance of riddling to Barnes's stylistics, she overlooks the medical literature as a valuable intertext that sheds light on the motivating factors behind Barnes's riddling prose.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, sexologists routinely compared homosexuality to a riddle and offered confident assurances that science would unlock all of its secrets. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895), a German jurist and gay rights advocate, persistently characterized love between men as "a riddle of nature," and the publication of his collected writings under the title of *Forschungen über das Rätsel der Mannlichen Liebe* (*Research on The Riddle of Man-Manly Love*) did much to popularize and cement this conceptual linkage. Ulrichs called for the scientific study of homosexuality in order to dispel the prejudices that plague Urnings (his term for homosexual men), explaining that "riddles of nature can be solved by, if anything, science" (38), and the hesitancy expressed in his conditional phrasing turns to certainty by the time that Ulrichs completed the fourth pamphlet in his twelve-part series, which he subtitled "Solutions to the Riddle of Uranism and Uranian Variations" (1865). The two most widely read sexologists of the English speaking world, Krafft-Ebing and Ellis, both adopted Ulrichs's formulation of homosexuality as a riddle to be unraveled through scientific scrutiny. Indeed, it was Ulrichs, who had sparked Krafft-Ebing's interest in the study of homosexuality in the first place. Seven years prior to the publication of *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), which would establish him as the foremost sexologist of the nineteenth century, Krafft-Ebing freely admitted in a letter to Ulrichs that "it was the knowledge of your writings alone, which gave rise to my research in this highly important field" (qtd. in Kennedy 70).

Building off of the groundbreaking work of his German predecessor, Krafft-Ebing declared homosexuality to be an "enigmatical phenomenon of Nature" and "an enigma of many thousand years" (337, 343). Yet, in marked contrast to Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing subscribed to a disease-based model of homosexuality according to which "antipathic sexual feeling" is a "functional sign of degeneration." He held out the hope that it could be managed (if not cured) in

less fully developed cases through "the exercise of will and self-control; by moral treatment, and possibly by hypnotic suggestions" (337-8). A generation younger and significantly more progressive than Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis rejected the prevailing view of homosexuality as "a diseased condition of the body or mind," insisting that "what is abnormal is [not] necessarily diseased" and he expressed outrage at "those who are prepared to cure the invert at any price" (Krafft Ebing vii; Ellis 187).²⁹ Nevertheless, he agreed that sexual inversion (his term for homosexuality) is a "medico-legal problem so full of interest" that men of science "need not fear to face it" or to test their wits against this "mysterious riddle" (Ellis 43). Like Krafft-Ebing before him, Ellis publically recognized Ulrichs in his landmark *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion* (1897) as one of the key figures in the history of the study of inversion and Ellis's intellectual debts to Ulrichs—both acknowledged and unattributed—are substantial. I assert that Barnes draws upon the medical establishment's longstanding conceptualization of alternative sexualities as puzzles to be solved by aligning lesbian sexuality in *Ladies Almanack* with puzzles of all kinds—mazes, mysteries, and labyrinths—but above all with riddles. In so doing, she reclaims the enigmatic mode and denies that a singular solution to the "riddle" of human sexuality is either possible or desirable.

Rather than simply reversing the values ascribed to heterosexuality and homosexuality,

²⁹ Ellis's writings express a profound ambivalence about whether homosexuality should be regarded as a form of degeneration. In the first edition of *Sexual Inversion*, Ellis declared that while "strictly speaking the invert is degenerate; he has fallen away from the genus," he argued against studying sexual inversion through the lens of degeneration theory (188-89). Despite continued efforts to distance himself from the discredited theory in his third edition, including assembling a formidable list of scientific authorities all of whom "reject the conception of sexual inversion as degeneracy," the language and tenets of degeneration continue to filter into Ellis's writings on inversion. Not only does he maintain that inverts frequently exhibit "signs of infantilism in the general bodily structure" that arise from their "somewhat arrested development," suggesting that they are degenerate beings incapable of full development beyond the stage of childhood, but he also lumps sexual inverts with "the congenital idiot," "the instinctive criminal," and "the man of genius" as congenital phenomena (171, 186). The clearest example of the combined influence of degeneration theory and eugenics on his thinking occurs in Ellis's commentary on the undesirability of inverts reproducing. He states "they belong to a neurotic and failing stock. Sometimes, indeed, the tendency toward sexual inversion in eccentric and neurotic families seems to be Nature's merciful method of winding up a concern, which, from her point of view, has ceased to be profitable" (198).

"normal" and "abnormal," Barnes blurs the boundaries between them and draws attention to the arbitrariness of all such systems of categorization through her utilization of the riddle form. Riddles are both transgressive and transformative. They transform "one kind of category (whether of thing or being) . . . into another" by proposing a previously unperceived analogy between them, and their solution often involves a "shift in level that allows the categories to be related to one another under a common, more abstract rubric" (Handelman 43-45). In essence, riddles require the listener to rethink the way that we structure and make meaning of the world through language, showing that the seemingly impermeable barriers between different orders of things are far less stable than we might suspect. This playful destabilization of existing systems of classification, or shattering of the riddlee's expectations (rupture), affords the opportunity for new combinations (recombination) that forge alliances between dissimilar or even directly opposed categories of being (Stein 128).³⁰ Riddles, therefore, challenge "the institutionalized order" by indicating that the "conceptual categories" upon which it is based are arbitrary, given "the various ways in which things interrelate in the phenomenological world" (ibid). By harnessing the transgressive power of riddles, Barnes utilizes their capacity to enact change for political ends, "turning the unfamiliar into the familiar," as all riddles do, and breaking down the boundaries between self and other (Handelman 54; Cohen 305). Thus, while both she and the sexologists frame alternative sexualities as riddles, the net result is quite different. Barnes uses riddles affirmatively to bridge boundaries, whereas sexologists utilize riddles to divisive ends, elevating same-sex desire to the status of an enigma in order to applaud their own efforts at its demystification and to subjugate the potentially "dangerous other" by controlling how he or she

³⁰ The Chinese recognized the riddle's tendency toward what I have termed rupture, restoration, and/or recombination as early as the second century CE when K'ung Jung inaugurated a variety of riddling called *li-ho*, or "separating and recombining" by writing a "conundrum on his own name" (Plaks 230).

is defined.

In this chapter, I explore two major threads of Barnes's engagement with sexology that are closely tied to riddles and riddling. The first involves Barnes's response to the theories of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs as filtered through Marcel Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1921-2) as well as her posthumous dialogue with Ulrichs himself, whom she addresses most directly in the November section of *Ladies Almanack*. The second deals with the text's reassertion of the Sapphic lineage denied by Richard von Krafft-Ebing and, to a slightly lesser extent, Havelock Ellis, and Barnes's status as a chronicler who traffics in "probabilities" rather than (false) certainty.

"A Lady of Fashion"

Ladies Almanack circulated in manuscript form among the members of Natalie Barney's Parisian salon until Robert McAlmon prevailed upon Barnes to have it published. He made all the necessary arrangements with Darantière Press, the same firm that had printed Joyce's *Ulysses* and Stein's *Making of Americans*, and covered most of the associated costs of publication (Herring 152). Barnes chose to issue the volume under a pseudonym, attributing the words and illustrations to "A Lady of Fashion." Although she was widely regarded as the author and illustrator of the book at the time—indeed, Barnes "hawked" many of the copies of the small print run to interested customers directly—there was no conclusive evidence to support the rumors, and this anonymity, however slight, freed her from having to self-censor a work that had been written for an audience whose receptivity to its subject matter was assured since they themselves were the basis for its characters. It would be more than forty years, when Harper and Row issued their facsimile reprint in 1972, before Barnes formally acknowledged her authorship of the book by permitting her name to grace its cover and penning a brief Foreword.

Katherine Kent, Julie Taylor, and Tyrus Miller have all focused on the fleeting nature of fashion in their analysis of Barnes's pseudonym and have linked this concern with time to the text's stance on reproduction within a lesbian context. While I agree that reproduction and genealogy are central concerns in the text, I interpret Barnes's *nom de plume* as an evocation of the long history of women's writing and an effort to position herself within that tradition, as well as a covert announcement of her sexual orientation. Much of women's writing has been conducted anonymously, and one of the most common pseudonyms adopted by female authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was "by a lady." Even such luminaries as Jane Austen, whose first novel *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) bore this attribution on its title page, and Hannah Webster Foster, who wrote *The Coquette* (1797) and *The Boarding School* (1798) as "A Lady of Massachusetts," elected to maintain their anonymity under a moniker that nevertheless foregrounded their gender and social class.³¹ Female novelists, in particular, tended to publish their writings anonymously due to the disrepute in which the fledgling genre was held. Dismissed as frivolous entertainment or railed against as a corrosive agent that seduced impressionable female readers into error by spinning captivating fantasies incompatible with the maintenance of virtue, novels offered a popular alternative to the Bible and other types of edifying literature that warned women to "keep within compass." Rather than meekly conforming to expectations of proper feminine behavior, women who penned satires and other "controversial" works availed themselves of the protections afforded by anonymity in order to offer damaging critiques with impunity (Feldman 286). By adopting the pseudonym "a Lady of Fashion," Barnes acknowledges the forces that have tended to marginalize and suppress women's

³¹ In a statistical study of the holdings of the British Museum conducted at the beginning of the 20th century, William Prideaux Courtney found that over 800 of the institution's anonymous books were signed "by a lady," four times as many as the comparable designation "by a gentleman" which yielded under 200 works (Feldman 282; Courtney 15). However, Courtney suggests that the gender disparity may not be as substantial as it initially appears since a verifiable portion of the works purportedly written by ladies actually concealed male authors.

voices and pays tribute to the female authors who refused to allow these obstacles to prevent them from speaking their minds, often in quite political ways.

In the tradition of the women writers that have gone before her, Barnes issues her own satire under the cover of anonymity, a gesture that wryly suggests the dangerousness of her subject matter not to impressionable female readers, but to the patriarchy, who may find themselves wifeless should her mandate that "all ladies should carry" the *Ladies Almanack* be fulfilled (9). Susan Sniader Lanser has observed how unclear the line of demarcation between lesbian and heterosexual women becomes in the text when Barnes utilizes terms that refer to the female gender as a whole (e.g., "woman," "lady," and "sister") as a means of encoding the unspoken referent "lesbian" (360-3). This conflation of gender and sexual orientation affords the opportunity for linguistic play in which both meanings are operative simultaneously. Barnes draws attention to the ensuing terminological ambiguity through such riddles as "all women are not women all," which may be parsed as all women are not lesbians, or, in an allusion to "the third sex" that is neither entirely male nor female, those persons that appear to be women may yet possess a "male" soul (67). Her destabilization of the taxonomic system that would divide women into discrete categories based upon their sexual preferences, or indeed distinguish women from men, results in a "lesbian continuum" where any woman might be tempted away from an unhappy marriage under the right circumstances (Lanser 161). In this way, Barnes's riddles interrogate the boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality, masculinity and femininity and forge connections across categories frequently regarded as incompatible. Although riddles have come to be regarded as light entertainment fit for the playground, they possess the powerful ability to create a shared sense of community capable of combating the estranging forces that disregard the very commonalities that riddles affirm through their

revelation of "unusual" or unexpected affinities between seemingly disparate objects, phenomena, or beings.

Barnes's drawing illustrating the commandment that her witty almanac should be carried by "all ladies" emphasizes the differing emotional states of wives and those ladies who will have no lords, suggesting the seductive allure of the latter state (Fig. 2). In the second frontispiece to *Ladies Almanack*, the independent lady looms large in the foreground, seemingly unconcerned by the lion roaring behind her as she looks the viewer in the eye and displays the *Almanack* clasped between her hands. In contrast to this stylish, daring figure who wears her hat at a rakish angle and her décolleté exposed, the diminutive bride stands in the corner with head downcast, deep in the shadows, and seemingly consumed by "her fears." Since each of the figures pictured in the illustration appears with the tools of their trade—the cook with her recipes, the doctor with his physic, and the priest with his breviary—Barnes paints a portrait of wedded misery in which the bride will not have occasion to lose "her fears," but rather they will become her chief stock in trade. It is little surprise then that such women may forgo "the olden Formula" and go a-Maying with Musset (13).

By declaring herself a "lady of fashion," a phrase that was synonymous with lesbian love in the sexological literature, Barnes announces her sexual orientation and positions her book as the work of an insider. However, in typical Barnesian fashion, the announcement of her lesbian identification is not as straightforward or simple as it may seem because sexologists deployed the trope of the modish lesbian in order to deny that Sapphism derives from an innate predisposition and to represent it as an acquired vice. In *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing maintains that not only is the incidence of lesbianism much lower than homosexuality, but also "the majority" of lesbians "do not act in obedience to an innate impulse" (i.e., are not congenital cases) and instead

form attachments to members of their own sex as a result of learned behavior (607).³² In support of this contention, he cites Ali Coffignon, who "reports that this vice is, of late, quite the fashion" in Paris "partly owing to [the popularity of] novels on the subject" (609). Coffignon minimizes the threat posed by sexual relationships between women by depicting them as a transitory phase, a vogue that will run its course, yet his fears that this may not be the case find expression in his condemnation of their behavior as immoral. Physician Julien Chevalier echoes his compatriot's sentiments in *L'Inversion Sexuelle* (1893), noting the "sudden explosion of lesbian vice" especially among the upper classes where "the vice is fashionable," "almost chic" due to "its varnish of elegant Epicureanism" (227, 231).³³ He observes that "it's in this refined niche of society that one sees suspect liaisons between a lady of fashion and a woman of the demi-monde; a noblewoman and an actress" (qtd. in Erber 184, emphasis added).³⁴ Chevalier regards Sapphism with horror as a disruptive force, an epidemic sweeping through Paris that threatens to unsettle traditional social divisions through the mingling of respectable society with its dark double, the demi-monde, as well as the union of aristocratic ladies with members of the working

³² Krafft-Ebing's belief in the lower incidence of same-sex attraction among women appears to derive from statements made by Ulrichs in his *Forschungen über das Rätsel der Männlichen Liebe*. In the second volume (*Inclusa*), Ulrichs grudgingly concedes that "females having woman-womanly sexual desire" do exist, but he concludes that "women such as these appear in much smaller numbers than Urnings" (81).

³³ In the original French these passages read: "l'explosion presque subite du vice lesbien" (227) and "Le vice est à la mode par son vernis d'épicurisme élégant, parce qu'il fait presque partie du chic" (231). Chevalier reissued his findings with few alterations at the start of the 20th century under the new title *Abberations de l'Instinct Sexuel aux Points de vue Ethnographique, Historique et Social* (1905). The new edition is nearly identical to its predecessor, even down to the pagination, except that he has removed the Preface by Lacassagne and eliminated the final section, entitled "Étude Médico-Légale," which was sadly out of date after more than a decade's worth of research on the topic and changes to legal statutes had been conducted.

³⁴ Translation by Nancy Erber. The original reads: "des classes élevées du monde parisien, de se qu'on appelle le high-life,...C'est dans cette société raffinée que l'on observe ces liaisons suspectes de femme du monde et du demi-monde, ces intimités de grande dame à cabotine" (Chevalier 228-229).

classes.³⁵ What is more, this challenge to the social hierarchy arrived at a time when gender roles were already in flux, and he argues that efforts to achieve greater equality between the sexes actually caused the marked increase in lesbian love (a belief shared by Ellis but expressed with greater tact) following the reductive logic that if a woman is "self-sufficient," then she has no further use for men and will turn to members of her own sex for affection (227).³⁶

Despite Chevalier's rather impoverished, utilitarian view of heterosexual love and the extremeness of many of his theories, Krafft-Ebing cites him approvingly in *Psychopathia Sexualis* on numerous occasions and even quotes directly from his conclusion that there is absolutely no hereditary basis for Sapphism (Chevalier 269; Krafft-Ebing 610). Chevalier contends that since love between women is purely a matter of choice, it should be condemned, and he adds that it is a moral imperative to prevent the spread of this "evil," which, like leprosy, imperils the health of the national body, by "carrying the iron and fire to these shameful wounds and cauterizing energetically" (259). Krafft-Ebing's comment that Chevalier "very drastically" depicts Sapphism as a perversion is an understatement, yet his unwillingness to speak out more forcefully against Chevalier's hate-filled rhetoric derives, as we have seen, from agreement with

³⁵ Nancy Erber indicates that Chevalier's attack was directed at the "burgeoning lesbian subculture" of the Parisian theatrical and artistic worlds where Natalie Barney and Renée Vivien were especially prominent (184). Indeed, Barney's life and those of the members of her circle furnish examples of both types of amorous couplings that Chevalier singled out as especially damaging to the social hierarchy. Barney's affair with famed courtesan Liane de Pougy, which formed the basis for the latter's bestselling autobiographical novel *Idylle Saphique* (1901), was one of the best known and most highly publicized unions of a "lady of fashion" with a member of the demi-monde, and Barney's longstanding liaison with Elisabeth ("Lily") de Gramont, the Duchess of Clermont-Tonnerre would, in Chevalier's view, constitute a mesalliance between the blue-blooded descendant of King Henry IV of France and the daughter of a wealthy American tradesman (Rodriguez 196). A prominent member of Barney's salon during the early days, Colette shared an onstage kiss with her real-life lover "Missy," the Marquise de Belbeuf as part of their *Rêve d'Égypte* that was considered so scandalous that the show was forced to close after a single performance at the Moulin Rouge in January 1907, making theirs one of the most notorious love affairs between a "noblewoman and an actress" of the early twentieth century.

³⁶ Ellis characterizes the campaign for equal rights as "on the whole, a wholesome and inevitable movement," yet in almost the same breath, he attributes an "increase in feminine criminality and feminine insanity" as well as "an increase in homosexuality" to women's emancipation, claiming all three are part of an "allied, if not the same group of phenomena" (147).

many of his premises (610). Chevalier's radical views combined with the deference accorded him in the field of sexology—his ideas not only filter into the writings of both Krafft-Ebing and Ellis, but Ellis continues to cite him in the revised and expanded third edition of his *Sexual Inversion* (1915)—make him a prime target for Barnes's mockery. As I will demonstrate in my analysis of Barnes's Foreword, she parodies Chevalier's anxious fantasy that lesbianism is a "new cult" whose followers are "legion" by literalizing it to humorous effect in *Ladies Almanack* where the venerable Musset, "the Pope" of Lesbos, assembles a holy order that proselytizes zealously and wins over converts to their "Sect." Drawing upon the terminology made familiar by Krafft-Ebing and the French sexologists, Barnes inhabits the pose of the fashionable lesbian with an ironic twist, affirming that she has intimate knowledge of the "fashion" but denying that it is a mere affectation by restoring the long, worldwide history of the love that dare not speak its name using a genre with an equally lengthy lineage and universal distribution: the riddle.

"Neap-tide to the Proustian chronicle"

Barnes's cryptic Foreword provides the first glimpse into the text's riddling dynamics and offers a strategy for making sense of her gnarled syntax, archaic diction, and multifaceted prose. The final line counsels "It might be well to honour the creature slowly, that you may afford it" (4). Lanser interprets this remark as an authorial acknowledgment of the text's "linguistic complexity" that encourages the reader to treat its difficult style as the occasion for untrammelled exploration rather than as "a barrier to [be] surmount[ed]" (167). While it is certainly good advice to read Barnes's complicated prose slowly and carefully, one also has to attend to the hefty semantic freight and layered meanings of her language in order to bring the creature to heel. What makes this task challenging is that Barnes revels in ambiguity. At the sentence level, gaps or omissions in the text, such as the absence of a grammatical subject, compel the reader to

fill the breach as best she may with the materials at hand, while the opposite problem, a surplus of potential meanings for any given word, several of which may fit (or be made to fit) in a particular context, requires the reader to choose between them. Here one is confronted with the novel problem of seeming to have both too little and too much information akin to the riddle of a house with no door; the given information misdirects by forging a chain of associations tied to architecture when the solution (an egg) involves thinking figuratively, not literally. In this sense, "house" provides too much (misleading) information, whereas too little insight has been offered into the shared attribute upon which the metaphor, and thus the riddle's solution, turns (i.e., the house as a container of living things). However, the elasticity of language, which produces the difficulty and pleasure of riddles, also ensures that there are multiple viable solutions to any given riddle image (e.g., a tortoise's shell). The same holds true for Barnes's prosody. She clearly delights in the richness of the English language and takes full advantage of its flexibility by creating "chain[s] of signifiers," to borrow a phrase from Monika Kaup, which derive their meaning through their interplay. That is, the reader's choice of the dominant sense of a word is often provisional as the very next word or sentence may activate rejected or overlooked meanings, and by extension, differing interpretations of the passage.

Just as riddles defamiliarize everyday objects or things by encouraging us to regard them in new and novel ways, Barnes's prose denaturalizes the seamless transmission of information through the medium of the written word by drawing attention to the interpretive labor required to facilitate it, reminding us that communication is always a collaborative enterprise. In her attention to the processes involved in the transmission of meaning and the potential opacity of linguistic signs, Barnes resembles Gertrude Stein. Yet, whereas Stein's writing often sounds like a broken record, ceaselessly repeating simple words and phrases until they become detached

from their arbitrary significations, Barnes achieves a melodious flow of words that still defies definitive interpretation.³⁷ Rather than stripping language of its signifying power, Barnes elevates linguistic excess to an art form, producing a surfeit of words and meanings through her "baroquely spiraling language" (Kaup 95). While the artificiality of this loud "jangle" of style may make her writing appear to be devoid of all substance, Barnes suggests that it is precisely at the intersection between style and content that meaning can be found. The bird "twittering so Loud upon the Wire that one cannot hear the Message" nevertheless communicates one ("and yet!"), and it is a matter of learning to attune one's ear in order to be able to identify and appreciate the various melodies playing within the din (46). Meaning has not been lost, just submerged within the noisy feedback of a highly referential system, and its recovery becomes the occasion for innovative recombinations—new chords played in a symphony jointly orchestrated by writer and reader.

The Foreword picks up a note sounded in the book's long, elaborate subtitle and establishes its centrality to Barnes's project: cultural memory and the costs of exclusion from the official record. "Who shall remember thee" asks the "Lullaby for a Lady's Lady" (21). Sadly, the implicit answer is no one because as soon as she "gives her body to all unrecorded Music," a lesbian marches beyond the bounds of traditional history (23). From the outset, *Ladies Almanack* ponders the question of who and what gets enshrined in the official record, explores the politics of inclusion, and offers an alternative account that documents those whom reticence or conscious efforts at extirpation would otherwise erase from history. The subtitle promises to deliver "a full record," which suggests that all others have been partial in both senses of the word—incomplete as well as lacking objectivity. However, like any specialized almanac, *Ladies Almanack* does not

³⁷ Despite its accuracy, Barnes would resent the comparison. She felt that Stein "couldn't write for beans!" (qtd. in Herring 175).

purport to encompass the entire population; in both word and design, it announces itself to be a book by, for, and about ladies. As if to underscore its intended audience, the illustration on the title page (Fig. 3) presents a "slightly stylized rendition of female genitals" with Musset's face peeping from the entrance to the vagina and flanked on either side by topless mermaids whose curvaceous bodies twist into a pose reminiscent of the labia majora (Doughty 151). Francis M. Doughty has rightly observed that Barnes's strategy of concealing this view of female anatomy within a vaguely heraldic design makes detecting it a game, one geared toward ladies who, to use Barnes's euphemistic terminology, have been "up to [their] ears in Love's Acre" before (42).³⁸ More precisely it is a game that operates on the same principle as riddles, which "conceal and reveal their referent simultaneously," and the tension between various possible solutions to the riddle image—whether semantic or visual—produces the pleasure of resolution when the correct answer is detected (Kaviola-Bregenhøj 17).

The presence of barely disguised female genitals on the title page combined with the subtitle's reference to the "nocturnal Distempers" of the titular ladies seems to suggest that the text will grant the reader access to prurient knowledge, an assumption that Barnes's teasing prose encourages but also deflects, like a bawdy riddle with an "innocent" solution. Witty double

³⁸ The game involves more than mere recognition of the drawing's resemblance to female anatomy. Heraldry is a recurring theme in the book closely associated with the knightly Musset, and the symbolism of the heraldic figures and objects present in this illustration serves as a counterbalance to its purely genital register by offering insight into the heroine's character. In heraldry, mermaids represent eloquence, and the absence of the comb and mirror that traditionally accompany them suggests that Musset is not plagued by vanity even though she is "much in Demand" among women due to her unrivalled prowess as a lover (9). The armored arm embowed that appears at the top of the coat of arms, directly above the vaguely clitoral wreath, represents leadership qualities. The armored arm holds a flower aloft, indicating the union of military skill with courtly grace in Musset's person, an appropriate image for a text that consistently represents lesbian love as riding to the hunt or a military campaign of conquest led by the indefatigable Musset. The field lozenge surrounding the vaginal aperture is also quite fitting since lozenges are closely associated with women (whose coat of arms are borne upon lozenges rather than shields) and female fertility. Finally, the diamond-shaped lozenge, a traditional representation of constancy, takes on a parodic bent as it testifies to Musset's profligacy (i.e., each of the checkered diamonds signifies a female conquest) for, as we later learn from the well-pleased Musset herself, her badge was formed by the "many Stains" she earned in sexual "combat" (35).

entendres, veiled references to sexual acts, provocative illustrations, and carefully arranged typography forming a suggestive "v" that projects into the reader's lap at the end of several of the chapters all play into the subtitle's implicit promise of full disclosure and the text's power to seduce. However, as much as the text tantalizes with the lure of unfettered access, it never ultimately delivers upon it because doing so would reduce lighthearted satire to pornography, debasing its subject(s) in the process. While alluding to lovemaking in humorous jest conforms with the text's aesthetics of indirection, Barnes hints that anything more graphic would violate the rules of discretion and good taste. Masie Tuck-and-Frill underscores this point by gently chastising the indiscreet Musset, reminding her that the heart is "a good place indeed, but a better when seen indirectly" (24). The August section expands upon the idea that riddling speech is infinitely preferable to the tawdriness of the confessional mode when the narrator engages in an extended rumination on the subject of female braggadocio. This metatextual moment indicts women who bandy about intimacies that should be kept private, declaring "'tis a gruesome thing" to act "as if Love and its doings were a public Smithy where all Ears are shod" or to "discuss in public assembly that which by Nature was hidden between two Pillars" (48). In a none too subtle dig at the male sex, the narrator explains that it is no excuse that "a Man speaks no better" of his female conquests because it is natural for him to debase that which he does not understand whereas for a woman to "cackle and crow over the last to bed" would be like betraying oneself since a woman knows firsthand how another woman feels (49). Nor does this reticence detract from the text's appeal. By refusing to give up its secrets easily, *Ladies Almanack* secures the reader's enduring interest, and perhaps even critical acclaim, since, as the narrator observes, "that which is a Mystery . . . is sought after and raised high" (49).

The Foreword registers Barnes's awareness that the more heterogeneous audience for the

reissue of *Ladies Almanack* may be less receptive to its contents, or even offended by offhand remarks about men's "Nature whining" (49). In order to forestall criticism, Barnes deprecates her "chronicle" as a "slight satiric wiggling" before it can even be examined by "the compound public eye" (4). Yet her use of the weighty term "chronicle," which invests the almanac with scholarly gravitas, partially counteracts her dismissive treatment of its merits and makes a tacit bid for the importance of its subject matter. Chronicles purport to be truthful accounts of the deeds of kings, prelates, and other cultural heroes, and they tell the history of a people chronologically without any pretense of "literary style" (OED). However, *Ladies Almanack* is no dry tome. Barnes adds the leaven of humor into her account of the life, loves, and death of Saint Musset, and she draws attention to the imaginative license required to complete her self-appointed task as a chronicler. I must, therefore, disagree with Monika Kaup's assertion that "Barnes merely assumes the anonymous persona of a popular follower of her heroine who records, rather than invents, a collective oral legend" (94). More than a mere recorder, the narrator offers her fertile imagination as the only unique gift that she is capable of bestowing upon her older, highly experienced lover. Having despaired of the possibility of satisfying her sexually ("Hath she not been turned all ways that the Sands of her Desire know all Runnings?"), the narrator concludes that "Fancy is my only Craft," and she dedicates this "Love Letter" (the *Almanack* itself) to her as "a Present" (14, 17).

Just as riddles are culturally specific and may be incomprehensible to outsiders, Barnes worries that a text written for "the private domaine [sic]" and "distributed to a very special audience" may be beyond the ken of a heterogeneous ("compound") readership, and she expresses her misgivings through the metaphor of the "compound eye" (qtd. in Lanser 164). Diane Warren has argued that this metaphor is "demeaning" because it equates the reading public

with insects and insinuates that their "surveillance" of the text is a form of "parasitism" (75-6). I believe that Barnes's comment has less to do with the readers' intentions (parasitic or otherwise) and more to do with their faulty optics and, by extension, perceptual abilities. Compound eyes have very poor resolving power. They are incapable of registering fine detail and can only detect vague outlines. This low level of visual acuity results in distortion, and Barnes suggests that the average reader is poorly equipped to handle a text that turns on fine gradations of meaning and requires sensitivity to nuance in order to peel back its many layers. Like a butterfly that can see well enough to alight upon a flower, yet cannot identify the particular variety without having recourse to its other senses, the reader will be able to appreciate the broad outlines of the text, but perhaps not the subtle tincture and arrangement of its petals. Limited by their faulty optics, they may mistake the blocking device, the paradox at the heart of the riddle, for an impenetrable boundary, rather than recognizing it for what it truly is, a bridge offering access to a previously unperceived world. As Dan Handelman explains, the very structure of the riddle, which propels the listener toward a solution "insists that there must be ways to solve the paradox, to penetrate the boundary, and so to create an extraordinary relationship between those categories or levels" (44). However, if the riddlee cannot detect the metaphor that resolves the seeming contradiction and thus find an exit from the "infinite regress" of the riddle's paradox, then the desired transformation (of the riddle's components or the listener him/herself) never occurs (ibid). The unsolved riddle loses its effectiveness as a tool for creating perceptual shifts or political change, hence Barnes's investment in the reader's ability to recognize the game afoot.

Barnes accuses Proust of creating an equally distorted picture of lesbian experience in her

second use of the term "chronicle" in the Foreword.³⁹ She declares *Ladies Almanack* "Neap-tide to the Proustian chronicle, gleanings from the shores of Mytilene" (4). Lanser was among the first to recognize that this line positions the *Almanack* as a "corrective" to Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah*, which Barney and her circle found to be woefully inaccurate in terms of its portrayal of lesbian eroticism and his characterization of its practitioners (157). Luckily for us, Barney's criticisms of Proust's novel have been preserved in her *Aventures de l'esprit* (1929). After reading the first volume, Barney reports that she expressed her concerns to Proust directly, but he blithely dismissed them, assuring her that "his Gomorrhans would all be charming" (Barney 67). However, Barney felt these women were "above all unrealistic" because he lacked direct experience of woman-centered amative networks, having never been initiated into those "Eleusinian Mysteries," and therefore he falls back upon his own experiences as a gay man when delineating his lesbian characters. Barney warns that it is "risky to substitute the one for the other," and in a masterful stroke, she uses the epigraph of Proust's volume against him, quoting "*The woman will have Gomorrah and the man will have Sodom*" (67, original emphasis). Here she slyly hints that he should have taken his own advice and left accounts of Lesbos to someone who has actually visited its "shores."

Although she does not say so explicitly in *Aventures de l'esprit*, Barney and her circle also took umbrage at the profound influence that Karl Heinrich Ulrichs's theories had on Proust's depiction of lesbian love in *Sodom and Gomorrah*. Most Proust scholars now agree that he derived his understanding of inversion from Ulrichs's writings, particularly *Memnon* (1868), the

³⁹ It is tempting to interpret Barnes's repeated use of the term "chronicle" in light of the Greek name attached to arguably the most famous and widely read chronicles ever written, the two books of the Bible, known as *Paralipomena*, or "the things left out" (Knoppers 576). Like Chronicles 1 and 2, which serve as a supplement that "records the events left out of earlier biblical history," Barnes's almanac focuses on that which has been elided from the official record, "the part . . . that has never been told!" or, in Proust's case, told inauthentically (Knoppers 576; Barnes 24).

seventh volume of the *Forschungen*.⁴⁰ Rather than depicting "same-sex attraction per se," Proust portrays homosexuality as a form of gender dysphoria based upon Ulrichs's model of a female soul trapped in a male body (Ladenson 118). M. de Charlus is what Ulrichs would characterize as a *Weibling*, or effete homosexual, whose attraction to hyper-masculine "real men" dooms him to an unhappy existence in which he must purchase the affections of "that type of man who has nothing feminine about him, who is not an invert and consequently cannot love him in return" (Proust 13). One can see Ulrichs's theories in action early in the novel when the narrator witnesses Charlus's face revert to its "natural state" when the Baron thinks himself unobserved. Marcel is shocked to discover that Charlus's "features, expressions [and] smile" closely resemble a woman's, and in a sudden flash of inspiration, he realizes that not only does Charlus look "like a woman: he was one!" (5, 13). Here Proust illustrates Ulrichs's assertion that "the Urning is not a man, but rather a kind of feminine being" in whom "the feminine element" predominates even down to the detail that this inner femininity manifests itself in "manners, facial expressions, and gestures, in our mien, in almost every movement of our limbs, of our arms, hands, laugh, and smile" (Ulrichs 36, 58). As if this close paraphrase of the *Forschungen* was not sufficient to establish his reliance on Ulrichs, Proust offers a thinly veiled quotation of his postulate *anima muliebris corpore virili inclusa* (a female soul in a male body) a few pages later. Writing of a beautiful young man with "an admirable female head," he "marvels [at] how the young woman, the girl, the Galatea barely awakened to life, in the unconscious mass of this male body in which she is imprisoned" still manages to make her presence felt (17). However, Proust's indebtedness to Ulrichs's system of thought is most readily apparent when he repeatedly invokes the chief

⁴⁰ See, for example, J.E. Rivers's essay "The Myth and Science of Homosexuality in *À la recherche du temps perdu*" in *Homosexualities in French Literature* (1979). Building off of Rivers's pioneering work, a younger generation of scholars have also noted the influence of Ulrichs's theories on Proust. See Elizabeth Ladenson's essay "Sexuality" in *Marcel Proust in Context* (2013) as well as her book *Proust's Lesbianism* (1999) and Richard Davenport-Hines's *Proust at the Majestic* (2006).

metaphor of the *Forschungen* to describe Charlus's efforts to discern whether the handsome young Comte de Sturgis might be amenable to his advances. Proust writes: "One might have thought that the Baron was endeavoring to solve the enigma of the Sphinx, had it not been that, rather, of a young and living Oedipus," adding "the proposition set him by the lineaments of the young Comte de Sturgis . . . appeared . . . to be some rebus, some riddle, some algebraical problem of which he must try to penetrate the mystery or work out the formula" (66). Here the "riddle of man-manly love" and the emotional toll inflicted by the enforced concealment of his sexual orientation finds expression in Charlus's "profound absorption" with the young man's face and his increasingly perplexed efforts to read signs of reciprocated interest upon it for if Charlus ventures the wrong guess, rather than indulging in the euphemistic pleasures of "penetrat[ing] the mystery," he will give himself away.

Contrary to Elizabeth Ladenson's assertion that "the female equivalent" of Ulrichs's Urning, the *Urningin*, or woman with a masculine soul, "is nowhere to be found in the *Recherche*," the first volume of *Sodom and Gomorrah* furnishes a clear-cut example that could not have been more calculated to offend the ladies of Barney's coterie (*Proust's Lesbianism*, 12). When describing the "clumsily manlike" Mme. de Vaugoubert, who "was in no way attractive," Proust's narrator remarks that it is not surprising that rumors have been circulating that she wears "the trousers" in her marriage to a closeted husband since "Mme. de Vaugoubert was really a man" (35-6). While this revelation closely parallels the narrator's realization that Charlus is "really" a woman, Marcel's "profound disgust" for women "tainted with that vice" ensures that his abhorrence for the overbearing Madame is not tempered with the instinctive empathy that he feels for the Baron (166). Marcel could not have expressed his outing of the Madame in more unflattering terms, nor does poor Mme. de Vaugoubert even remotely resemble the "charming"

Gomorrhans that Proust had promised Natalie Barney. To be fair, Mme. de Vaugoubert is a very minor character and her sexuality remains open to question since it is unclear whether nature had "bestow[ed] on the girl the deceiving aspect of the man" or whether her virilisation had been effected during prolonged contact with her husband in order to please him (36). Yet the point remains that she is not the only decidedly unpleasant Gomorran in Proust's repertoire. There are the "loud and vulgar" Mlle. Bloch and her lover Léa, whose public caresses and "appalling language" scandalize Marcel almost as much as the Mademoiselle's physical intimacies with a young wife in the dining room beneath the nose of her "innocent," "hoodwinked" husband (146, 179-80). Or, there is the beautiful, nameless young woman debased by "the constant acceptance of vulgar expedients" for satisfying her sexual desires into leading "an utterly low life," who radiates such intense sexual energy that Marcel despairs of shielding Albertine from "the alternate, circling fires of her gaze" (179). Against the stereotypical image of "women with cropped hair who behave like men," Proust offers an alternative vision of the predatory lesbian, an alluring woman consumed by her sexual needs (167). He presents the active sexual role that these Gomorrhans assume as inherently masculine, and Albertine's "deep and penetrating laugh" reveals her "masculine soul" as clearly as Charlus's mannerisms betray his feminine one (141). While André Gide objected to the marked femininity of Proust's Sodomites and Natalie Barney was equally offended by the masculinity of his Gomorrhans, both criticisms derive from Ulrichs's influential premise that inversion occurs when "nature has developed both seeds of the sexual organism, the physical and the mental, in diverse directions: the body in the direction of the male, the mental into the female," or vice versa (163).

In her Foreword to *Ladies Almanack*, Barnes reclaims Gomorrah and establishes its independence from masculine influence through the metaphor of "neap-tide." During neap tide,

the sun and the moon are at right angles to each other and their gravitational pulls, rather than acting in concert, work against each other, producing lower tides. Drawing upon the traditional gendering of astral bodies, Barnes insinuates that her account of the loves shared between women will not be augmented or co-opted by male authorities (the sun), but rather will be governed purely by female agency (the moon). Not only are male characters absent from the text, but she creates a gynocentric universe where "all the Planets, Stars and Zones/ Run girlish to their Marrow-bones!" (60). Even the sun does not escape this feminizing bent, and it appears in allegorical form on the back cover as a young woman endowed with pert breasts, curvaceous hips, and wrapped in an enormous red ribbon (Fig. 4). In this illustration, Barnes depicts the sun and moon as an amorous female couple. The bright sun rests her head and shoulders upon the tawny moon, snaking her left arm around the moon's shoulders where they clasp hands while the sun's thighs envelop her companion's backside in a warm embrace. The ebony-tressed moon returns these signs of affection by directing a loving glance over her shoulder at the sun. Each figure balances her emblem—a crescent moon and a stylized sun—on an upraised index finger, depicting the actual conditions in which neap tides occur, namely when the moon is in its first or last quarter. In a visual pun that reinforces the sentiment expressed in the Foreword, both women have turned their backs on the sun—even its representative holds her stylized sun a full arm's length away from their entwined bodies, signifying their rejection of men in favor of the love and community of women.

At the center of the female cosmos Barnes has constructed is the moon, a universal female symbol that also incorporates a private reference for the amusement of the *Salon de l'Amazone*. Famed for her cloud of silvery blond hair, Natalie Barney had been nicknamed "Moonbeam" at the beginning of the twentieth century by no less an authority on feminine

beauty than the renowned courtesan (and her lover at the time) Liane de Pougy. The sobriquet stuck, and one admirer after another "braided [her hair] with the Stars" as Barnes puts it in *Ladies Almanack* (15). Dressed in her habitual white clothing and with her "fairy hair whose blondness is of so rare a hue that one might always believe she is covered in moonlight," Barney was (and enjoyed playing) the moon around whom other female luminaries gravitated (qtd. in Barney 138).⁴¹

Barnes alludes to Barney's sway through her feminist revision of a popular almanac staple, "The Man of Signs." Also known as "The Anatomy," this astrological woodcut charts the moon's influence over parts of the human body as it passes through the houses of the zodiac that were thought to govern them. As the name "Man of Signs" suggests, the human figure shown at the center of the illustration was "usually a male or androgynous body, rarely a female body—surrounded by the twelve signs of the zodiac" (Horrocks 19). Barnes replicates the iconography of "The Man of Signs" with one key alteration—a woman takes center stage (Fig. 5). The substitution of a female body for a male one underscores the sexist thinking underlying the assumption that "the Anatomy" must necessarily be male, an assumption that reinforces woman's position as a second-class citizen. In Barnes's illustration, woman becomes "the spinning Center of a spinning World" (51), and in a second conflation of woman with lesbian, it is a young Natalie Barney, her signature mound of silvery hair piled atop her head, who stands at the zodiac's center in a circle reminiscent of the full moon. As if to confirm her identity, this Woman of Signs's upraised index finger gestures toward the moon's domain—the heavens—and also signifies her teaching authority as she stands at the ready, even signals her intention to interject

⁴¹ Lucie Delarue-Mardrus offered these words of praise in honor of her hostess at a gathering of the *Académie des Femmes* in 1927. Barney founded her "Academy of Women" in order to recognize the contributions of female writers that she regarded as "representative of contemporary and cosmopolitan literature" and to create a supportive network of female artists (Barney 133). Barnes, who was honored by the *Académie* in June 1927, was likely present on this occasion.

and share her wisdom. That her discourse will be on love is confirmed by the gesture made by her left hand, which spells out the acronym "I love you" in American Sign Language, a fitting subject for Dame Musset, "who was in her Heart one Grand Red Cross for the Pursuance, the Relief, and the Distraction" of women suffering from the pangs of love and unfulfilled sexual desire (6).⁴²

Barnes also subtly manipulates the correspondences between the signs of the zodiac and the body parts they govern. She substitutes "the dear buttock" for the decidedly off-putting bowels and introduces "the belle belly" in place of the neck, producing an eroticized body that Julie Taylor rightly claims is defined through "use and pleasure" rather than fixed identity (724). The signs ruled by the sun and moon, Cancer and Leo respectively, are among the few that undergo alterations in Barnes's schematic. Normally located on opposite sides of the zodiacal ring, the crab and lion appear side by side in Barnes's drawing where they seem to be locked in head to head combat. In a surprise upset, the unassuming crab wrests control of the heart from the ferocious lion, who must settle for ruling over the newly added belly. This amounts to a cosmic joke in which Barnes hints that men are ruled by their appetites whereas women are motivated by love. Yet, never one to settle for such totalizing rhetoric (even in jest), Barnes immediately undercuts it by transposing attributes of one onto the other, endowing the heart with the belly's hunger ("the hungry heart") and the masculine lion with feminine beauty ("the belle belly").

While I agree with Daniela Caselli that biography cannot "unlock" all of the meanings of *Ladies Almanack*, if we ignore the relevance of biographical elements to a coterie text filled with

⁴² The significance of the gesture made by the Woman of Signs's left hand should not be underestimated because Barnes defied the laws of anatomy in order to include it. With her hand turned downward and the open palm facing the viewer, the pinky, not thumb should be adjacent to her hip.

in-jokes and written to please a very select audience, then we lose some of the text's richness. We would also forfeit one of the connecting links between its many layers. Suzanne Rodriguez astutely observed that *Ladies Almanack* "possesses multiple levels, each with its own intricacy" and that "linkages between levels often start off strong but then disappear" or "one level [may appear] to contradict the existence of another" (284-5). What Rodriguez does not seem to realize is that she is describing precisely how a riddle works. Riddles misdirect by forging a chain of associations ("linkages" that "start off strong") that lead the riddlee down the wrong path, and the riddle image produces a seemingly impossible scenario in which one given appears to "contradict the existence of another" (e.g., a face with no mouth). She is quite right that "short startling phrases are buried deep within endless or seemingly innocuous sentences, as if daring to be found" because the goal of riddles is to ensure that "the riddlee is misled into focusing on the wrong detail" and excess verbiage (loud "twittering") is Barnes's preferred method of accomplishing this linguistic sleight of hand (Rodriguez 285; Kaviola-Bregenhøj, *Riddles* 131). In short, *Ladies Almanack* is a highly complex riddle that blends various registers—biography, literary allusion, cultural commentary, and critiques of sexology just to name a few—and they are so tightly interwoven that information from one domain can help bridge the gap and provide access to another.

While Proust and Ulrichs come in for criticisms in the Foreword, it also marks the beginning of Barnes's assault on the French sexologist Julien Chevalier, whose diatribes about lesbian "vice" were all too common within the sexological literature of the fin-de-siècle. She mocks Chevalier's fervent exhortations against lesbians, whom he calls "priestesses of [a] soft cult" and "devotees of the white lust," by portraying the community of women surrounding Dame Musset as a religious order (244, 247). Her dialogue with Chevalier begins when she

promises that her book will provide "gleanings from the shores of Mytilene, glimpses of its novitiates, its rising 'saints' and 'priestesses,' and thereon to such aptitude and insouciance that they took to gaming and to swapping that 'other' of the mystery, the anomaly that calls the hidden name" (4). Barnes's use of scare quotes around the terms "saints" and "priestesses" signals her ironic distance; she announces that these terms are not her own, nor do they reflect her views. Instead, they derive from Chevalier's inflammatory prose when he bemoans that love between women had been "rare not even long ago," but now "the priestesses of the new cult are become legion" (227). The root of his anxiety is that these "priestesses" will initiate other women into their "mysteries," and he notes with dismay that the occasional boatload to Cytheria has taken on the proportions and regularity of a commuter train (228). Barnes plays off of his fears of the mass exodus of women to the Lesbian capital by noting the presence of "novitiates," those who have yet to take their vows, among its ranks. In contrast to these new inductees, the upper rungs of the ecclesiastical hierarchy are occupied by the ordained ("priestesses") and those who, like Musset, have been canonized for their services to the "church." Yet Barnes suggests that the novices represent the future leaders of the order, its "rising" stars. Without denying that training is necessary to prepare some women for full membership in the order, she subtly undercuts Chevalier's insistence that lesbian love be understood as an acquired "vice" by emphasizing the "aptitude" and "insouciance" of its practitioners. "Aptitude" signifies a natural ability or propensity, which according to Krafft-Ebing's definition (and despite his reservations) would qualify them as "congenital" cases since "the natural disposition is the determining condition; not education and other accidental circumstances like seduction" (288). Or, to return to the religious metaphor, these "priestesses" have felt a calling since birth.

Their "insouciance" or carefree indifference to the social stigma attached to their actions

plays out in the women's merrymaking ("gaming") with a possible allusion to an eighteenth-century term for lesbian lovemaking "the game of flats." Contextual clues offer strong support for this reading. Throughout *Ladies Almanack* "mystery" is synonymous with womanhood, and women remain enigmas to lovers of both sexes for they "shall be alien always" to a man, and "a Mystery that is lost to the proportion of Mystery" for another woman (57). Barnes plays the secular and religious senses of "mystery" off of each other, likening female genitalia to "a much Thumbed Mystery and a Maze" in a pun on digital stimulation that suggests that pleasuring a woman is a puzzle, which the observant find as easy to solve as a mystery novel with its tidy denouement or the trial and error method of navigating a labyrinth (15). However, the depths of a woman's mind "so webbed and threaded with Thought and Fancy that the World sees little of either" remains inaccessible, and woman herself is therefore as inexplicable as the divine mysteries that must be accepted on faith (51). In this way, Barnes restores the enigmatic quality that sexologists sought to deny women, and lesbians in particular, by proffering their solutions to the "riddle" of same-sex attraction. As "insouciant" as the "priestesses" she describes, Barnes thumbs her nose at Chevalier by embedding a reference to cunnilingus in her refutation of his theories. Drawing upon multiple senses of the word "swapping," including rubbing, kissing, and exchanging, Barnes alludes to the Lesbians' reciprocal attentions to that part which is not truly "other" insofar as both lovers possess "Organs as exactly alike as two Peas, or twin Griefs" (11). A play on "affronted" in the final sentence, which substitutes the expected meaning of offended for the more literal sense of "facing each other," makes the reference more explicit. Here "the anomaly," an ubiquitous term in sexology used to refer to male and female homosexuality, is no longer afraid to "call the hidden name" and instead openly embraces "the love that dare not speak its name" (4). On the shores of Mytilene, where no stigma attaches to Sapphic desire, the

"mystery" lies face to face with her beloved and "eats its shadow," or as the poet laureate Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718) describes "The Game at Flats" in his poem of the same name, "alternately the happy Pair / All grant, and All receive" (lines 6-7).

The Foreword's sexual register co-exists with and complements Barnes's veiled commentary on her riddling style, neither invalidating the other, in an illustration of the polyphony of the text. In this configuration, it is Barnes's prose that threatens to "eat its shadow," to erase all traces of "the love that dare not speak its name" if due deference is not accorded it. When seen from straight on ("affronted"), the "creature" disappears because Barnes follows Emily Dickinson's injunction to "tell it slant." A master of indirection, her writing operates on the level of suggestion and builds through accretion. She offers "glimpses" but never an unobstructed view; it falls to the reader to assemble these bits of information and reconstruct the "creature's" outlines. In this way, Barnes both covers her tracks so that anyone hostile to Sapphic love cannot point to a particular passage as evidence of depravity, and appeals to "the Barney circle's delight in innuendo and obscurity," their love of puzzles of all kinds (Lanser 165). If read sympathetically, or, in Barnes's terminology, if one "honour[s] the creature slowly," then her playful presentation of same-sex love comes into focus. Here again, Barnes's text proclaims itself in opposition ("neap-tide") to Proust's "chronicle," for unlike in *Sodom and Gomorrah* where "the creature at last discerned had lost its power of remaining invisible," knowing that the ladies of the *Almanack* are lesbians does not lay bare all of their or the text's secrets, though it does help to explain certain facets "that hitherto had seemed . . . incoherent," rendering them suddenly "intelligible" (Proust 12-13). The narrator of Proust's novel reduces the closeted M. de Charlus to his sexual orientation (a "creature"), making it the defining feature of his being, whereas Barnes emphasizes the differences of temperament, opinion, dress, occupation, and nationality of

Musset's circle, and refutes monolithic conceptions of lesbian sexuality by averring they are "diverse to the Point where Classification becomes almost impossible" (29). Thus, while Proust's metaphor of a sentence "broken up in letters scattered at random upon a table" that a flash of insight suddenly rearranges into a coherent "thought" serves as an accurate description of the experience of unraveling Barnes's riddling prose, in her case there is no "proper order" or single configuration that produces an epiphany, nor do the letters merely spell out "Gomorrhah" (13).

"As Incredible as a Thing Forgotten," or "The First Woman Born with a Difference"

Located on the margins of the discussion of marriage and reproduction that dominate the month of March in *Ladies Almanack*, the "Zodiac" recounts an outlandish tale of the origins of the "first Woman born with a Difference" (24). This counternarrative to the biblical account of creation, which proclaims itself "the part about Heaven that has never been told," presents the circumstances surrounding the birth and parentage of the first lesbian as a riddle. In an allusion to the doctrine of original sin, the brief narrative begins with "the Fall," not of Adam and Eve, who have yet to be created, but of Satan. Immediately after his expulsion from heaven and startled by the loud yell he emitted on his way down, all of the angels and signs of the Zodiac "gathered together, so close that they were not recognizable, one from the other" (24). Nine months later, a "great crowing" filled the heavens when suddenly an egg, "as incredible as a thing forgotten," fell to earth. There it broke open and "the first Woman born with a Difference" emerged fully grown, but just as promptly excused herself and disappeared. The tale ends with an observation and query: the angels, who had witnessed the birth, "parted, and on the face of each was the Mother look. Why was that?" (26).⁴³ At first glance, the answer to this riddle seems quite simple—the angels gave birth to her. The accompanying illustration (Fig. 6) hints that this

⁴³ Barnes signals that her Zodiac is a riddle by concluding with one of the formulae "commonly used in literary riddles," namely "a question implying a challenge" (Pagis 92).

is the correct solution. On the facing page, twelve startled angels, halos intact and hands clasped in prayer, stand huddled together with a large, rapidly descending egg centered beneath them. Their prominent wings suggest that they are the feathered creatures that squawked while laying the egg. Yet the solution raises more questions than the riddle itself, chief of which is how are we to interpret this fantastical story?

Barnes's humorous account of the origins of the first lesbian engages with sexology on several fronts. The tale revolves around a pun on the prepositional phrase "born with a difference," meaning born in an unusual manner (i.e., conceived from the union of angels and constellations, hatched from an egg, and born fully grown) and having an inborn attraction to members of the same sex. As is often the case in Barnes's writing, one meaning serves as a distraction, a mundane counterpart to the other but they also complement each other. She valorizes sexual difference by playfully ascribing sinless, celestial origins to lesbians and female bisexuals. Her revisionist mythology draws upon elements from existing cosmogonic myths, such as the cosmic egg, for etiological and propagandistic ends, equating the creation of the world with the origins of a specific subset of its inhabitants.

Yet, unlike the mythical narrative that forms the basis for Ulrichs's nomenclature, Barnes's origin story does not deny women a role in the act of creation nor does it feature a pronounced masculine bias. Ulrichs explained that he derived the terms "Urning" and "Dioning" from Plato's *Symposium*, which "traced the origins of man-manly love to Uranus, the love for women to Dione" (32). According to Plato, the love inspired by Dionian Aphrodite, named for her mother and formed through sexual reproduction, is "common" whereas the love inspired by Uranian Aphrodite, born from the severed genitals of Uranus and thus "having no mother," is truly noble. Not only does this establish a clear hierarchy of value directly correlated with

gender, the "heavenly" Uranian love is itself a male preserve—both lover and beloved are male. Only "the meaner sort of men" and women fall under Dionian Aphrodite's sway. Barnes troubles this easy division between male/heavenly and female/common by transforming "the angels in heaven," the beings whom Ulrichs regarded as "totally asexual" and therefore uniquely qualified to render "a totally impartial judgment" on Uranian love, into the collective mothers of "the first Woman born with a Difference" (Ulrichs 32). The celestial love felt by the products of this uncommon act of reproduction will decidedly not "turn to the male, and delight in him who is the more valiant and intelligent nature," as Plato predicted, but rather "No Man shall nip them, and no Boy shall kiss" these "Sisters of Heaven" for they delight in "Woman by a Woman's girlish side!" (Plato; Barnes 38, 40). According to Orphic tradition, Uranus was himself born from a "huge egg" along with Gaia. Completing the gender reversal, Barnes's narrative has a non-reproductive female figure emerge from the egg once occupied by the god of the heavens, either rendering his line obsolete or suggesting that the love of woman for woman preceded "manly love," making the latter the "younger" and according to Plato's logic, "common" form.

By dating the origins of women "born with a difference" to immediately after Satan's fall, Barnes argues on behalf of the biological origins of same-sex desire. Women "with a Difference" have always existed, but they have frequently been forced through repressive social controls (like the religious system alluded to in her tale) to conceal that difference, to disappear. Sexologists, such as Krafft-Ebing, completed this disappearing act by diagnosing lesbian love as an episodic instance of "perversity" (a fashionable vice) rather than an innate attraction to members of the same sex. Although he admits that "certain passages in the Bible, the history of Greece ('Sapphic love'), the moral history of ancient Rome and of the Middle Ages" furnish examples that "*congressus intersexualis feminarum* took place at all times," Krafft-Ebing emphasizes that

"many of these cases" should in fact be classified as perversity since "the majority of female Urnings" are not congenital (396, 607). In contrast to Krafft-Ebing's undermining of the historical precedents for lesbian identity, Ellis maintained that "feminine inversion" is not "a vice of modern refined civilization" and marshaled a list of "distinguished" female inverts from various epochs of world history (195, 204). However, his affirmation of a Sapphic lineage comes at a steep cost—the sacrifice of femininity. He implies that it is their "masculine traits" and "markedly virile temperament" that makes these women noteworthy (196). Rather than applauding the accomplishments of female inverts as women, he celebrates masculine ability displaced into female bodies following Ulrichs's theory that "the key to the riddle of their kind of love" is "an inherent" masculinity, or more precisely, the presence of a male soul in a female body (Ulrichs 81). Barnes likely had both men in mind when she mocks "these Scriveners" who grant women access "to sense through the masculine Door only" and under the false pretense that any woman worthy of praise was destined to be a man but "by some Mischance, or monstrous Fury of Fate, [she] stumbled over a Womb, and was damned then and forever to drag it about, like a Prisoner his Ball and Chain" (53). Just as riddles comment "with a twinkle in the eye on a serious matter" (Kaviola-Bregenhøj 9), Barnes's humorous, fictitious account of the birth of the first lesbian attests to the more than "twenty Centuries" of lesbian history denied by Krafft-Ebing and masculinized by Ellis (Barnes 15).

"The Voice of the Prophet"

From the riddle of the birth of the first woman "with a Difference," we move on to the text's first riddling figure, an out of work midwife named Masie-Tuck-and Frill, whose fondest wish is to deliver a child to a "Girl's Girl" (22). Masie finds herself "lamentably out of a Job" due to "the Trend of the Times," a reference to the newly "fashionable" practice of lesbian love as

well as medical science's discrediting of the authority of folk medicine and folk practices. With more and more (heterosexual) couples electing to give birth in the sterile conditions of a hospital, Masie gets "called to no Beds, but those of Sisters mingled in the Bond of no Relativity," but her hope that "the Pretties would yet whelp a little Sweet" remains undiminished (22). In a punning allusion to the miraculous birth of the first lesbian to the angelic host in the Zodiac section, Masie vows that "by fair means or foul" a "Girl's Girl" will "one day become a Mother" (ibid). Combining faith in the power of creation, which always finds a way to ensure the continuation of the human species, with her own unorthodox methods, Masie represents Barnes's take on the "literary convention" of the "midwife-witch" (Harley 8).

This benevolent *sage-femme* envisions two different scenarios in which her charges might (re)produce a "Sister of Heaven" despite Patience Scalpel's dire prognostication that "they have come to a blind Alley; there will be no Children born" (12). The biological route, facilitated by spells and charms, would certainly be cause for "crowing" if it were successful, yet Masie maintains that "a Feather might accomplish it, or a Song rightly sung, or an Exclamation said in the right Place, or a Trifle done in the right Spirit, and then you would have need of me indeed!" (22). While this may seem to be nothing more than the nonsensical ravings of a superstitious woman, Masie's Christian name offers the first clue that her speech is a puzzle and the surest way of navigating its twists and turns is by avoiding the trap of literal interpretation. Kathryn Kent makes the compelling argument that this passage "connects the production of lesbians with artistic endeavor" through its conflation of feathers as sartorial accessory utilized in self-fashioning, writing implement, and fanciful instrument of impregnation (94). Through a shift in levels characteristic of riddles, a ludicrous biological argument gives way to a social one in which "queer reproduction" takes place through the seductive power of art; writing or a "Song

rightly sung" may add a new "Sister of Heaven" to the ranks, and the works of art are themselves the children of the lesbian artist (ibid). Building off of the sense of reproduction as replication, the "Lady's Lady" forges a copy of herself each time that she persuades another woman to come "down from the Bed of Matrimony . . . Past watching Eye and seeking Hand" (Barnes 54). Masie picks up on this meaning of reproduction in the second, more explicitly non-biological method of perpetuating a Sapphic lineage when she asks "what is to prevent some modern Girl from rising from the Couch of a Girl as modern, with something new in her Mind?" (22). The only form of impregnation that occurs here is ideological—one woman convinces another of the naturalness of responding to her desires through the persuasive powers of the bedchamber (i.e., her "couch"), and in the process creates a "Girl as modern" as herself.

What is at stake behind Barnes's extended rumination on reproduction is the legitimacy of non-normative sexualities and their validity before the law. Reproduction was central to debates about whether homosexuality is "natural" with some early commentators taking the stance that any sexual act engaged in for purposes other than procreation is inherently sinful and against nature. Ulrichs fought strenuously against this religiously inflected understanding of sexuality, arguing that "that which is natural is not made unnatural by infertility," and he directed anyone who is "unsatisfied with the fruitlessness of our sex acts" to lodge their complaints with the "higher being, be it God or nature" that implanted attraction to men in the hearts of Urnings (37-8). Ellis traced the "horror and disgust" with which homosexuality was viewed back to periods in human history when "the enlargement of the population [became] a strongly felt social need" and consequently homosexuality was regarded as an antisocial act (206). This reproductive imperative was codified into law under the Roman emperors who declared homosexuality a "crime . . . punishable by death" (ibid). The most enduring of the Roman legal codes, Justinian's

Edict of 538 continued to exert its influence well into the modern period and an outraged Ulrichs railed against its citation in the decision to convict an Urning in Bremen in 1867 for "unnatural vice" (410).⁴⁴ Barnes turns the reproductive argument on its head by converting fears of the rapid transmission of lesbian "vice" into evidence of the naturalness of Sapphic love since, according to the terms of the debate, anything that reproduces itself is inherently natural, and by extension, cannot be immoral.

Masie's monologue offers a textbook example of one of the mainstays of riddling: self-contradiction that results in logical paradox. With Musset as an attentive and "charmed" listener, Masie unfolds her philosophy, explaining "Love in Man is Fear of Fear. Love in Woman is Hope without Hope. Man fears all that can be taken away from him, a Woman's Love includes that, and then Lies down beside it" (23). According to Masie, loving serves as a method of warding off fear for men; man loves because he fears being afraid, and the root cause of his fear is being alone. Having a partner to love offers a distraction and a measure of relief because it re-directs his mental energy outward toward the love object rather than turning inward and feeding fears of inadequacy that threaten to consume him. Woman's oxymoronic hopeful hopelessness derives from her passivity; she hopes that loving someone will fill a void in her life and give it meaning, and she is therefore dependent upon others for happiness and fulfillment. Both fear and hope are future oriented, but man fears that which he currently possesses will be taken away whereas woman hopes for some future good, yet resigns herself ("lies down") to the unlikelihood of its realization or pragmatically accepts the inevitability of loss, and thus the futility of fear. Neither view of love is a romantic one; in both instances love serves an instrumental end as a means of

⁴⁴ Ulrichs was appalled that "the fire-and-brimstone laws of a fanatic premedieval hyperorthodoxy" should be used as justification for the continued persecution of Urnings in modern Germany, and he wrote at length on the Feldtmann case in *Memnon*, Part II of his *Forschungen über das Rätsel der Männlichen Liebe*. In one of the more memorable passages, he archly congratulates Justinian that "the barbarian —Oh, dear I meant to say highly civilized —Bremen law speaks on the authority of your edict of the year 538, warning against earthquakes and plague" (412).

avoiding self-examination and offers a superficial fix to a deep-seated problem. Although Masie speaks in somewhat stereotypical gendered terms, her ultimate message encompasses all of humanity as she warns that knowledge of one's true self cannot be gained through dependence upon another. Barnes underscores the validity of Masie's ideas by echoing them in the September section. The narrator states that the reason why both men and women feel heartbroken by infidelity or the end of a love affair is that they weep for "Loneliness estranged—the unthinking returning of themselves to themselves" (58). No longer defined as part of a couple, lover and beloved resume their separate identities and the shattering sensation of being alone results in psychic anguish as the individual suddenly regards himself or herself from an unfamiliar and disorienting perspective.

Masie's philosophical musings also engage Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* in a dialogue that interrogates religious justifications for women's subjection.⁴⁵ While pondering the cause of fear, Aquinas cites Augustine's pronouncement that "'there can be no doubt that there can be no cause for fear save the loss of what we love, when we possess it, or the failure to obtain what we hope for'" as the basis for his own conclusion that "love causes fear: since it is through his loving a certain good, that whatever deprives man of that good is evil to him, and that consequently he fears it as an evil." With their shared focus on the causal relationships between love, hope, and fear, the close similarity between this passage and Masie's monologue is readily discernible. By assigning a different gender to each of the types of love-induced fears

⁴⁵ Barnes exhibited a lifelong fascination with the person and writings of Thomas Aquinas. Her personal library (sold as part of her papers to the University of Maryland) contained five volumes written by or about Aquinas at the time of her death. These include *Introduction to Thomas Aquinas* (1962) and *The Silence of Saint Thomas* (1957) both by the German philosopher Josef Pieper while a third volume by Frederick Copleston, known for his *History of Philosophy* series, is entitled *Aquinas: An Introduction to the Life and Work of the Great Medieval Thinker* (1955). Susan Sniader Lanser has argued that Barnes "rather pointedly parodies the *Summa Theologiae's* discussion of 'Whether Women Should Have Been Made in the First Production of Things' in her tale of the birth of the first woman 'with a Difference,' but I detect his influence much more prominently in a section of *Ladies Almanack* unremarked upon by Lanser, namely Masie's riddling speech (162).

identified by Augustine, Masie highlights the systemic inequality that produces an imbalance of power and offers a feminist re-writing of Aquinas's philosophy. She depicts men as the haves, fearfully guarding what they already possess and women as the have-nots, hoping to one day obtain their desires. This small alteration also reveals an internal bulwark against the redistribution of power since man "fears . . . as an evil" anything that threatens to deprive him of what he loves, especially to a being as "defective and misbegotten" as the good Saint Thomas believed woman to be.

Masie's dialogue with Aquinas continues as she ruminates on his assertion, founded upon biblical precedents, that woman's sole purpose in life is to be "a helper in the work of generation." She states "A Man's love is built to fit Nature. Woman's is a Kiss in the Mirror. It is a Farewell to the Creator, without disturbing him, the supreme Tenderness toward Oblivion, Battle after Retreat, Challenge when the Sword is broken" (23). By likening woman's love to "a Kiss in the Mirror," Masie hints that she refers here to a specific subset of the female population—women that love women—and she takes Aquinas's assertion that likeness produces love to its logical conclusion, the validation of same-sex desire. Aquinas correlates varying degrees of similarity to different types of love, arguing that those individuals "having the same quality actually" are bound by the higher love of "friendship or well-being" whereas the likeness of potentiality where "one thing [has] potentially and by way of inclination, a quality which the other has actually" produces only lust. Situating Masie's remarks within her ongoing exchange with Aquinas converts an apparent criticism of the narcissism of lesbian love into a bid for its recognition as the purest kind of love by the very orthodoxy that deemed it a sinful abomination since, if similarity is the basis for love, what greater love can there be than between mirror images? When a woman bids "Farewell to the Creator," she renounces the love and dominion of

men, symbolized by the male god and his commandments, and turns her back on the reproductive duties that define her within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Her victory is a pyrrhic one, for though "the Sword is broken," and she alone determines her actions, she knowingly embraces a path that will consign her to "Oblivion" twice over; she will have no biological descendants to keep her memory alive and will be erased from history. However, Masie bears witness to a different method of securing immortality and acts as its conduit. "The unrecorded Music" of lesbian lives will continue to live on in women's oral tradition where, due to its emotional resonance ("it strikes loudly on the heart"), "the Psalm" will never die (23).

Transfixed by Masie's riddling speech, Musset mistakes her for "a Sister Lost," which further cements the association between riddles and lesbian sexuality within the text. Musset declares that she "speak[s] in the Voice of one who should be One of Us!" but the *sage-femme* demurs, explaining "I speak in that Voice which has been accorded ever to those who go neither Hither nor Thither; the Voice of the Prophet" (23). As a midwife, Masie occupies the threshold between life and death, and she traces the gift of prophecy to her liminality. Both occupationally and perhaps in terms of her sexual orientation, Masie is in between states, "neither Hither nor Thither," and it is this indeterminacy that grants her the prophetic insights that she reveals in the "divine dialect" of riddles (Bussanich 203). Like the *sage-femme*, who ushers new life into the world and guards against death in childbirth, riddles are "poised at the boundary between domains, at the edge of life and death, where each issues into the other" (Hasan-Rokem and Shulman 3). Riddles have been the preferred vehicle of divine revelation since classical times, but as the innumerable tragedies resulting from their misinterpretation in Greek mythology attest, their meaning is far from unambiguous.

It is precisely because prophecy is not straightforward, but requires elucidation and

interpretation that I disagree with Julie Taylor's assertion that *Ladies Almanack* "brings into question the stable and assured position of knowledge occupied by the self-appointed prophet Masie Tuck-and-Frill" as part of Barnes's program of "discredit[ing] the medical and moral authority of the contemporary sexologist" (717). As I have demonstrated, Masie's riddling speech is subject to numerous interpretations, and thus its meaning is neither "stable" nor "assured" but is as protean as that of the Oracle itself, which conceals truths using metaphorical language, "strange words, circumlocutions, and vagueness"—an apt description of Masie's dark sayings as well as Barnes's own prose (Strousma 274). Given the oppositional relationship between midwives and doctors, it would also be highly unlikely for Barnes to use the figure of the *sage-femme*, so closely associated with the folk authority of the wise woman, as a means of indirectly attacking the very men involved in undercutting the authority of these female healers and jeopardizing their livelihood. Indeed, if Barnes were to reduce the "wise woman" to the mouthpiece of the dogmatic male doctor, it would be the equivalent of transforming her into the Sibyl—a mere vessel through whom the male god delivers his message in "a kind of spiritual rape" (Kahn 125). In Barnes's gynocentric text, the "Voice of the Prophet" is not a man's voice ventriloquized through a woman's body, but rather a woman who speaks on her own behalf, and in so doing wrests control of the female seat of prophecy, Delphi meaning womb, from the usurper Apollo.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Indeed, the text offers hints that Masie, one of the few characters that Natalie Barney could not identify in her annotated copy of *Ladies Almanack*, may be based upon the goddess Themis, mother of the Fates and possessor of Delphi before Apollo. As the personification of divine law, Themis was, according to Homer, "a voice or utterance of the gods," who instructed mankind on right conduct and the rule of order (qtd. in Oakeshott 75). She is frequently depicted seated beside her consort Zeus whispering wise counsel into his ear. Themis inherited Delphi from her mother Gaia along with her prophetic powers, and as its chief oracle she predicted the fall of the Titans and the birth of a son (Achilles) greater than his father to Thetis. Like Masie, Themis was known to play the midwife. Present at the birth of Apollo, she served as his first nursemaid, mixing the nectar and ambrosia for the divine child, and she was the "*Eileithyia* (Birth-Goddess)" for Aphrodite during Beroe's birth. Nonnus provides a surprisingly detailed account of the delivery: Themis "made a way through the narrow opening of the swollen womb for the child . . . and lightened the sharp pang of the ripening birth" as Aphrodite "leaned back heavily against the ministering goddess,

"Riddle Me This"

In the November section, fittingly subtitled "Ebb," Musset believes that she has become wise when her "feminine Tides" cease as she reaches "fifty odd" years of age (12, 74). With the power of hindsight, she, like all women of a certain age, experiences the dubious "Pleasure" of recognizing the errors she has made in the past and resolves to share her discovery with the younger generation so that they may be spared the "Pangs of Love" (73, 78). While her intentions seem admirable, Musset refuses to accept that her knowledge is experiential in character and even if she were to succeed in transmitting "old-girls' Wisdom," she would deprive the young of the joys of "Love's rich welter," the exquisite intermingling of sorrow and sweetness that makes the experience of love so all-consuming (75). What begins as a cause for celebration rapidly deteriorates into Musset's low "ebb" as each woman that she encounters refuses to take her riddles seriously. Only the Madame in Mittens gives her a patient hearing, but the insights that the sexagenarian communicates leave Musset feeling so defeated that she cancels "her order for [the] ringing of Bells" and immediately returns home (79). Unflaggingly funny and written in surprisingly accessible prose, this key scene embeds an incisive critique of Ulrichs's theories, particularly his tendency to generalize about an entire class of people based upon his own idiosyncratic feelings and personal experiences, into the confrontation between Musset and the Madame. In the only instance in the book where the self-assured "Pope" of Lesbos becomes flustered and gets bested by another, Musset is made to look a fool due to her faulty assumption that there is a singular truth that is equally applicable to everyone at all times. Her defeat by the sharp-tongued Madame represents the triumph of probabilistic riddles over their deterministic counterpart, suggesting that anyone who posits a definitive answer to the "riddle"

and in her throes brought forth the wise child" ("Themis"). A midwife, prophetess, and "voice" of the gods, Masie bears more than a passing resemblance to the great goddess.

of sexuality is bound for failure.

Don Handelman distinguishes between two classes of riddles that differ markedly in terms of their causal structures, and I will refer to them as probablistic and deterministic riddles for ease of reference. Probablistic riddles have multiple possible solutions that can be guessed or "worked out" through careful consideration of the riddle image whereas deterministic riddles have a single answer that "must be known in advance" (47). Deterministic riddles are therefore teleological in organization and drive the riddlee insistently down one pathway toward a specific, predetermined destination and the solution of the riddle, once arrived at, is accorded the deference of revelation (ibid). In probablistic riddles, the relationship between parts to whole is much more fluid—the piece of the solution provided in the riddle image can be used to construct numerous metaphors capable of unifying its disjointed parts into a variety of arrangements. To express this idea within the larger framework of my study, the goal of deterministic riddles is merely restoration of the unity lost through the initial rupture (i.e., the severing of image from answer) while probablistic riddles encourage innovative acts of recombination that privilege individual ingenuity over received wisdom. As we shall see, Musset's riddling is decidedly deterministic for not only is she unwilling to entertain alternative solutions, but her riddles form a chain that leads to a preordained outcome: the choice between love and wisdom, which she assumes will inevitably result in the selection of the latter.

Armed with a walking stick and wearing her trusty "Busby," Musset begins her quest to enlighten others by accosting every woman that she meets with news of "things that they had not hoped to know for a great long while" (74). Cognizant on some level that her wisdom cannot be shared and must be experienced firsthand at the appropriate time, Musset nevertheless vows that "Women must know of it before they *can!*" and threatens to disrupt the natural order by making

the young "as wise as [their] Mother[s]" (74-5, emphasis added). Each of the riddling confrontations with her reluctant auditors unfolds in the same way. Opening with the traditional interrogatory formula, she bids them to "riddle me this" and describes love in the paradoxical language of riddles as "halt as a Standstill, as fast as a Watch, as wet as a Rill, as soft as a Mouse end, as hard as a Heart, as salt as flitch, as bitter as Gall" before asking "which is always present yet never in Sight, which is as light as a Kerchief, and as dark as a Crow?" (75). By incorporating direct questions into the riddle image, Musset maintains the illusion that she expects her listener to respond, but she does not pause long enough to allow anyone to venture a solution. Before the riddlee can interject, she provides the answer herself and moves on to the next riddle. Her choice of interrogative ("which") also indicates that Musset has a clear program in mind. There are only two (unstated) possibilities that the riddlee may choose from: love or wisdom, and her brief preamble to the second conundrum, "riddle me the other," makes this abundantly clear (75).

However, when Musset attempts to describe wisdom, her similes start to breakdown, demonstrating the idiosyncratic, highly subjective nature of her wisdom and rendering it suspect. According to Musset, wisdom is "as cool as a Cow's Dug, as sane as a Bell-hop, as calm as a Groat, as sure as you-think-it, and as right-as-you-are" (75-6). These mismatched pairs resemble proverbial phrases, such as cool as a cucumber or not worth a groat, but they substitute an ill-fitting or nonsensical term for the expected one (i.e., a cold udder is a sign of illness in cattle and an inanimate object cannot have feelings of any kind). More pervasive than malapropism, Musset's faulty similes illustrate the subjectivity of her wisdom, which holds up the thinking individual as her own measuring stick instead of relying on objective criteria for determining correctness. For Musset, everything is relative and contingent upon the self (i.e., "as sure as you-

think-it, and as right-as-you-are"). In this regard she closely resembles Ulrichs, who "assumed that all Urnings were like himself and that any love that is directed toward a man . . . is necessarily a woman's love," which led him to conclude that Urnings must have female souls trapped in male bodies (Bullough 24). Extrapolating outward from his own experience of gender dysphoria, Ulrichs maintained that "our character, the way in which we feel, our entire mood, is not masculine; it is decidedly feminine . . . we only play the man," and he stubbornly denied all evidence to the contrary, even attacking the masculinity of dissenters by arguing that they are not "justified" to call themselves "men" because "the fact is that their congenital love for the male sex is itself a part of being *female*" (58, 162, original emphasis). As set in her ways as Ulrichs, Musset regards herself as a prophet, and delivers her message with the assurance of "a Crier of old London," equally deaf to demurrals and blind to her own limitations (78). By the time that she finally ceases pontificating, her auditors are too exasperated, bored, or wise to bother to answer the question that precipitated the entire monologue: "which will you have?" (76). The women's refusal to choose between love and wisdom draws attention to the false binary that Musset has constructed. Love and wisdom are not mutually exclusive and by ignoring her, they lay claim to both. The ironic refrain of the chapter, "But the Girl would not listen," underscores that Musset, not the women she accosts, has "much [to] learn," and her ignorance stems from presumption as well as an arrogant refusal to entertain other points of view (76).

Everything changes when she meets the Madame in Mittens in Well-Over Square. Having failed to sway anyone to the side of "wisdom," Musset drops her riddling pose and delivers her message in a more straightforward, but no less paradoxical fashion, counseling the older woman to "Never want but what you have, never have but that which stays, and let nothing remain. Wisdom is indifference" (78). "The only Trouble with it," she musingly adds, "is how

extraordinarily it fills the Bed" (78-9). Musset's deadpan delivery makes the punchline of this joke even funnier, but the illustration at the beginning of the chapter alerts readers to the dire consequences of Musset's vaunted indifference, which is actually selfishness disguised as philanthropy. Musset preaches emotional detachment in order to immure herself against "the Sorrow and the Pain of Loveslabourlost," choosing to feel nothing rather than endure the possibility of getting hurt (75). Yet this safety comes at another's expense because Musset treats the women drawn to her by her perceived disinterest as mere "trifles" to be used for pleasure, then discarded. Barnes's illustration depicts Musset's behavior as a thinly veiled act of aggression against womankind (Fig. 7). Grinning broadly, Musset stands with her arms folded across her chest and one boot-clad foot firmly pressing down upon the neck of a prostrate woman. The vulnerability of her hapless victim is emphasized by her vacant expression, kneeling position, bared buttocks, and hair trailing in the dirt. Small, hand-printed letters above each of the figures spell out what the drawing has already conveyed in no uncertain terms: Musset's triumphant "Wisdom!" is "Woman Conquered" by a different name.⁴⁷

Musset's triumph is short-lived, however, because the seemingly mild-mannered Madame turns the tables on her without missing a beat. While demurely adding sugar to her tea, the Madame observes, "I am sixty, and at my Age both Youth and Wisdom are over, and you reap a

⁴⁷ Not coincidentally, one of the most damaging criticisms of Ulrichs's early writings was that he sacrificed the honor of his beloved in order to satiate his own physical needs. Ulrichs was attracted to masculine men, and since he assumed that the female element predominated in all Urnings, he was convinced that he could not love another Urning, only heterosexual men (Dionings). This led to the wrinkle that satisfying his sexual desires with a man would be in accordance with his own nature, but not that of his love object since, as Ulrichs conceded, "subjectively, it is unnatural for the Dioning, since the Dioning does not enjoy sex with one of his own kind" (47). Although he made some efforts to justify the consenting Dioning's actions, the ethical defense he mounted on behalf of Urnings left their Dionian lovers largely unprotected and himself vulnerable to the charge made by Rudolf Virchow that "You are so selfish to plead only for yourself and to abandon the rights of the nature of your beloved" (qtd. in Ulrichs 212). This criticism, coming from one of Germany's leading scientific minds, clearly irked Ulrichs, and he repeatedly referenced and sought to refute it in his subsequent writings. See, for example, *Vindicta* §23-27 (entitled "Is it Truly Unnatural for Dionings to Consent to Sexual Pleasures with Urnings?") and *Ara Spei* "The Uranian Bonds of Love" (especially §52-53) for Ulrichs's revised arguments on this score.

third Crop" (79). Alarmed by these tidings, Musset inquires, "God save us, is there yet more to learn of this world?" to which the Madame responds, "But yes, there is that and others. At sixty you are ten Years tired of your Knowledge" (ibid). This zinger hits its mark, and a thoroughly deflated Musset retreats in stunned silence. Despite the brevity of their exchange, it highlights differences in outlook and expression between Musset and the Madame that correspond to the differing epistemological stances of deterministic and probabilistic riddles. The Madame does not presume to know the details of Musset's future or imagine it will be identical to her own, hence the vagueness of her reply "there is that and others," but she does caution that there is always more to learn. Whereas Musset felt compelled to spell out every detail of her riddles, leaving nothing for the listener to puzzle over, the Madame's ambiguous phrasing allows uncertainty to creep in and she does not patronize her listener by glossing her intended meaning. Linguistically, the Madame accomplishes what the overbearing Musset could not. She permits the riddlee to reach her own conclusions.

Although she does not package her knowledge as a riddle, the Madame's initial pronouncement functions like one. It creates suspense by leaving the reader, along with Musset, pondering the tantalizing question what can this "third crop" be and awaiting the solution that will unravel its secret. But, if the reader expected a single, clear-cut answer, (s)he will be sorely disappointed because, in true probabilistic fashion, the Madame's response can be interpreted in various ways. Is the "third crop" apathy, self-awareness, or perhaps, as Ery Shin suggests, "Socratic resignation ('all I know is that I know nothing') before humankind's inability to conceive absolute knowledge" ? (33). While Shin is undoubtedly correct that Barnes alludes to Plato's *Apology* here, her assertion that Musset is a "failure" because she "triumphantly initiates women into same-sex desire but dies without fathoming all of its secrets" seems to miss the point

of this scene altogether (21). Musset fails precisely *because* of her totalizing rhetoric, her assumption that her experiences are universal. It is not, then, Musset's "failure to understand *the* queer," as Shin claims, that Barnes takes to task, but the monolithic quality that she ascribes to queer being (Shin 33, emphasis added). Just as the Madame's probablistic riddling favors the inclusivity of both/and over exclusionary binary formulations, *Ladies Almanack* renounces monolithic conceptions of lesbian identity and celebrates the diversity present within the community of woman-loving women.

By staging Musset's defeat in such an unequivocal and humorous fashion, Barnes dismantles the confident assurances of sexologists in general, and Ulrichs in particular, to have solved the "riddle" of same-sex desire. The first hint that Barnes is targeting the medicalization of human sexuality in this scene comes when Musset uses the scientifically inflected phrase "my new findings" to describe her wisdom and proceeds to tout its curative properties, promising that her "findings" will banish the "Tears" and "Agues" of love (77). In a mocking echo of Ulrichs's "man-manly love," Musset swears to the efficacy of her remedy for love's "Trials and Troubles" even for "such as are silly enough to be in Love with a Man and a Man" (78). Add to these facts the centrality of riddling, so ubiquitous in Ulrichs's writings, to Musset's comeuppance and the scholarly consensus that she is a parody of inversion—Barnes's answer to Radclyffe Hall's tragic invert Stephen Gordon—and we begin to zero in on a specific figure within the field of sexology, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. Havelock Ellis is generally credited with popularizing the concept of inversion during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but what is less widely known is that it is based upon Ulrichs's theory of the "third sex," specifically his postulate that Urnings have "a female psyche confined in a male body," or *anima muliebris corpore virili inclusa* (Bauer 86; Kennedy). Ulrichs's ideas (often unattributed) filtered into the writings of numerous

authors, including Proust as we have seen, within the emerging discipline of sexology, but since his texts themselves were only available in German, most English-speaking readers would not have encountered a systematic discussion of his theories until the publication of Ellis's *Sexual Inversion*, which offers a summary of "Ulrichs's Views" as an appendix. This is likely where Radclyffe Hall, who idolized Ellis as "the greatest living authority on the tragical problem of inversion," first came into contact with his ideas, although she was also familiar with the writings of Magnus Hirschfeld, Ulrichs's self-proclaimed successor (Souhami, *Trials* 158, 199; Kennedy 255). Hall invokes the scientific authority of Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing explicitly in *The Well of Loneliness* in order to prove that Stephen's inversion is natural and congenital. Early in the novel, Stephen's "puzzled" father surreptitiously reads and annotates "a slim volume" authored "by a German, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs" in search of answers as to why his daughter is so different from other girls (26). Ulrichs's pride of place in *The Well*, the repugnance with which members of Barney's circle regarded his theory of the "third sex," and their distaste for Hall's melancholic vision of inversion place a target on Ulrichs's back that Barnes hits with a well-placed shaft of mockery.

Romaine Brooks's assessment of *The Well* as "ridiculous, superficial, and trite" sums up how most of Barney's circle felt about the novel and its championing of inversion (Rodriguez 274). Attracted to feminine loveliness and proud of her own femininity, Barney especially hated "the idea that a lesbian was a man trapped in a woman's body" and she opposed cross-dressing or the adoption of masculine mannerisms on the basis that they might seem to offer evidence that lesbians were members of a "third sex" (Rodriguez 272; Benstock 11). Despite her personal objections to cultivating a butch aesthetic, Barney welcomed all types to her Salon, including John (as Hall preferred to be called), and Hall heaped praise on Barney's fictional alter-ego

Natalie Seymour for providing a refuge to "men and women who must carry God's mark on their foreheads" (352). From the very outset, *Ladies Almanack* positions itself in opposition to *The Well* and the theory of the "third sex" to which Hall subscribes. Even before the text proper begins, Barnes pokes fun at Hall's melodramatic, purple prose by offering a literal rendition of one of her hackneyed metaphors as the book's frontispiece (Fig. 8). Rumored to be Barney's favorite illustration, the frontispiece depicts Dame Musset as a "wonder worker" equipped with "a pole and a muff," who rescues women (and a few men) that have fallen through "that exceeding thin ice to which it has pleased God, more and more, to call frail woman" from drowning. Her self-assurance while standing atop the treacherous ice inspires two of the figures to begin pulling themselves from the waters just as Valerie Seymour, that "lighthouse in a storm-swept sea" for inverts, inspires "a few" of the "poor spluttering victims" left "shipwrecked" and "drowning" under waves of opprobrium to find the courage to "strike boldly out for the shore" (Hall 352).

Barnes also goes out of her way to parody the scene in *The Well* in which Stephen's father Sir Philip "reads and rereads" Ulrichs's writings because Musset is "a witty and learned Fifty" when the main action of the book takes place; consequently, Barnes must squeeze this episode from Musset's childhood into the front matter of her *Almanack* (9). In a move that circumvents Ulrichs, Barnes replaces the solitary act of reading with a dialogue between father and daughter in which Musset relies solely upon her own authority to defend the naturalness of her predilections. Like Sir Philip, Musset's father had "spent many a windy Eve pacing his Library in the most normal of Night-Shirts" ruminating upon his child's anomalous behavior, but less timid or less decorous than that country gentleman, he confronts his daughter directly about her "fatherly Sentiments" (8). Musset, who "had been developed in the Womb of her most gentle

Mother to be a Boy," nonchalantly explains to her flustered father that his wish for a son has been fulfilled and inquires "Am I not doing after your very Desire, and is it not the more commendable, seeing that I do it without the Tools for the Trade, and yet nothing complain?" (7-8). Barnes rejects the stereotype of the tragic invert "leaning, all of a limp, on a Pillar of Bathos" perpetuated by Hall, and substitutes an undaunted Musset standing as "calm[ly] as you please" ready to dry the tears of those who have yet to achieve her equipoise and to offer more earthy forms of consolation as well (7-9). In a book written at Barney's behest that systematically dismantles the pathological view of same-sex attraction espoused by Hall, Barnes cannot resist taking a swipe at the original architect of the theory of inversion using the riddles so closely associated with his name and integral to his theories.

However, what differentiates Barnes from the rest of Barney's coterie is that she acknowledges the transformation that Ulrichs, like Musset herself, undergoes when confronted with proof of the inadequacy of his theories. Based upon his "limited acquaintance" with other Urnings, Ulrichs had assumed that they all must resemble himself—feminine in spirit, attracted to manly Dionings, preferring the sexually active role, and repulsed by the mere thought of anal penetration (Kennedy 58, 73-4). The publication of his first two books brought him into contact with a much more diverse array of gay men, and he was forced "to acknowledge that they were not as uniformly feminine as he perceived himself to be" (Le Vay).⁴⁸ In response to this new data, Ulrichs adjusted his theory by "proposing that there was a spectrum of Urning natures" instead of a singular type (ibid). The *Weibling*, or Urning in whom femininity predominates, now became one pole in a series of "Uranian Stages" with as many as "a thousand intermediaries"

⁴⁸ Ulrichs regretted and later admitted the error that he had made in his first two volumes. In a letter written to his friend and fellow author Carl Robert Egells in December 1873, Ulrichs acknowledged that "in the booklets *Vindex* and *Inclusa* I was still one-sided. I knew only Weiblings and believed myself to be a Weibling; I did not yet know any gradations" (qtd. in Kennedy 131).

between it and the hyper-masculine *Mannling* at the opposite end of the spectrum (Ulrichs 168). From the fourth volume of his *Forschungen* onward, Ulrichs's theory of "Zwischenstufen" ("intermediate stages") would undergo further refinements, chief of which was the addition of "true man" and "true woman" to the spectrum in an effort to demonstrate that all of human sexuality forms a continuum (Kennedy 212). Ulrichs sought to combat disease-based theories of homosexuality by arguing that "the steady and regular progressive transition" from *Weibling* to *Mannling* to "real men" is "inconsistent with the acquisition of some kind of disease," and, in a remark that anticipates and refutes Hall, he concludes that Urnings bear "the stamp of health on [their] forehead[s]" (688). The marked change in Ulrichs's thinking from his initial dogmatic assertion that Urnings form a single, feminine type to arguing on behalf of a complex system that charts gradations of sexual orientation, gender identity, and "preferred sexual behaviors" on one axis did not escape Barnes (Le Vay). Having poked fun at the naive generalizations that undergird his postulate of a masculine soul in a female body through Dame Musset's ignominious defeat, Barnes redeems him using the same means.

As guilty as Ulrichs of having assumed that her experiences are universal, Musset undergoes a transformation that mirrors Ulrichs's own during the final two chapters of *Ladies Almanack*. More than forty years have elapsed between her failed riddling session in November and the beginning of the December chapter, and when we encounter Musset again, she is a changed woman. Although her physical appearance remains largely the same, with "her good Beak of a nose [having grown to be] yet more of a Pope's proportion," the truly striking alteration that has taken place is to her outlook. Musset has renounced her vision of a single path trodden by all women, and now celebrates the variability of women's experiences as well as the diversity of her followers. During her final sermon, delivered at the ripe old age of ninety-nine,

"difference" becomes Musset's mantra. She ruminates on the many "different" types of burials and implores her disciples to honor her by disposing of her body in as many ways as their imaginations can concoct. She explains, "Now I leave behind me . . . many Mourners of many Races and many Tempers, and as they loved me differently in Life so I would have them plan differently for me in Death" (82). This is a far cry from the woman who attempted to impose her views on all and sundry a few pages earlier. Musset has embraced the probabilistic mindset of the Madame, and she treats her death as the occasion for paying tribute to the heterogeneity of the lesbian community; her final wishes emphasize the differences among women "born with a Difference," whose unique attributes are often overshadowed by a reductive fixation on their shared sexual orientation. Like Ulrichs, Musset has come to believe in a spectrum, an infinite series of gradations encompassing individuals with distinctive backgrounds and personalities where once she had seen only similarity.

Coda: "Decipher the Line"

Musset's elaborate funerary rites look back with pride upon her Sapphic heritage and project into the future by producing an enduring record for "those who shall follow" (82). The mourning commences with forty of her followers shaving their heads, and this act of grief pays tacit homage to one of Sappho's epigrams: "For her the maids who were her fellows shore / Their curls, and to her tomb this tribute bore."⁴⁹ In accordance with her wishes, Musset's followers agree upon "as good a Series" of posthumous commemorations of their former leader as "the Wits of Women can devise"—carrying her body in state throughout the town, kneeling in grief in darkened churches, sealing her Christ-like "in a Tomb for many days," and burying her corpse in various positions and locales (82-3). The humorous catalogue of increasingly ornate funerary

⁴⁹ Translation by Henry Thornton Wharton from *Sappho: Memoir, Text, Selected Readings, and a Literal Translation*.

proceedings, replete with proofs of Musset's saintliness (e.g., the lamentation of the animal world at her decease), culminates in the immolation of her body on "a great Pyre" (84). Many scholars, starting with Karla Jay, have been troubled by the fact that Musset's tongue alone "would not suffer Ash" and embarks on a series of posthumous sexual adventures before its final interment in an urn on "the Altar in the Temple of Love" (84). Jay contends that this reduces lesbian love to genital stimulation and strips Musset of her voice. Laura Behling agrees, and she cites Musset's disembodied tongue as the most egregious example of Barnes's portrayal of lesbians as fragmented, highly sexualized beings (518-20). While it is true that Barnes treats Musset's tongue as a metonymic substitute for lesbian sexuality in this instance, she does so in order to convey the affirmative message that lesbian love endures, or in a characteristically bawdy play on words, "flickers to this day," regardless of the death of its foremost practitioner and chief evangelist (84). Arguments that the final scene deprives Musset of her voice place undue emphasis on one episode from her funerary rites, which also include the recording of her "many sayings" (i.e., the gospels according to Musset) and the carving of "many Tombs" that enshrine her in monumental history (84). Both of these acts of devotion inscribe her name and words in a medium more durable than flesh, enabling them to live on long after the death of her physical body.

Moreover, Musset's epitaph quite literally gives her the last word, and perhaps even the last laugh. In the final sentence of *Ladies Almanack*, the narrator observes that "one may still decipher the Line," inscribed upon Musset's urn "beneath its Handles, 'Oh ye of little Faith'" (84). By casually inserting the instruction to "decipher the Line" into this passage, Barnes alerts readers to the presence of hidden or encrypted information, and urges us to search for meanings beyond the face value of the text. In this case, working out the "cipher" involves recognizing the

allusion to Matthew 8:26 and restoring its original context. These words of remonstrance were spoken by Jesus to his disciples when they feared that they would drown while crossing the Sea of Galilee. With their boat "swamped by the waves," the terrified disciples woke Christ and begged him to save them. Disappointed by their lack of faith, Jesus gently chastised his disciples before performing a miracle that eradicated the source of their fear: "he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm" (Matthew 8:26). Ery Shin claims that Musset's epitaph "addresses an as yet unenlightened lesbian majority" because Musset has failed to achieve understanding of "lesbian love's most intimate, enduring secrets" and therefore cannot communicate them (34). However, the scriptural allusion attributes the fault not to imperfect understanding on Musset's part—she is after all likened to Christ!—but to her disciples' lack of confidence. Musset's ministry continues from beyond the grave as her epitaph encourages her followers not to fear, but to have faith that they too will weather the storm and bask in the calm that follows. With this quotation, Barnes neatly brings the book full circle as Musset the "wonder worker" once again offers spiritual salvation to the drowning. As undisturbed by the storm howling around her as Christ himself, Musset likewise inquires of her disciples "Why are ye fearful?" before calmly rendering aid. Having fished her struggling brethren from the waves and angled after a pretty housemaid in her day, Musset becomes *the* fisher of (wo)men indeed if one but "decipher[s] the Line."

"We have known, for some time now, that we are the vestiges of an ancient and lost line."
—Djuna Barnes to Peter Hoare⁵⁰

Chapter Three: "Outrunners in the Thickets of Probability"

In her excellent essay "'Woman, Remember You': Djuna Barnes and History," Julie L. Abraham tracks Barnes's lifelong fascination with history across her published works and notes her marked preference for recording the lives of "those who are outside of the circle of power that the official history bestows and legitimates: Jews, wives, daughters, homosexual men, and lesbians" (255). Although she pays surprisingly scant attention to *Ladies Almanack*, touching upon it very briefly, Abraham's essay lays the groundwork for more sustained considerations of the importance of origins and lineage within the *Almanack* by astutely observing that "implicit throughout her work is the sense that her texts are themselves additions to history, recording characters, experiences, and perspectives that history usually prefers to ignore" (253). Many sexologists shared Barnes's concern with history, crafting lengthy lists of historical personages from around the world whom they claimed were gay, lesbian, or bisexual; however, Barnes's method of chronicling differs substantially from even the most well-intended among them. In this chapter, I argue that Barnes reconstructs a Sapphic lineage that Richard von Krafft-Ebing repudiated and Havelock Ellis rendered unflatteringly masculine by drawing upon the suggestive riddle form. Through riddling prose that hints at the "probability" or "likelihood" that the historical figures she names were "Sisters of Heaven," Barnes recovers submerged genealogies without claiming definitive knowledge of any person's sexual orientation or fixing them within a limited range of the spectrum of human desire.

The difficulty of Barnes's riddling prose reaches its apogee when she recounts the hidden history of lesbian desire in the July and October chapters of *Ladies Almanack*. The topic under

⁵⁰ Quoted in *Silence and Power: A Reevaluation of Djuna Barnes* on page 337.

discussion in July is love poetry, and the narrator observes that no record exists, not even in "the Columns of our most jaundiced Journals" of "what a woman says to a Woman and she be up to her Ears in Love's Acre" (42-3). The "jaundiced Journal" to which Barnes alludes is *The Yellow Book*, and she hints that even decadent periodicals closely associated with homosexuality proved unreceptive to professions of love written in a female voice to a female addressee. However, absence from the historical record does not amount to proof of non-existence, and the narrator vows that "from Fish to Man there has been much Back-mating and Front to Front, though only a Twitter of it comes out of the Past" (43). This witty play on evolutionary theory and the prevalence of homosexuality in the animal kingdom (the latter often used in sexological studies as proof of the naturalness of homosexual tendencies among humans) leads into an explanation of why homosexuals are almost entirely absent from official accounts of the past. The narrator remarks that "To the Ancients, Love Letters and Love Hearsay . . . were from like to unlike," adding in a parenthetical aside "(though how much Luck and how much Cunning this was on the part of the Outrunners in the Thickets of prehistoric proability [sic], none can say" (43). She suggests that some gay and lesbian forbearers may have simply gone undetected ("Luck"), while others may have actively sought to conceal their sexual orientation under a mask of heterosexuality ("Cunning").

Daniela Caselli interprets this passage quite differently than I do. She claims that "Outrunners" refers to historians who have stripped "the past of its potential" by asserting that love once ran in exclusively heterosexual channels (51). I find this argument unconvincing for several reasons. First, "Outrunners" are forerunners, an advance guard that rides ahead of the main party and secures new ground often at considerable risk to their own safety; their trailblazing forges a new path for those who will follow rather than simply repeating stale

pronouncements about whom it is or is not permissible to love. The plural noun "Thickets" suggests that forging a clear pathway was no easy task, and it evokes a vivid mental picture of the arduousness of this disheartening labor as well as the likelihood of becoming lost among the thickly tangled brush. Clawed at by the dense undergrowth, bodies aching with fatigue and covered in scratches, the "Outrunners" cut their way to a clearing only to find that it is surrounded on all sides by heavy growth and they must begin their work all over again. Faced by this bleak prospect, it is no wonder that some employed "Cunning" to escape it, while others thanked their "lucky" stars for never having been cast among the brambles in the first place. The hard labor and struggle involved in this scenario is a more accurate reflection of the persecution faced by individuals of non-normative sexualities as they fight for public recognition of their fundamental rights than the privileged position of historians, whose version of events generally does not derive from the perspective of the "Thickets," but from a position of power.

Second, "probable" is code for the willingness and ability to engage in lesbian lovemaking in *Ladies Almanack*, a fact that the narrator discloses a few sentences later while reporting the importunate speech of one woman to her female beloved: "tell me hastily, are you well? for I am well, oh most newly well . . . But if you be nowise probable, but tell me, and I will burst my Gussets with hereditary Weeping, that we be not dated to a Moon" (43). Given its sexual connotations, "probability" locates the pioneering efforts made by the "Outrunners" within a lesbian frame of reference, and thus "prehistoric probability" refers to the likely existence of homosexual men and women during a time (prehistory) prior to the invention of "written historical records" (OED). Further support for this reading comes in the parallel passage: "Some must go first, and some must come after. And how is the Jungle so twig-thick and underfoot, if not because a Bison, and a Bison and a Bison went by?" (71). The key here is

that bison, animals well-known for engaging in homosexual practices, are not native to the jungle but have altered the environment to meet their needs, trampling the undergrowth (cf. "Thicket") until it provides no obstacle to their forward progress.⁵¹ Although the names and uniquely identifying features of these "bison" have been lost, the altered landscape—the "twig-thick" carpet that they have created on the jungle floor—endures as a continuous reminder of their presence. It also serves as a symbol of hope for the despondent to take solace in because, as the narrator reminds us, "The Branch does not bend unless for a passing" (71). Far from "pre-empting the past of its potential," as Caselli claims, these "Outrunners" are a testament to the enduring power of suppressed histories, whose stories carry on the "winds" of feminine speech—the "Titters" and "whispers" that come "out of the Past"—and leave their mark on the physical world if one simply knows where to look (Caselli 51; Barnes 43, 70).

In a moment of levity, the narrator jokes that the absence of lesbian love poetry from written records is not necessarily such a bad thing since many "be not happy unless writhing in Treacle" (46). However, she resolves that "The Time has come" for declarations of love between women to be acknowledged publically, no matter how "saccharine" or "flower-casting" they may be, and she proceeds to transcribe a representative sample (43, 46). The first of these examples purports to be equally bad heterosexual love poetry for the purposes of comparison, and perhaps even justification since it demonstrates the depths of inanity to which love causes members of both sexes to descend. Yet, on closer inspection, there are clues that it too has been written by a

⁵¹ Both male and female bison participate in homosexual behaviors in the wild, such as mounting or tending members of the same sex. Hilde Vervaecke and Catherine Roden note that "same-sex mounting has been regularly observed in American bison (*Bison bison*) males and can be as frequent as heterosexual mounting" (131). During the winter, bulls live in bachelor herds "where homosexual activity is frequent" and indeed "heterosexual copulation" during breeding season may only form "a small portion of the total sexual activity" engaged in by bison (Neill 16-17). Homosexual behaviors are less common among female bison, but during their three-year long study of American bison living in "semi-natural conditions" in Belgium, Vervaecke and Roden observed a higher incidence of "homosexual interactions between study females" than had been anticipated based upon previous data; consequently, they concluded that homosexual behavior is "part of the normal female bison ethogram" (145, 149).

woman to a concealed female lover. The narrator states, "Our own Journals teem with Maids and their Beards, whose very highest encomiums reach no more glorious Foothold than 'Honey Lou', or 'Snooky dear'" (43). While "Beard" may serve as a belittling synecdoche for a male lover, it is also slang for a member of the opposite sex whose presence shields a homosexual man or woman from censure by creating the illusion of a heterosexual romance—an example of the "Cunning" misdirection practiced by some of the "Outrunners."⁵² In this case, the "Beard" is a literary one, and Havelock Ellis confirms that it was especially common for lesbian poets of the modern era to maintain the illusion of addressing a male lover, so much so that he singles out Renée Vivien for "the brave simplicity and sincerity" of her verse, which unapologetically praised Sapphic love at a time when "most other feminine singers of homosexuality ha[d] cautiously thrown a veil of heterosexuality over their songs" (340).

The question of the narrator's affiliation also comes into play here because the meaning of "Our own Journals" depends upon the group to which she belongs. Given her use of the pronoun "they" when referring to the effusions of lesbian poets and her protestation that she transcribes their "honeyed" words "with unwilling Hand," she initially appears to speak in the voice of an outsider (i.e., from the heterosexual camp). However, it becomes increasingly clear that what she objects to is not love between women, but the vapid expressions of devotion that cheapen that love and subject it to mockery. Using the first-person plural ("we"), which aligns her with the "Sisters of Heaven" whom she addresses, she calls for greater restraint and technical

⁵² According to the OED, the earliest attributed use of "beard" in this sense is 1972, but *Caselli's Dictionary of Slang* posits a date of origin in the 1960s and *The Routledge Dictionary of Modern Slang* offers a still earlier date, 1956. There is, as yet, no consensus as to when precisely the term entered common usage in the United States. The concept of a fictitious relationship intended to disguise the sexual orientation of one or both of its participants, or even a marriage of convenience between gay members of the opposite sex, is much older, and examples of these types of arrangements could be found among British and American expatriates living in Paris during the 1920s and 1930s. For instance, Winifred ("Bryher") Ellerman's marriages of convenience to Robert McAlmon (1921-27) and Kenneth MacPherson (1927-47) took place during her long-term romantic relationship with H.D. and gave both men license to continue their affairs with other men.

skill in the crafting of lesbian love poetry, or barring these at least a form "as fitting to the thing it covers as an Infant's Cap, which even when frilled to the very frontal bone . . . is somewhat of a Head's proportion, nor flows and drips away and adown, as if it were no Covering for a probability" (42-3). The repeated emphasis on "covering" and concealment picks up the sense of "Beards" as false fronts and advances the idea that the "sweet to sickness" tone of these paeans may actually be a protective strategy, a method of repelling anyone hostile to the sentiments concealed therein or of catching them "like a trapped Fly" wriggling in "the Gum of Love!" (46). In light of the narrator's lesbian allegiances, "Our own Journals" may, therefore, be interpreted as a Sapphic corollary to *The Yellow Book* wherein it is possible to discern how "a Maid goes at a Maid" beneath the thin veneer of heterosexual address (43).

The metaphor of the "Infant's Cap" conveys anxiety that indulging in baby-talk may appear to corroborate Ellis's assertion that "inverts" exhibit marked signs of infantilism, often "approaching the child type" (172), as well as Freud's belief that homosexuality results from incomplete psychosexual development. Rather than unwittingly advancing the theory that lesbians suffer from arrested development, she urges her Treacle-loving, "mid-mauve" sisters to step out from behind their "Beards" and to state their love for women plainly, arguing "it would loom the bigger if stripped of its Jangle" (46). Frankness about one's sexual orientation does not, however, preclude the witty wordplay characteristic of Barnes's own enigmatic aesthetic; indeed, one of the narrator's chief grievances against the current, "Cherub-bound" state of lesbian poetics is its lack of proportion or sense of humor (45). Disgusted by rhetoric that renders the love between women sickeningly precious, she diagnoses it as "gruesomely unmindful of Reason or Sense, to say nothing of Humor" and prescribes "a Seed of the fit on which to sneeze themselves into the fitting" (46). Barnes hints that there is no form more "fitting" to the articulation of queer

desires than her own riddling aesthetic, which restores the original sense of the verb "to queer" (i.e., "to puzzle, flummox, confound, baffle" [OED]) by presenting the reader with perplexing puzzles that defy definitive explanation. Forced into a position of uncertainty that mirrors the experiences of women "born with a difference," the reader must interpret a barrage of signs, some of them conflicting, in an effort to make sense of the text. In this way Barnes queers the reader, translating ontological uncertainty for a heterosexual audience and breaking down the barrier between gay and straight through the shared sensation of being as "riddled as a Medlar" (33). Just as Musset's protégé Tuck bewails her inability to differentiate between a "blind Alley" and a "Boulevard" while hunting the non-committal Bess, the reader is bound to make interpretive errors that will leave her feeling equally uneasy and likely to concur with Tuck that "Sign-Posts never serve for anything but unsettling my Mind!" (38).

"Riddle Me This, or Meddle Me That"

Barnes's prose becomes even more impenetrable, verging on incomprehensibility in September's "Spring Fevers, Love Philters and Winter Feasts" when the narrator speculates about the loves between women that have gone undocumented in both pagan and Christian contexts. Here too, riddles play an explicit role in Barnes's exploration of lesbian sexuality and alternative histories. After discussing love potions and other magical aids that "Maidens all forlorn in the tatters of Love's hope" use to secure their beloved's affection, the narrator sagely concludes "the more Peels spilt over Shoulder the more spelled of a Girl. And saying riddle me this, or meddle me that, contriving the Potion as ever you may, hiccup hic jacet, brings up nothing but naught with a Dear on its back" (70). Peeling an apple and throwing the paring over your left shoulder was a popular and very old folk method of divining the first letter of one's future husband's name. In an unexpected and humorous twist, Barnes affirms the predictive power of this

superstitious practice as a means of undermining the heterosexual assumptions behind it. No matter how many times a woman "born with a Difference" tosses a peel over her shoulder, she remains "spelled of a Girl" in two senses of the word—bewitched by members of the female sex and each successive peel spells out the first letter of a girl's name, not that of a potential husband. The enigmatic second line is a riddle itself, one that culminates in a paradox: how can nothing have something on its back? The simplest answer is that it only *appears* to be nothing since if "naught" possesses a "back" it is by definition aught. On one level, this demonstrates yet again that the absence of evidence is not proof of absence; that is, just because same-sex loves remain undocumented (a zero, or "naught") in existing records is insufficient cause to conclude that they never occurred. On the contrary, the "naught" is a placeholder that attests to the likelihood of a concealed presence—a "naught" is a "cipher" after all—and the potentiality that the gap it represents in historical records will one day be filled.

Barnes also enters into extremely contentious philosophical ground by alluding to Parmenides's famous dicta *ex nihilo nihil fit*, "out of nothing comes nothing," which ancient philosophers and medieval theologians alike treated as axiomatic when pondering the origins of existence (Davis 68). Parmenides reasoned that since nothing comes from nothing, and nothingness is not the current state of being, "what is is uncreated and indestructible" whereas Aquinas and other supporters of the theory of *creatio ex nihilo* argued that since the lifespan of all things in nature is finite and "that which does not exist only begins to exist by something already existing," there must have been a time when "there could have been nothing in existence" and that would still be the case without the intervention of "a first mover," who set the chain of events into motion through the act that we call creation. Applying Parmenides's axiom to same-sex attraction, Barnes mounts a logical argument that uncovers the erasure of gay and lesbian

precursors, reasoning that the observable existence of individuals attracted to members of their own sex in the present proves that these desires have always existed since "nothing comes from nothing." Paying heed to the "whispers" that come from the past, Barnes offers her own enigmatic account of Sapphic desires and recounts the hidden histories obscured by "Myths Tongue-tied with Girl-talk" (70).

Concealed beneath the philosophical argument is ribald proof of the efficacy of the love potion, which produces the desired result of physical consummation ("a Dear on its back"). The theme of intermingling introduced by riddles and affirmed by the term "meddle" alerts readers to the sexual subtext. Dina Stein has observed that riddles are an "erotic" mode of discourse because they are "structured to bring the separated together, to connect the disconnected," and their suggestive yoking of unlike elements helps to explain why riddles are frequently performed at weddings (129). "Meddle" picks up the erotic connotations of "mixing" through one of its secondary meanings "to have sexual intercourse with" (OED). As the lovesick "Maiden" stirs the ingredients of the potion together, rhythmically blending them, she performs a type of sympathetic magic that anticipates the fusing of her body with that of her would-be lover. Once the recipient consumes the potion, she "hiccups" and falls on her back (the literal meaning of *hic jacet*, or "here lies") ready to enjoy the delights of the little death (as suggested by the funereal connotations of *hic jacet* as epitaph). The narrator reminds us that these pleasures will be shared solely between women through a playful reference to the absence of the phallus—the potion "brings up nothing," but that does not seem to trouble either the "Dear on [her] back" or the "meddler" who has "contrived" to put her in that position!

Nevertheless, this veiled account of female intimacy is not completely celebratory because it acknowledges that there is no place for women in received histories beyond the

placeholder "naught." Indeed, the narrator becomes so frustrated by this state of affairs that she cries out "Were all Giants' doings a Man's"? (70). If, like Bounding Bess, a woman uncritically accepts narratives of the past constructed by adherents of female inferiority, then she will "add herself up to an impossible Zero, and so come to her Death of that premeditated Accuracy" (37-8). It is precisely because Bess is "grand at History" and preoccupied with "minor Details that went as far back as Rome" that she fails to discern that the authorities she cites—Spinoza and Darwin—would not take her seriously regardless of her choice of "Mount" (i.e., sexual orientation) or how knowledgeably she can converse about "the Destiny of Nations" (32-3).⁵³ Instead, they would find her "wanting" based purely upon her biological sex, and therefore her prevarication about whether submitting to her desire for Miss Spiritus would make her appear "witless" is beside the point (32). Through Bess's negative example, the text warns that women must weigh the "exact and enduring Knowledge" presented to them as "Facts" with an eye to what it omits: the "Crumb [left] untabulated" and the "unfathomed Mystery" indicative of alternative traditions (37).

Barnes participates in a rival historical tradition, one that is fragmentary and difficult to pin down because it has been transmitted orally from one woman to the next in the coded language and conspiratorial setting of the *tête-à-tête*. In honor of its secrecy and abiding by its

⁵³ In his final work, *Tractatus Politicus (A Political Treatise)* published posthumously in 1677, Spinoza excludes women from politics "due to their weakness," arguing that "women have not the same rights as men by nature, but are necessarily inferior to them" based upon the faulty syllogism that if women had "equal strength of mind and intellectual ability," then they would have ruled over man and not vice versa (qtd. in Gullan Whur 93-4). Almost a century later, Darwin likewise mistook custom for a biological mandate in *The Descent of Man* (1871). While discussing the "mental powers of man and woman," Darwin maintains that men achieve "higher eminence" than women in all fields due to their superior intellects. In his view, the combined pressures of natural selection and sexual selection have enhanced the intellectual abilities of men so greatly that not only have they "become superior to women," but the disparity between the sexes would be even more pronounced had not the "law of the equal transmission of characters to both sexes" prevailed. He adds grimly, "otherwise it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to woman, as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to the peahen" (313). Given these inflammatory remarks, it is not surprising that the very mention of *The Descent of Man* causes the ladies of the *Almanack* to "shudder" and Tuck to hiss "I will have nothing to do with [it], here or then!" (37).

rules, the narrator broaches the topic of women's hidden histories in a guarded fashion by asking six consecutive questions. The first gestures toward the vast geo-temporal distribution of women "born with a difference" by inquiring "Was there a whisper of Ellen or Mary, of Rachel or Gretchen, of Tao or Hedda or Bellorinabella y Bellorella, or Tancred of Injen in the Old Winds, or of Wives whispering a thing to a Wife?" (70). Rattling off the names in pairs, rather than presenting them as a continuous list, creates the impression of romantic couples, and fuels the suspicion that the "whispers" about these women pertain to their sexuality. The names themselves have been drawn from all over the world—Rachel is Hebrew, Gretchen is German, Tao is Chinese, Hedda is Scandinavian, and Bellorinabella is Italianate—and their geographical range corresponds with Musset's catalogue of the many nationalities upon whom she has honed her craft, since, according to her proud boast, she has "learned on the Bodies of all Women, all Customs" and "all Nations" have "given up their Secrets" to her (35). Tancred is traditionally a man's name and its addition to the list disrupts the seemingly homogenous grouping, yet the Italian names that Barnes has invented also blend masculine ("bello") and feminine elements ("ella") in defiance of the binary logic of categorization. The subsequent line confirms that this riddle-like mixing of disparate elements represents a calculated repudiation of the norms of classification when the narrator inquires "What's in a name before Christ?" (70). Drawing upon Juliet's famous speech, she interrogates the divisive practice of labeling and emphasizes the tragic consequences of divvying up humanity into opposing groups. Lurking in the background of this discussion of the arbitrariness of naming is the fact that sexologists had recently coined the terms "lesbian" and "Sapphism" in order to delimit a class of women based upon their sexual preferences—the first attributed use of both terms appears in medical literature written in 1890—and this medicalization of human sexuality firmly locates same-sex attraction within the realm of

pathology (OED). The pathological residue adhering to the term "lesbian" helps to explain why Barnes uses it only once in the entirety of *Ladies Almanack* as does her opposition to the hard and fast method of classification that it represents. While not a word of "a Miss with her Missus" may be preserved in narratives written after Christianity proscribed the practice, she suggests that much greater latitude existed in the distant past (B.C.) and news of these doings carry on the "Old Winds" where, in a suggestive and ongoing conflation of oral literature with oral sex, "In Cave's Mouth it was bruited as Love-by-a-hair" (70). In short, she urges her fellow "Sisters of Heaven" not to be troubled by a name which, to quote Juliet, "is no part of thee" and to find comfort in their own traditions since "That which we call a rose/ By any other word would smell as sweet" (2.2.43-4).

"Lists and Likelihoods" and "The Fourth Great Moment of History"

As a chronicler, Barnes differs substantially from even the most well-intended sexologists, such as Ulrichs and Hirschfeld, who made confident assertions about the sexual orientation of historical figures based upon flimsy or inadequate evidence. In his massive tome *The Homosexuality of Men and Women* (1914), Hirschfeld lists the names of several hundred individuals from antiquity to the present (excluding living persons) whom he asserts were "without a doubt homosexual" in an effort to demonstrate that "Urningdom has played a much greater role in world history than we think" (739, 772). Appealing to the self-interest of his readers, he pleads for equal rights for homosexuals, maintaining "this list alone is sufficient" to prove that any nation that "takes the opportunities of development away from persons with same-sex feelings, causes injury to itself" (748). Unfortunately, Hirschfeld's catalogue suffers from a tendency that he criticized in the work of his fellow sexologists, namely "he was quick to claim earlier historical figures as homosexual or lesbians without much evidence" (Bullough 13).

Hirschfeld reluctantly included Ulrichs—the man whom he respected so greatly that he made a pilgrimage to his gravesite in Italy in 1909—among those sexologists that he believed "identify many names without support for their reasons" (Kennedy 255; Hirschfeld 749).

Ulrichs became something of a whipping boy for Hirschfeld's colleague Iwan Bloch, the German dermatologist hailed as the "father of sexology" due to his pioneering efforts to professionalize the discipline during the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁵⁴ Although Ulrichs had died in 1895, Bloch regarded his continuing influence as a roadblock to sexology's acceptance as a serious science, and he regularly made vituperative comments about Ulrichs and his "uncritical theories" in his early writings. Bloch accused Ulrichs of having "inaugurated" the "mania" for claiming historical figures as homosexuals, and he derided the lengths to which this "literary intermediate-hunting" would go by sarcastically observing "If a great thinker has remained unmarried and not been especially fond of the ladies, then he must necessarily have been an intermediate" (*Anthropological* 212). Although Bloch was unjustly critical of Ulrichs, he correctly pinpoints a weakness in his predecessor's thinking, the tendency to treat sentiments expressed in works of literature as "confessions of homosexuality" on the part of the author (212). Ironically, neither man was cognizant of the equally pronounced tendency in their works, common among sexologists of the period, to diagnose strong women in a position of power as lesbian, bisexual, or inverted due to their "masculine" attributes.

⁵⁴ Bloch co-founded the *Ärztliche Gesellschaft für Sexualwissenschaft und Eugenik* (Medical Society for Sexual Science and Eugenics) with Hirschfeld and Albert Eulenburg (among others) in Berlin in 1913. The Society revived Hirschfeld's short-lived *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* (1908), the first journal dedicated to the study of sexology, as its official organ under the editorship of Bloch and Eulenburg. Bloch also planned to publish a series of monographs written by leading sexologists that would offer a comprehensive overview of their field of study entitled *Handbuch der Gesamten Sexualwissenschaft in Einzeldarstellungen* (Handbook of the Complete Science of Sexuality in Single Volumes) of which only three volumes were completed—Bloch's *Die Prostitution* (Prostitution) in two volumes (vol. I: 1912, Vol. II: published posthumously in 1925) and Hirschfeld's *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (The Homosexuality of Men and Women) [1914, 1919]—due to Bloch's sudden death in 1922.

Barnes avoids the pitfalls entered into by both Hirschfeld and Ulrichs by repeatedly stressing the "probability" or "likelihood" that the historical figures she names were "Sisters of Heaven" rather than unequivocally declaring their membership in the lesbian fold. She counters Hirschfeld's exhaustive list with a poem entitled "Lists and Likelihoods," which concludes the September section of *Ladies Almanack*. Written in iambic tetrameter, the poem introduces eleven individuals (predominately women) drawn from a wide variety of occupations, ranging from "doxy" to "Queen," with equally disparate physical appearances; some possess a delicate, childlike beauty, others are as sleek and seductive as a "panther," while still others, like the "humpback Jester" and conjoined twins "in one Sash tied," verge on the grotesque. Although the final example of "The Queen, who in the Night turned down / The spikes of her Husband's Crown / Therein to sit her Wench of Bliss" strongly hints that the unifying feature of this extremely varied list is attraction to members of the same sex, Barnes refuses to say so explicitly or to specify what precisely these individuals evince a "likelihood" toward since doing so would amount to much the same thing. She utilizes this tactic to similar effect at the end of August when High-Head offers a nearly identical catalogue of the types of women who abandon "their Posts," explaining to her partner Low-Heel that they are "some of all sorts" and come "from Kings' Thrones and Clerks' Stools, from high Life and from low" (54). Despite her evasiveness, here too, the cagey reader has little doubt that "such women" forsake the marital bed (their "posts") and join the opposing "army" in order to taste the delights offered in "that wide Acre, where beside some brawling March, the first of shes turned up a Hem with the Hand of combat" (54). This teasingly indirect and evasive method of reasserting the Sapphic lineage denied by Krafft-Ebing and masculinized by Ellis enables Barnes to pay tribute to the anonymous hordes of women (from the "first of shes" onward) who have loved women, to poach historical figures that

have been traditionally depicted as heterosexuals, and to reclaim lesbians, like Sappho, who have been rendered normative to suit the whims of the current cultural climate.

Catherine the Great, St. Theresa, Messalina, the Queen of Sheba, and Queen Anne are just a few of the prominent women from world history whose names Barnes invokes in *Ladies Almanack*. While the examples could be multiplied, we will focus on how Barnes portrays four representative figures: Priscilla, the patron saint of good marriages; the Queen of Sheba and her encounter with Jezebel during "the fourth great Moment of History;" and Sappho, the only historical figure to be mentioned twice in the text (41). Given Barnes's efforts to reinvest women "born with a Difference" with the enigmatic qualities denied them by sexologists professing to have solved the "riddle" of their same-sex desires, it is no coincidence that many of the women she reclaims are riddlers in their own right and their riddles frequently pertain to female creativity or female artistry.

Although not a riddler herself, Priscilla appears amidst the highly coded, nearly unintelligible "chronicle" of lesbian history that occupies September's "Spring Fevers, Love Philters, and Winter Feasts." The narrator recalls a rumor carried on a "grass Breeze" and "forgotten by all but the Blood-hounds of deduction, that Priscilla herself was prone to a Distaff, and garbled her John for her Jenny in Cupboard would get no Dog a Bone" (71). Priscilla and her husband Aquila were important members of the early Christian church lauded by Paul for their missionary work and devotion to the faith. In each of the four books of the New Testament where they are mentioned, the couple's names always appear together, emphasizing their unity and equal partnership. As a unique indication of the great respect with which Priscilla was held in a male-dominated culture, she is generally listed first (Trebilco 113). Barnes's version of events converts Priscilla into a disciple for a different cause, suggesting that the patron saint of

good marriages harbored lesbian inclinations ("prone to a Distaff") and acted upon them covertly in what may be a very early reference to closeted sexuality. The "skeleton" in Priscilla's closet is a living, breathing woman who takes Aquila's place in a secret rendezvous in an empty "Cupboard." Rather than inadvertently confusing "her John for her Jenny," Priscilla chooses her female companion over her husband—to garble is "to select"—and, in a second play on words, she "scrambles" the signal in order to throw the "Blood-hounds of deduction" off the scent (OED). Barnes insinuates that the marriage held up as exemplary in the Christian faith was nothing more than a smoke screen, a convenient method for Priscilla to secure honor and status while indulging her "Distaff" inclinations. Priscilla's attraction to women is couched in language that links female sexuality and artistry, and aligns her with the riddlers Sheba and Sappho. The "Distaff" is a "cleft staff" used to hold wool or flax during spinning, and its crude resemblance to female genitalia as well as the fact that spinning was traditionally women's work led to the term becoming synonymous with the female sex by Chaucer's time (OED). It is especially fitting, then, that Priscilla indulges her "Distaff" desires in the quintessentially domestic space of the "Cupboard," and while percussive knocking sounds may result, it will not be because either woman's "Old Man" is playing "knick-knack paddywhack." Instead, when Aquila comes "rolling home," Priscilla will be the one to play "knick-knack" in its traditional sense by "tricking" and "dodging" her husband using a "clever expedient" (OED).

The romance between Priscilla and "her Jenny" provides a concrete example of "Wives whispering a thing to a Wife," but not all of the embraces that Barnes recounts have been stolen, nor the bonds between women necessarily non-monogamous. As a case in point, Doll tells Musset the parable of "The Fourth Great Moment of History," which occurred when the merest glimpse of the Queen of Sheba convinced "that flighty forthright" Jezebel to give up her

philandering ways (41). Engaged in her favorite pastime of "angling from her Window" and propositioning the many "Kings that way wending to War and to Death," Jezebel calls out her customary 'Uoo Hoo!'" just as the Queen of Sheba passes beneath her (41). Without offering any further details of their encounter, Doll enigmatically concludes, "*And that was Jezebel's last 'Uoo Hoo!'"* (41, original emphasis). Part queer love story and cautionary tale, Doll's account of the meeting between these notorious biblical queens blends sex with the threat of violence in an effort to tame Musset's own wandering eye. In order to unravel the riddle of what precisely transpired between the queens, especially given the ominous news that it was Jezebel's last such greeting, one must be cognizant of the circumstances attending Jezebel's death in the biblical account and read between the lines of the frame story. According to 2 Kings 9:30-7, Jezebel's own eunuchs threw the disgraced queen from her window at the command of her son's murderer, the future king Jehu, and her corpse was trampled by horses and consumed by dogs in the street while he feasted in the palace. The extraordinary cruelty of this callous act belies a purely romantic reading of Doll's tale in which the famed riddler Sheba seduces Jezebel without uttering a single word, and Jezebel finds such contentment and satiety in the arms of her new lover that she never desires to return to her window again. Instead, the continued resonance of the biblical narrative to Doll's retelling suggests that Sheba uses coercion or the threat of violence to ensure Jezebel's loyalty—the promise of making good on her death by defenestration—just as Doll attempts to curb Musset's profligate ways through veiled threats. Doll makes the connections between her parable and their lives explicit by warning Musset to pay heed to her words for "though I be neither good Sheba nor you good Jezebel, we are exactly lesser" (41).

By harnessing the "aggressive" energy of riddles to reprove her lover, Doll draws attention to the menacing aspect of riddling, which threatens to overturn the established order by

undermining the classificatory system upon which that order rests (Stein 128). In Jewish and Arabic traditions alike, the Queen of Sheba was regarded as "a threatening force: erotic, demonic, [and] chaotic" because she deviates from prescribed female behavior by coming to Solomon of her own accord and presuming to test his knowledge against her own. In so doing, "she breaks through the normative categories in a manner similar to the riddles she poses" (Stein 133-4). Although biblical reports of Sheba's visit to Solomon's court do not specify the content of her riddles, only indicating that she "test[ed] him with hard questions" (1 Kings 10:1; 2 Chronicles 9:1), the Midrash on Proverbs provides a detailed account of the four riddles the wise queen put to the King of Israel. As Tamar Kadari has noted, the unifying feature of these riddles is their concern with gender and sexuality. Without going into too much detail here, the Queen of Sheba's wisdom is tied to a gendered way of seeing, one that validates female perspectives and experiences. Her first riddle ("Seven exit and nine enter, two pour and one drinks") pertains to the female reproductive cycle and tests Solomon's knowledge of matters normally outside of masculine purview while the third exposes cultural pressures imposed upon children to inhabit clearly defined gender norms (e.g., female modesty and bashfulness). As Dina Stein astutely observes, the Queen of Sheba represents "an alternative order" and her riddles serve as "threatening ammunition" against Solomon because they offer "a different way of categorizing" that denaturalizes the patriarchal system over which he presides by pointing to its arbitrariness (133, 5). Doll's reimagining of Sheba makes her even more dangerous by rendering her impervious to Solomon's romantic overtures: this Sheba cannot be tamed or subdued through marriage to him—at least two separate traditions hold that Solomon married Sheba and she bore him a son—and she must be bested using purely intellectual means. No mere pawn in a narrative designed to magnify the wisdom of the Israelite king and the greatness of his God, she is free to

do as she pleases and it is this autonomy that makes her appear "demonic" in a system where women are defined by their relationships to men. An exception to the rule herself, Sheba arrives in Jerusalem not as a wife, mother, or sister—the very roles that her second riddle calls into question by citing the case of the daughters of Lot—but as a queen regnant, so confident in her wisdom that she challenges the Israelite king to a battle of wits on his own turf. Doll's narrative helps to explain why Sheba reigns in her own right: a fellow queen, not a king waits for her at home.

Just as riddles fuse seemingly incompatible or even directly opposed categories, Barnes's four "great Moment[s] of History" reveal that many of the narratives we have come to accept as truthful accounts of the past blend fact with fiction, and thus should more accurately be classed as legends. By naming Doll's tale the "fourth great Moment of History," Barnes slyly alludes to her novel *Ryder* (1928), published earlier that same year, in which Dr. Matthew O'Connor narrates "Three Great Moments of History" with his usual panache. The first of these recasts Cleopatra's suicide as the result of weariness with Antony and maternal tenderness for the asp; the second refers to the confrontation between Barbara Fritchie and Stonewall Jackson on his way to the battle of Antietam; and the third recounts the circumstances of General Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House. What these three events share in common, beyond the sexually charged manner of their telling, is that the stories told about them are generally believed to be true even though there is good reason to doubt their validity. The manner of Cleopatra's death has been a topic of debate since ancient times. Greek sources, beginning with Strabo, emphasize the "mystery surrounding her death" and offer two theories about how it may have occurred: death by asp bite (with the number of asps and location of the wounds varying) or by poisoned implement, such as a comb or hairpin (Tronson 41). In his

excellent article "Vergil, the Augustans, and the Invention of Cleopatra's Suicide: One Asp or Two?" Adrian Tronson demonstrates, through elegant analysis of the extant classical sources, that the "fundamental cultural myth" of Cleopatra's suicide by asp(s) is the product of Augustus's propaganda machine, which eliminated the alternative theory proposed by the Greeks in order to create "a political myth favorable to Octavian," one that enabled him to appear magnanimous after the death of his defeated, captive enemy (38).

Although far removed in time and place from first century BCE Alexandria, the inspiring tale of the elderly Barbara Fritchie patriotically waving the Union flag in defiance at the passing rebel general also clearly served political ends. The authenticity of the account made famous by John Greenleaf Whittier's poem "Barbara Fritchie" (1863) quickly came under fire when certain inconsistencies, including the fact that Jackson's route never took him past her house, became public knowledge (Blank and Puglia 137). Despite Whittier's repeated protestations that "the story was no invention of mine. It came to me from sources which I regard as entirely reliable," an "animated and prolonged controversy" about its veracity ensued in which Confederate officers, local historians, and women claiming to be the "real" flag-waving heroine picked apart his version of events (Pickard 456, 459). Scholars now generally agree that the dramatic confrontation between Fritchie and Jackson never occurred, although a similar incident took place involving a young schoolteacher by the name of Mary Quantrell and her daughter, both of whom bravely waved Old Glory at an impassive Stonewall. Yet, as one nineteenth-century critic of the Fritchie legend drily remarked, since "Mrs. Quantrell was not fortunate [enough] to find a poet to celebrate her deed *she* never became famous" (Seilheimer 618-19, emphasis added).

While the Fritchie legend garnered support for the Union cause during the height of the fighting, another potent and hotly contested piece of Civil War propaganda involving Lee's

surrender forms the third "great moment of History." Clearly influenced by the rumors that Grant arrived at the peace settlement wearing a muddy uniform, O'Connor dubs him "a kind of old sow" and throws his support behind the elegantly attired Lee, who prepares to surrender his sword with the bearing of a gentleman as a token of his defeat (231). However, the actual presentation of the blade, ostensibly an act of submission, takes on a defiant edge in O'Connor's telling that Confederate supporters would rally behind. When he hands Grant his unsheathed sword hilt-first, as etiquette demands, Lee suggestively remarks "'You know what you can do with this, don't you?'" (231). In reality, no such exchange occurred, but the rumor that Lee had offered his sword and Grant refused to accept it circulated widely after the war and drew ire from many Southerners who believed that it was nothing more than Northern propaganda designed to enhance the reputation of "the great, heroic, magnanimous Grant" (qtd. in Conway 159). One Confederate veteran railed that it was "a story without any particle of foundation in fact and utterly unreasonable," given the terms of the surrender, which permitted Confederate officers to retain their side arms, and angry letters citing Lee's statement that Grant "did not touch my sword" poured into newspapers for decades (Conway 159; F. Lee 398). Ironically, it was Grant himself who finally set the record straight by categorically denying the rumors. In his *Personal Memoirs* (1885-6), he writes, "the much talked of surrendering of Lee's sword and my handing it back, this and much more that has been said about it is the purest romance. The word sword or side arms was not mentioned by either one of us . . ." (434). In the third "great moment of History," O'Connor has deftly respun a notorious piece of Union propaganda into a celebration of Lee's unbreakable spirit well-suited to Confederate tastes, demonstrating just how easily legendary events can be co-opted by either side and invested with the force and authority of history.

By highlighting the fictive content present in each of the four moments of "History," Barnes reminds us that truth and history are not synonymous. Histories are necessarily selective accounts, and the version of the past that they manufacture is prone to various types of distortion, ranging from oversimplification to willful misrepresentation. Filtered through a human conduit who selects the facts, interprets them, and moulds the narrative into a definite shape, histories advance agendas whether the author is cognizant of them or not. Even the most scrupulous chroniclers cannot eliminate personal bias completely or divorce themselves from the cultural climate in which they live; consequently, the histories they produce not only reflect, but also reinscribe the values of the time and place of their composition. Despite the greater cachet accorded history than fiction, histories are at root stories (as the suffix indicates) of the past and they bear much more in common with their less vaunted cousin than we might want to admit. Barnes hints that it is not the factuality of these moments of history that makes them "great," but the artistry of their telling. Like the riddles she prizes, Barnes's four "great moments of History" force us to confront the fact that the strict separation between truth and lies, history and fiction is itself illusory. These seemingly discrete categories are in reality thoroughly mixed. Yet, until history loses its privileged position, it will remain necessary to contest the veracity of received accounts of the past by making visible what they have omitted, obscured, or otherwise distorted.

One such victim of distortion whom Barnes recuperates is Sappho herself. Although translators have recast lyrical expressions of same-sex love in heterosexual guise for centuries, Sappho is arguably the most prominent figure to have been subjected to recurring efforts to render both her works and her sexuality normative throughout the ages.⁵⁵ As early as the fourth

⁵⁵ Efforts to render Sappho normative co-exist alongside and are likely reactions against depictions of her as the embodiment of lesbian excess, a "monstrous" tribade. See Harriette Andreadis's "The Sappho Tradition" for a

century BCE when writers of Greek Middle Comedy concocted the legend of the Leucadian leap in which Sappho, consumed by unrequited love for the youth Phaon, renounces the love of women and jumps to her death, the "tenth Muse" has been depicted as a heterosexual, replete with a husband and daughter (Kleïs) in some versions. In the modern era, efforts to sanitize Sappho reached a pinnacle in response to her adoption as the "patron saint" of lesbians living in Europe during the fin-de-siècle and early twentieth century (Reynolds 294-7). Harriette Andreadis attributes Natalie Barney and Pierre Louÿs with jointly inaugurating the "twentieth century's popular understanding of Sappho as a lesbian poet," and credits Barney's pioneering efforts both as a writer and *salonnière* for establishing the tradition of Sappho as "a proto-lesbian foremother" (27).⁵⁶ While Natalie Barney recreated Mytilene under the watchful eyes of a bust of Sappho in her Parisian garden, crusaders for the "clean-up-Sappho brigade," led by J.M.F. Bascoul and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, dug up an old theory, first proposed by Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker in 1816, that explained away Sappho's passionate devotion to girls by arguing that she was their "chaste" schoolmistress (Reynolds 295). Despite Havelock Ellis's assertion that this "antiquated view" of the poetess was on the wane by 1915, and "most competent and reliable authorities" no longer doubted the "homosexual character of her poems," scholarly monographs proclaiming Sappho's chastity continued to be published throughout the

succinct account of four of the most enduring guises under which the poetess has been brought before the public, ranging from emblem of "female poetic excellence" to "suicidal abandoned woman" (18).

⁵⁶ Sappho inspired many of Barney's artistic choices and inspired her efforts to form a woman-centered community of writers and artists in Paris. As a small sampling of her sustained interest in Sappho: Barney learned Greek in order to read Sappho's poems in their original language; published *Cinq petits dialogues grecs* in 1902; made a pilgrimage to Lesbos with her lover and fellow Sappho aficionado Renée Vivien in 1904; and scripted *Équivoque*, a play in which she defended her idol against charges of heterosexuality by depicting an inconsolable Sappho leaping to her death, not out of love for Phaon, but for the woman he had stolen from her (Rodriguez 90, 204).

1920s and the schoolmistress theory retains traction to this day (Ellis 198).⁵⁷ The fact that Sappho was a contested figure at the beginning of the twentieth century makes it all the more significant that in both instances that she appears in *Ladies Almanack* it is unequivocally as a lesbian.

Sappho first crops up in *Ladies Almanack* as one of the "great Women in History" whom Bounding Bess invokes when trying to decide whether or not to pursue Miss Spiritus (32). Musing aloud, Bess asks "was not Sappho herself, though given to singing over the limp Bodies of Girls like any noisy Nightingale, nevertheless held in great Respect by the philosophers of her time?" (ibid). The somewhat disparaging characterization of Sappho as a "noisy Nightingale" reflects Bess's conflicted feelings about her own sexuality, but also alludes to the tale of Tereus and Philomela. After having been raped and mutilated by her brother-in-law, the captive Philomela manages to communicate her plight to her sister Procne in a tapestry woven by her own hands. The message, delivered to the queen by an old woman, was immediately understood, and the sisters exacted their bloody revenge upon the man that had deceived them both. In this meta moment, Barnes, who identified with the nightingale because her own initiation into sexuality had been through a rape sanctioned by her father, hints that her text, like Philomela's tapestry, contains hidden messages that only a female audience can discern.⁵⁸ Picking up on the resemblance of the colors of Philomela's tapestry as described in Ovid's account—the imperial purple woven upon a pure white background—to ink on paper, Barnes transforms the "inviolable

⁵⁷ In his recent translation, *Stung with Love: Poems and Fragments* (2009), Aaron Poochigian observes that modern scholarship remains divided on the matter of the "nature of Sappho's group" (xv). While "some scholars accept the traditional 'school' interpretation," others, such as Holt N. Parker, have offered vigorous arguments against it (xv, xix). Poochigian concludes that "If we must speak of a 'school' at all, it more resembled a finishing school and conservatory than a boarding school" (xxi). See Parker's "Sappho Schoolmistress" in *Re-Reading Sappho: Reception and Transmission* (1996).

⁵⁸ Phillip Herring has written about the conflicting stories Barnes told about her rape and how that incident informed her late play *The Antiphon* in his *Djuna: The Life and Work of Djuna Barnes*. See especially pages 53 and 267-272.

voice" of the nightingale into a textual one. Her allusion to Philomela offers a template for the reader to make sense of the repeated references to weaving ("distaff," "webbed and threaded," "much turning of the spindle," and etc.) and the "twittering" speech of birds present throughout *Ladies Almanack*, binding them together into a potent symbol of female resistance, the nightingale, whose "Shuttle threads Trouble to a Purpose" (58). What is more, Barnes traces the origins of female artistry as a form of resistance to Sappho herself, whose poetic lamentations over the "limp Bodies of Girls" are not chaste, spiritual effusions (as Welcker would have it), but decidedly corporeal ones (as indicated by the capitalization of "Bodies"), and the noisiness of her song a testament to her unconcern whether her feelings will be overheard by others. In contrast to the high-spirited Sappho, warbling her love for all to hear, Bess craves the "Respect" of the "philosophers," and it is this desire for masculine approval that renders her, in Musset's words, "not for us!" (33).

Sappho re-emerges in the final love potion of the extraordinarily difficult "Spring Fevers, Love Philters and Winter Feasts." Having declared all remedies for suppressing desire, ranging from eating cooling "Winter lettuce" to acts of religious devotion to be futile, the narrator offers an outrageous recipe for securing one's lady love. Six steps into the lengthy preparation, she instructs the reader to "cast a peep of No-Doubting-Sappho, blinked from the Stews of Secret Greek Broth, and some Rennet of Lesbos to force a get-up in the near Resurrection" over the mixture then once "the Mass bubbles and at the River's lip quivers, call it dear Cyprian, and take her under your Wing on the warm side, and but her no buts!" (72-3). Written in dense, highly allusive prose, this recipe is a riddle in its own right, and following it to the letter would be nearly impossible, not that anyone in their right mind would ever attempt to do so since Barnes's bent is clearly parodic. We are supposed to laugh at the sheer ridiculousness of tilling six pans of

earth and placing them inside an animal skin as a means of inciting love.

Yet this seemingly nonsensical series of tasks conceals masterful wordplay that pits two different stances toward knowledge and belief systems against each other. "No-doubting-Sappho" evokes the Apostle Thomas, who refused to believe in the risen Christ until provided with both visual ("cast a peep") and tactile evidence, and establishes the Lesbian poetess in direct opposition to him, and by extension, the religious tradition that he represents. Born several centuries prior to the founding of Christianity, Sappho is the devoted servant of Aphrodite, the "dear Cyprian" whom she calls upon to aid her in her romantic endeavors and addresses in strikingly intimate terms in her poetry. Unlike the faithless Thomas, Sappho is represented as unwavering in her convictions, which as Love's devotee includes worship through lovemaking, even though she comes to us in heavily mediated form. We only ever catch glimpses of Sappho in the tattered shreds of papyrus upon which her poems were written, or in compositions by her fellow Greeks, who quote snippets of her verses and preserve precious few details of her life story. In a topical allusion to the Sappho "revival" then underway, Barnes observes that these few tidbits, made newly accessible through Wharton's English language translation, have inspired such lively interest in the once forgotten poetess that it amounts to a "near Resurrection."⁵⁹ However, by invoking the language of witchcraft, she warns that the Sapphos assembled out of the dustbin of history are a far cry from the real woman who once lived on Lesbos. Whether through envy, malice, prudery, or imaginative license, the "evil eye" has soured ("blinked") the pure "Mare's milk" of Lesbos, curdling it and forming "Rennet." Each new

⁵⁹ Henry Thornton Wharton's *Sappho: Memoir, Text, Selected Renderings, and a Literal Translation* (1885) offered easy to read English translations of all of the surviving fragments and helped to usher in a Sappho revival among the general public, who were not equipped to read the difficult Aeolic dialect in which she wrote (Reynolds 290). Although he subscribed to Welcker's theory of a "chaste" Sappho, Wharton did not attempt to conceal the homoerotic content of the poems by substituting masculine pronouns for female ones. Natalie Barney purchased Wharton's volume in the fall of 1900, and it was his translation that inspired her to learn Greek (Rodriguez 119).

translation casts the pieces of Sappho's corpse/corpus into a "Stew," seasoned to the scholar's taste and fed to a public as blithely unaware of the deception as Tereus was when he consumed the cannibalistic meal prepared for him by Procne and Philomela. Against the need for certainty represented by Thomas's ghoulish probing of Christ's wounds, Barnes argues that it is the profound mystery enveloping Sappho that imbues her with power. Even if it were possible to raise the historical woman from her grave at this distant remove, turning the full glare of the empiricist's eye upon her would be to corrupt by laying bare that which should remain concealed. Instead of attempting to reconstruct an unrecoverable past and gracing the largely fictive results with the mantle of history, Barnes's complex dialogue with Sappho's poetry hints that the best way to honor the "tenth muse" is to permit her many mysteries to inspire new works of art.⁶⁰

Perhaps because she herself was an "enigma" to the ancient world, a highly regarded poetess about whom next to nothing was known, Sappho, like Sheba, has a long history of being portrayed as a riddler dating back to the fourth century BCE. In the only surviving fragment of the play *Sappho* by Antiphanes, the poetess poses a riddle about writing's ability to give voice to the voiceless that turns on the gender of the term *epistolē* (letter). Sappho states, "A female creature there is, who keeps her infants beneath her robes. They are voiceless, and yet their cry resounds over land and sea; they speak to whomever they will, and even those who are absent or deaf are able to hear them" (qtd. in Williamson 15). Contrary to Henry Thornton Wharton's

⁶⁰ Barnes alludes to Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite" and several of her extant fragments in the final love potion. Drawing upon the image of ladies clasping "their wings close to their bodies" for warmth in one of Sappho's fragments, Barnes depicts one woman taking another under her "Wing on the warm side," in a gesture that blends tutelage with tenderness. Just as Sappho did, she calls upon the "dear Cyprian" to assist her, and brooks no refusal to her romantic overtures. The goddess's response to the burning Sappho, "That girl will learn to love, though she do it / Against her will" fits seamlessly into this new context, and the remonstrance that concludes Barnes's chapter "Or would you less Trouble? Away Girl!" reads like an imaginative reconstruction of the stern words that prompted Sappho's doleful admission "The goddess Kypris once / disciplined me / Blaming the way I prayed" (72). While these parallels may be coincidental, it seems unlikely that textual echoes from an author mentioned by name in a given passage are mere happenstance.

assertion that this riddle is "absurd" and demonstrates how "little the Comic writers understand her genius," the riddle and its solution reveal how fully Antiphanes attended to the gender politics of Sappho's poems, many of which retell myths from a female perspective or feature goddesses who take an active sexual role (Wharton 26; Williamson 127). Riddles figured prominently in Middle Greek Comedy and Antiphanes had several such "riddle comedies" in his repertoire, yet we know that he invented the riddle spoken by Sappho rather than recycling a traditional one because "no other versions of it appear in the later collections of riddles" and the only references to it are in the context of the play (Ceccarelli 249). This is significant because not only does Antiphanes uniquely supply two solutions to the riddle, but the riddle's relevance to Sappho's own poetic legacy would not be lost on his audience during a time when her songs were making the transition from oral literature to the written word and found new life in the papyri circulating throughout the Greek world. As Yopie Prins succinctly puts it, "Sappho answers her own question, because she herself is the answer to the riddle: she too is a letter whose voiceless letters we are called upon to 'hear,' through reading" (26).

The dual (and dueling) answers to Sappho's riddle highlight tensions between masculine and feminine, public and private, and the spoken versus the written word. The old man provides a solution that neutralizes the threat posed by a "female creature" that speaks beyond the confines of the *oikos*, even exerting her influence overseas, by absorbing it into the masculine political sphere. He explains that the "female creature" is the *polis* and her "infants" are the orators as well as the "deaf and dumb" *demos*. However, Sappho points out the flaws in his logic. The old man has attempted to sidestep the paradox by attributing its conflicting attributes to two different groups, utterly failing to answer the question of how something can be "voiceless" and yet speak, silent and yet communicate. Her rejoinder, "'You've got it all wrong; how could an orator be

voiceless, old man?" also insinuates that he has ascribed silence to the improper gender.⁶¹

Women have been denied free expression, but the written word offers them access to the realm beyond the home, and perhaps more importantly, to each other. Margaret Williamson argues that Sappho's riddle suggests a means by which the bonds between mothers and daughters, typically severed through marriage in a patrilocal society, could be maintained and a "tradition of women's writing could be created," epistles (16). Sappho's solution to the riddle utilizes the imagery of pregnancy to claim writing as a quintessentially feminine form: "The female creature is a letter, and the babies she carries around inside her are the letters of the alphabet." Drawing further parallels between the medium and its female users, she depicts writing as an empowering act that permits those who "have no voice" to "chat with people far away, whomever they wish" without the worry that their intimate exchanges will be overheard. However, the term that Sappho uses in the original Greek to describe women's writing roughly translates to "small talk" or "chatter," which demeans their efforts as trite and frivolous in tacit opposition to the weighty public utterances of the orators (Ceccarelli 255-6). Sappho's own compositions, thought to rival Homer in terms of their excellence, cannot be disposed of so easily. By making her the mouthpiece for this subtle critique of women's appropriation of a powerful political instrument for gossipy personal ends, Antiphanes pits Sappho against members of her own sex and reasserts her anomalous status as "*the one* great woman poet of the world" (Wharton 1, emphasis added). Antiphanes concedes that Sappho's words are worth hearing, yet the notion that she might have equally talented female successors appears laughable to him (Williamson 15).

Two millennia later, Barnes roundly denies that Sappho's songs were the only "immortal daughters" she produced by claiming her as a literary foremother, the progenitrix of multiple

⁶¹ Except where otherwise noted, I rely upon Patricia A. Rosenmeyer's translation of the surviving fragments from Antiphanes's *Sappho* in her *Ancient Greek Literary Letters: Selections in Translation*.

strands of women's writing. In a feminist twist on Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Barnes emphatically agrees that a writer's "historical sense" should encompass "the whole of the literature of Europe," yet she pointedly counters his masculinist bias by tracing a lineage of female literary production dating to the foundations of western civilization and originating in Sappho herself. A search for our "mothers' gardens," to use Alice Walker's phrase, leads back to an enigmatic, riddling figure whose lyrical fragments launched not only a tradition of women's writing, but as the first lesbian and perhaps even first woman of color whose writings have survived, this "noisy Nightingale" "singing over the limp Bodies of Girls" is a powerful symbol of female solidarity (32).⁶²

"One Should Remain An Enigma, Even to Oneself"

With the founding of the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955, a small cadre of woman-loving women took the first step toward ushering in "the society of the Future" predicted by Pierre Louÿs in his dedication to *The Songs of Bilitis*. In conjunction with numerous other politically conscious, nationwide homophile organizations, such as The Society for Human Rights (founded in Chicago in 1924) and the Mattachine Society (founded in 1951), the Daughters of Bilitis helped to lay the groundwork for the gay liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet, in an increasingly divisive political climate, the first nationwide lesbian organization folded in 1970 when tensions between feminists who called for more militant tactics and members favoring continued partnership with male advocacy groups reached a breaking point (Gallo 293). In this fraught environment, the reclusive Djuna Barnes, who had never been particularly

⁶² Maximus of Tyre (2nd century CE) claimed that Sappho was "small and dark" (qtd. in Wharton 26). Although he lived hundreds of years after her death and nothing is known definitively about Sappho's physical appearance, the tradition that she was ugly and dark-skinned had numerous adherents. For instance, the Oxyrhynchus papyri, which brought to light new fragments of Sappho's poems, states that "she had a dark complexion and was very short" while an anonymous commentator called her "very ugly, small and dark" and likened her to "a nightingale with deformed wings" (qtd. in Barnstone 123-4).

politically savvy, found herself pursued by admiring fans that assumed the author of such lesbian classics as *Ladies Almanack* and *Nightwood* (1936) would welcome their reverent attentions. However, Barnes had grown increasingly hostile toward women in general and lesbians in particular after her return to New York city from Paris in the fall of 1939. During the final years of her life, she renounced her lesbian past entirely. Without offering excuses for the horrific homophobic and misogynistic rants with which the elderly Barnes filled the ears of those visitors granted entry into her tiny Greenwich Village apartment, situating Barnes's behavior within a biographical and political frame helps us to better understand how the author of such a joyous and playful text as *Ladies Almanack* could denounce the very love that inspired some of her greatest works of art.

While Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Natalie Barney (the latter still living in Paris in the early 1970s) would have reveled in the greater openness and pride in homosexuality fostered by the gay liberation movement in America, Djuna Barnes regarded the efforts to claim her as a lesbian author with dismay. Both Frances Doughty and Phillip Herring have argued that Barnes feared that "being classified as a 'lesbian writer'" would negatively impact her literary legacy, preventing her from achieving the recognition she craved as a great author by marginalizing her (Herring 255, Doughty 150). Barnes considered herself to be the peer of James Joyce and T.S. Eliot, and she was indignant that her texts faced ghettoization simply because she examined the human condition from the perspective of individuals on the fringes of society. What is less widely acknowledged is how the dichotomous positions embraced by many liberationists may have affected the bisexual Barnes.⁶³ During the height of the movement, bisexuals "often felt

⁶³ Although she resisted labels that sought to fix human sexuality by delimiting it to a small segment of the spectrum of its manifestations, Barnes had sexual relationships with both men and women throughout her lifetime and would

compelled to come out as gay in order to challenge compulsory heterosexuality and avoid charges that they were trying to escape the greater stigma of homosexuality" (Beemyn 142).⁶⁴ Called upon to suppress one aspect of their desiring selves for the benefit of the movement, many bisexuals experienced psychic anguish and a sense of fragmentation that Carl Wittman poignantly alludes to in his "A Gay Manifesto" (1970), writing "The reason so few of us are bisexual is because society made such a big stink about homosexuality that we got forced into seeing ourselves as either straight or non-straight. . . . [W]e'll be gay until everyone has forgotten it's an issue. Then we'll begin to be complete." His hope for a renewed sense of wholeness begins at the personal level with the bisexual individual and implicitly extends outward to encompass an increasingly polarized nation divvied up into gay and straight camps.

Barnes did not live long enough to witness the formation of the bisexual movement in the late 1980s or the adoption of "biinclusive language" as part of the gay rights platform. Instead, the dichotomous positions espoused by the more extreme liberationists ran contrary to her understanding of human sexuality as a spectrum, and she recoiled from a binary arrangement in which she would have to sacrifice one aspect of herself in order to find acceptance. Through a combination of personal and political factors, Barnes's bemusement toward her legion of lesbian admirers—best expressed by her wondering aloud to editor Fran McCullough why do "'all these lesbians keep coming around?'"—gave way to infamously vituperative denunciations of lesbian sexuality by the late 1970s (qtd. in Stimpson 372). A clue to the potential cause of this vehemence resides in Hank O'Neal's parenthetical aside about Barnes's behavior in 1978 when he

best be described as a bisexual. Frann Michel is one of very few scholars to analyze Barnes's texts in light of her bisexuality. See her excellent essay "'I just loved Thelma': Djuna Barnes and the Construction of Bisexuality."

⁶⁴ As a case in point, lesbian separatists of the late 1970s sought to redefine the term "lesbian" as "a woman who [does] not have sex with men," effectively excluding bisexuals, who had previously been welcome under the more inclusive designation of "woman-loving women" (Beemyn 143).

notes her "total intolerance for lesbians (especially the ones that bother her about it)" (360). Annoyed by their presumption, Barnes appears to have overcorrected in the opposite direction and responded to her well-intended admirers, whom she felt hounded her mercilessly about her sexual orientation, by disavowing her lesbian past altogether. Whatever her reasons, the notoriously private Barnes retreated further into her self-imposed isolation, becoming "more and more of a legend" during the final two decades of her life, so much so that she half-jokingly referred to herself as "the most famous unknown in the world" (Giroux).

Sappho sang "I declare / that later on, / Even in an age unlike our own, / Someone will remember who we are." Two, often conflicting impulses shape Barnes's life and works: the desire to be remembered and a refusal to allow herself or her characters to be defined by their sexuality. This tension between being pigeonholed and being forgotten plays out in *Ladies Almanack* through the riddle form, which is simultaneously the vehicle for re-constructing a "probablistic" Sapphic genealogy and restoring the mystery to a type of love that sexologists claimed to have demystified. Unlike Proust's Gomorrhans, or arguably even Sappho herself, who is better known for engaging in the sexual practices that now bear her name than for the exquisite snippets of song that survive her, Barnes's women "born with a Difference" are united by their shared attraction to members of the female sex, but it is hardly the sum total of their lives. The witty portraits Barnes drew of these "sisters of Heaven" highlight each woman's quirky, unique attributes. Within the pages of *Ladies Almanack* can be found the sentimental midwife/witch Masie; the pedantic Bounding Bess, given to historical monologues and "compounding Maxims;" the feisty and vain Senorita Fly-About, who refuses to shave her lovely locks for any woman, even the mighty Musset herself; the Stetson-wearing Tilly-Tweed-In-Blood and her simpering, spiritualist partner Lady Buck-and-Balk; the journalist Nip, who turns a blind eye to

her lover Tuck's infidelities, chalking them up to her "Terrier Blood;" and the lusty Doll Furious, the Sheba to Musset's Jezebel, who tries in vain to convert the Pope of Lesbos to a life of monogamy. For each of these women, the answer to the sobering question "who shall remember thee?" is a positive one. As long as *Ladies Almanack* continues to be read, its characters (and the real women that inspired them) will live on in the reader's memory, not as an undifferentiated mass, but as clearly defined individuals.

But what of Barnes's own legacy? Remy de Gourmont counseled Natalie Barney that "one should remain an enigma, even to oneself," advice that the enigmatic Barnes followed far more faithfully than his loquacious Amazon ever did. During the final six months of her life, black smoke billowed from Barnes's apartment as she consigned a lifetime's worth of personal correspondence to the flames (Stimpson 370). The scraps that escaped this bonfire were placed under a strict gag order, which prohibited their publication, not for the standard fifty to one hundred years out of respect for the privacy of individuals who may still be living, but indefinitely. Yet, here too, the fear of being forgotten and the desire to be remembered *as she wanted to be*, and implicitly by the right people—the scholars who would have fullest access to the complete range of artifacts that she left behind—plays out in Barnes's meticulous archiving of her manuscripts, illustrations, photographs, and personal library, which she sold to the University of Maryland in 1972. Among these files are the notes that she wrote for posterity on her own works, from the late play *The Antiphon* onward, as well as the files she assembled on prominent friends (e.g., Joyce, Eliot, and Dag Hammarskjöld). In so doing, she was constructing a version of herself—Djuna Barnes, Author—that she hoped would one day receive the acclaim that she felt had been denied her during her lifetime. Although Barnes was sorely wounded by never having been admitted to the American Academy of Arts & Letters, the list of writers that

read and admired her works is mind-boggling (McCullough). Not only was she the intimate of most of the Anglo-American modernists, but members of the younger generation of writers that cited her as an influence include such notables as Dylan Thomas, Anais Nin, and Truman Capote. Another admirer, the poet Marianne Moore offered one of the most perceptive assessments of Barnes's style, remarking that "reading Djuna Barnes is like reading a foreign language which you understand" (qtd. in Herring 298). However, in true riddling fashion, if one is called upon to explain what you think you know about her texts, they, like Barnes herself, melt away into sonorous phrases that beckon and yet defy, perhaps infinitely deferring the closure of definitive explication with a wink and an enigmatic grin.

Part III: The Changing Faces of Jean Toomer

Chapter Four: More Fun Than a Barrel of Monkeys

"A barrel of monkeys could not afford more fun than our new puzzle, 'The Changing Faces,'" the J.B. Williams Company announced to the crowds that flocked to the Pan-American Exposition of 1901 in Buffalo, New York.⁶⁵ The Connecticut-based soap manufacturer distributed the puzzle card free of charge to visitors of their booth in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts building and offered to send one by mail to any person whose interest had been piqued by advertisements appearing in British and American periodicals from 1901 to 1903. As is so often the case with printed ephemera, the Changing Faces puzzle's fabrication from non-durable materials—in this case card stock and ink—meant that very few examples have survived the combined wear and tear of normal use and the passage of time, reducing the once popular puzzle to a rarity within a matter of years. Only a handful of puzzle aficionados, collectors of novelty trade cards, and cultural historians remain conversant with the Changing Faces puzzle in the present day. Yet, despite its current lack of renown, the Changing Faces puzzle is far more than just a passing fad or footnote in the history of the company that developed Aqua Velva and Lectric Shave. The Changing Faces puzzle provides a valuable window into nineteenth and early twentieth century studies of physiognomy, which tended to collapse the categories of race and deviancy, as well as efforts to patrol the increasingly porous boundaries between races through surveillance of the head and face in post-Reconstruction America.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ This quote comes from an advertisement that the J.B. Williams Company ran in *Puck* and *The Youth's Companion* during the final three months of the Exposition, which closed its doors on November 1, 1901. To view the ad, see *The Youth's Companion* 23 Aug. 1901: 413 or *Puck* 18 Sept. 1901: 13.

⁶⁶ I use the term physiognomy throughout this chapter to refer to the study of facial features and expression, which includes, but is not limited to the pseudoscience popularized by Lavater during the late eighteenth century that claimed a person's mentality and character could be ascertained simply by studying his or her face. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, a renewed interest in physiognomy manifested itself in a variety of scientific disciplines, including anthropology and criminology, where careful measurement of the head and face of subjects, living and dead, formed the basis for investigations into a diverse array of topics, ranging from biological

The Changing Faces puzzle features a man's face that distorts almost beyond recognition merely by pulling down the tab at the card's base. At the top of the puzzle, the name of the company and its best-selling product appear in large, bold lettering, while centered in a recessed box beneath them is a drawing of the smiling face of a man whose chin and cheeks are covered in thick, white shaving lather. Text at his chin-level explains, "when he uses Williams' soap he looks like this," insinuating that the man's healthy appearance and good mood are directly attributable to the Williams Company and their superior products. Index fingers on either side of the recessed box direct the viewer to "watch the man's face change" as you pull down the slide at the base of the card. Doing so reveals a second image that had been concealed behind the company's name. This second image, labeled "when he tries a substitute" hammers home the superiority of Williams' formula and hints that one cannot put a price on comfort and peace of mind. The man's carefully parted and oiled hair now appears disheveled, as if he has been running his fingers through it in frustration, and his partially closed eyes and pronounced grimace evocatively convey the annoyance, irritation, and even pain resulting from the decision to use a rival company's shaving soap. The challenge this puzzle poses, quite literally since the query "can you explain it?" is printed on the card itself, is to detect the mechanism responsible for the sudden transformation of the man's face. Solving this puzzle is a comparatively easy task given the clear correspondence between the position of the tab and the changes wrought to the man's appearance. Thus, it seems safe to say that the puzzle's difficulty was not its chief draw. Instead, the excitement occasioned by the rapid, seemingly magical alternation between images (like two frames of a motion picture played on repeat); the seamless collapsing of time between two potential outcomes (i.e., "when he uses Williams' soap he looks like this" versus "when he

and cultural evolution to social pathology (e.g., Lombroso's born criminal or photographic studies of the insane) and genetics.

uses a substitute he looks like this"); and the questions the puzzle raises about the nature of identity that can be addressed within the safe confines of the puzzle realm, help to explain the Changing Faces puzzle's sudden popularity across multiple demographics at the turn of the twentieth century.

If the Changing Faces puzzle were to be taken seriously, the constantly metamorphosing face of an individual threatens unitary notions of identity and undermines disciplines (e.g., physiognomy or Positivist criminology) that assume a one to one correlation between external, physical attributes and internal essences. As the seat of identity or the person as a whole through metonymy, the human face plays a pivotal role in personal conceptions of self, and if physical appearance were to become unstable or suddenly rendered mutable it would not only wreak havoc on systems of identification, which are primarily visual (e.g., mug shots and other photographic forms of identification), but also raise troubling questions about the nature of identity. Is there a self separate from the body? What role does appearance play in the construction of identity? Can a person undergo drastic physical changes without losing his or her identity? Can one person have multiple identities? What, if anything unites them? Do they remain constant over time? In stark contrast to the (false) sense of security afforded by systems of reading the face and body that purported to be definitive, the Changing Faces puzzle presents a series of seemingly unending questions and denies the comfort of easy or clear-cut answers. However, should the thoughts engendered by the Changing Faces become too unsettling, they can be conveniently dismissed by invoking the puzzle's status as a novelty, a mere source of entertainment too trivial to worry one's head over. In this way, the puzzle functions as both a

heuristic and defense mechanism, a tool for uncovering and engaging with potentially painful truths that can be reburied if and when they become too much to bear.⁶⁷

Jean Toomer (1894-1967), a person of mixed race heritage, did not have the luxury of casting aside the troubling questions about appearance and identity presented by the Changing Faces puzzle. Often mistaken for an Indian or Spaniard, Toomer was routinely subjected to questioning glances that sought to place him, and this scrutiny frustrated and pained him to such an extent that he wrote a poignant short prose work entitled "The Fable of a Creature" (1930), which illustrates how the impulse to classify others satisfies the onlooker's curiosity at the cost of any real understanding or human connection. Although Toomer's relatively privileged upbringing in a well-to-do enclave of Washington D.C. shielded him from the worst excesses of racially motivated violence, he grew up during a period of mounting tensions that came to a head in the Jim Crow South with programmatic attempts to disenfranchise African Americans, legalized segregation, and lynchings.⁶⁸

His first published book *Cane* (1923), a genre-defying work that combines poetry, prose, and a play, bears testament to the violence and hatred that racked the United States during what has been called the "nadir" of American race relations. In the trio of poems that form his "Georgia Portraits," Toomer artistically renders the suffering of bodies "blown by pain," whose

⁶⁷ Admittedly, it would be impossible for those who experience oppression based upon their physical appearance to deal with the concerns raised by the puzzle in purely hypothetical terms. However, the scenario that the Changing Faces puzzle presents of disrupting or overturning the very mechanism responsible for fueling that oppression would remain appealing, and the puzzle affords a respite, a safe place to think through and test out strategies for coping with or overcoming visually motivated forms of abuse.

⁶⁸ Toomer's maternal grandfather, P.B.S. Pinchback, briefly served as governor of Louisiana in 1872 and is widely recognized as the first African American to have occupied this level of governmental office in the nation. However, his political losses attest to the changing climate and many reversals that African Americans would face. In 1873, William Pitt Kellogg, the newly elected governor of Louisiana, appointed Pinchback to a seat in the United States Senate, but after three years of political wrangling at the Capitol, Pinchback's right to serve was denied when the Senate voted down his appointment. Pinchback had only the monetary compensation awarded him as consolation (Dray 222-228).

habitual subjection to emotional violence and physical atrocities—"Georgia Dusk" describes one such attack as a "barbecue / A feast of moon and men and barking hounds"—leaves a tangible record, an account inscribed upon the flesh in the form of "old scars, or the first red blisters." Toomer's prose is equally unflinching and its haunting beauty reproduces the disjuncture between the loveliness of the pastoral setting and the acts of unspeakable cruelty perpetrated within it.

In this section, the Changing Faces puzzle and its metaphorical registers serve as a lens through which to read *Cane* and to examine Toomer's efforts to shape his public image at the time of its composition and marketing. This puzzle is a particularly good fit (pun intended) because not only does changing faces serve as the underlying structural principle of *Cane*, but it also plays upon and disrupts binary thinking in ways that complement and prefigure Toomer's insistence on his own duality. At the time that he was putting the finishing touches on *Cane*, Toomer admitted in a letter to the editor of *Prairie* that he had experienced his own "racial definition" as a puzzle far more challenging to (re)solve than the general public seemed to assume: "the popular mind makes an easy solution of my problem. . . . When I live with the blacks I'm a Negro. When I live with whites, I'm white, or, better, a foreigner. I used to puzzle my own brain with the question. But now I'm done with it" (*Letters* 154). Toomer suggests that what may appear to be his shifting racial affiliations, or changing faces if you will, are nothing more than a product of the color line. Unwilling to emphasize one aspect of his heritage to the exclusion of all others, he rejected the prevailing dualistic racial framework and chose to self-identify under a more inclusive designation, maintaining that "racially, my bloods are so mixed to the extent that it is stupid and absurd to call me anything other than an American" (*ibid*).

For Toomer, the puzzle of racial identity derives in large part from the conflict between biological and sociological definitions of race. At the biological level, he maintained that America is a vast stomach where all races have already "mingled and blended" so thoroughly that it "has given rise to a new race . . . which includes *everyone* in this country" ("The Americans" 108, original emphasis). Instead of conceiving of "racial strains" as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that fit together imperfectly to form a person who is "half white and half black, or part Jewish and part Gentile," Toomer argued that it is "only because our psyches are in parts" that we fail to see that the resulting synthesis is not "white plus black" but "a third thing, a different and unique substance with unique attributes" (109). In this vicious cycle, social divisions based upon race condition us to prioritize superficial differences over the reality of shared humanity, and the psychic damage that ensues leaves no one whole. The allure of a puzzle like the Changing Faces, which uses physical transformation as a jumping off point to explore the nature of identity is that it de-naturalizes and problematizes the tendency to, in Toomer's words, "see a surface and assume it is a center" (ibid).

I contend that Toomer intervenes in scientific discourses that take the measurement of the human face and body as their central focus through his strategies for depicting African American and multiracial subjects in *Cane* and the crafting of his public persona as an author. His formal choices, especially the decision to foreground portraiture in *Cane* at precisely the moment when surveillance of faces for legible traces of race reached a fever pitch, take on greater resonance in light of the central role that physiognomy played in debates about race and criminality. In a nation where race is primarily assessed visually, the stakes of this method of identification increased during the early twentieth century as many states passed legislation inspired by the "one-drop rule" that defined individuals of 1/32 African or African American descent to be

black, "a distinction so narrow as to make 'blackness' and 'whiteness' indistinguishable" (Smith, "Art" 78). The rising tide of nativism and the growing popularity of the eugenics movement exacerbated interracial tensions that erupted during the Red Summer of 1919, adding an even greater sense of urgency to the identification of raced bodies and efforts to solve "the Negro Problem."⁶⁹ Within this context, Toomer's impressionistic portraits in Part One of *Cane* function as an act of resistance, a refusal to provide fodder for systems that reduce individuals to types and ascribe pathological meanings to facial features and racial traits. In lieu of detailed descriptions that produce realistic, photographic likenesses, Toomer employs imagery drawn from the natural world to convey a sense of his characters without clearly delineating their features. By withholding the data necessary for physiognomic and anthropometric readings in Part One of *Cane*, Toomer shields his characters from the dehumanizing, alienating stare that he so detested.

However, since Toomer could not operate outside of prevailing systems for reading the body, these same discourses, no matter how much he resisted them, would also of necessity inform and (to some extent) govern the choices that he made while constructing his public persona. In Chapter Five, I explore Toomer's self-presentation by analyzing a scrapbook from his college years that documents his involvement with the physical culture movement, his dispute with publisher Horace Liveright over the marketing of *Cane*, and two portraits of Toomer himself—one that he sanctioned and the other unauthorized but widely distributed. It is not my intention to make an essentialist argument that implies that thorough knowledge of Toomer's biography renders everything clear in *Cane* or unlocks all of its meanings. However, for a highly

⁶⁹ Debates about how to repair relations between the races and to guarantee African Americans the full political participation and social equality due them were insistently framed as "the Negro Problem," tacitly placing both the blame and onus for solution on the victimized. In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W.E.B. Du Bois documents the psychological effects of being labeled a problem, and shifts the terms of the debate, averring that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line," not the "Negro" ("The Forethought").

autobiographical writer whose own aesthetic emphasized the interrelationship between author and text, familiarity with his life experiences does provide valuable insight into questions posed by *Cane* and enriches our understanding of it.

The Evolutionary Subtext of Changing Faces

Careful analysis of the Changing Faces puzzle as a cultural artifact highlights the centrality of physiognomy to scientific and popular discourses, including conceptions of race, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and demonstrates how emerging theories in the sciences filtered into popular culture as well as modernist literature. More than just a bit of meaningless ephemera, the Changing Faces puzzle resides at the heart of cultural debates about degeneration, criminality, and race, all of which rely upon analysis of facial features to differentiate insider from outsider, normal from abnormal, white from black. Far too often, these categories fold into each other with the unspoken rule being that whiteness is the norm from which all others deviate.

Although phrenology had been discredited by the time that the Changing Faces puzzle became popular, a myriad of systems for interpreting the head and face had sprung up to take its place. As Michael Frizot notes, "it was through the body that nineteenth-century society aimed to know, to punish, to exclude and beleaguer, to reduce and to make subject to the law" (260). The most clearly visible parts of the body, the head and face, became fiercely contested sites for inscribing meaning and defining difference. By the mid-nineteenth century, practitioners of anthropometry (a system of measuring the human body) routinely examined the color of a subject's skin, eyes, and hair; measured the length and breadth of the head (noting its general conformation); took measurements of the face, nose, mouth, and ears, all of which were subject to further refinements along known anatomical landmarks (e.g., measuring the distance from the

nasion to crinion); and noted features of "racial significance" such as thickness of the lips, presence of the epicanthus, and texture of the hair (Hrdlička, *Anthropometry* 83).⁷⁰ Within the "infinite" number of possible measurements of the human body,⁷¹ facial angle, prognathism, and low cranial capacity came to be regarded as hallmarks of "savage" populations, while the faces of criminals, the mentally ill, and other so-called degenerates were said to be marred by "stigmata" that rendered them distinguishable from the rest of the population to the discerning eye. It is this shared preoccupation with "abnormal" physiognomy that marks the intersection between degeneration theory, Positivist criminology, eugenics, and the anthropological study of race.

Each of these fields laid claim to authoritative knowledge of the inner workings of the human body based upon analysis of external markers, and they inundated the American public with lectures and articles on their competing systems at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷² The long-term success of these attempts at popularization can be measured by an article that

⁷⁰ The roots of anthropometry date back to the seventeenth century. Johann Sigismund Elsholtz coined the term anthropometry, and he made the first contributions to the field by writing *Anthropometria* (1654) and inventing the anthropometron, a precursor to the anthropometer (Spencer 80-1). As a physician, Elsholtz's impetus for measuring the body was to discern if there were correspondences between bodily proportions and diseases, whereas by the late eighteenth century emphasis had shifted to the study of anatomical changes across life stages and comparative analysis of "the races, so as to distinguish them and establish their relations to each other" (Spencer 81). As a result of the proliferation of anthropometric studies in the second half of the nineteenth century and the lack of consensus about its practice—there were two rival systems, the French school led by Broca versus the German school governed by the Frankfort Agreement (1882)—calls for standardization beginning in the 1890s ultimately resulted in international agreements regarding measurements and practices in the first two decades of the twentieth century (Hrdlička, *Anthropometry* 9-10).

⁷¹ Hrdlička conceded that the "number of practicable measurements on the human form, both in life and on the remains, is infinite" (*Anthropometry* 60), and emphasized that in order for these measurements to have any meaning or scientific value, they must be standardized.

⁷² In the 1890s, Daniel G. Brinton sought to raise the profile of anthropology by writing a regular feature for *Science* entitled "Current Notes on Anthropology" (Baker 34), while Cesare Lombroso, founder of Positivist criminology, contributed articles to *The Forum*, *Century Magazine*, and *The North American Review* from 1895 until his death in 1909. By 1900, degeneration had "become a by-word" in the press, and William Thayer bemoaned how "the unthinking public accepts it so readily" due to the influence of the "men of science" who had "promulgated [it] during the past decade" (742).

appeared in *The Literary Digest* during the summer of 1925, which confidently answered the question "Can we read human character?" in the affirmative, adding "of course we can. A glance at the face enables us to do it" (22). Despite the writer's complacent attitude, the hard sciences had abandoned physiognomy as a reliable indicator of internal states by that point, and the article somewhat peevishly goes on to acknowledge how "distinctly disconcerting" the debunking of these old certainties was (ibid). Clearly, physiognomy exerted an enduring allure for the white population, partly because it offered the comfort of clear-cut answers in a time of uncertainty and also because it seemed to validate prejudices by equating appearances with essences.

For audiences steeped in Social Darwinism, rapidly changing faces would automatically evoke associations to evolutionary theory, and prompt fears of decay and decline as well as the hope for renewal under the watchful eye of scientists like Francis Galton. The Changing Faces puzzle debuted in the same year that Galton gave his famous address "The Possible Improvement of the Human Breed Under the Existing Conditions of Law and Sentiment" (1901) that popularized eugenics in England and America (Baker, *From Savage* 91). Recent developments in the sciences primed audiences to greet the puzzle's arrival with interest. Although iconic illustrations of changing faces, especially in a sequence from animal to human had appeared in scientific literature dating from at least the late eighteenth century, two mid-nineteenth century developments—the publication of Darwin's theory of evolution and photographic studies of criminal or aberrant physiognomy—led to a marked upswing in the number and visibility of these images circulating in mainstream channels.⁷³

⁷³ The frontispiece to Thomas Huxley's *Evidence As to Man's Place in Nature* (1863) provides one of the first visual representations of a transformation from ape to man within an explicitly evolutionary framework. However, earlier studies of comparative anatomy had depicted structural similarities between animals and humans in sequential illustrations of the head and face that foreshadowed progressive evolution. Petrus Camper's study of the facial angle, published posthumously in *The works of the late Professor Camper, on the connexion between the science of anatomy and the arts of drawing, painting, statuary, &c.* (1791, English trans. 1794) juxtaposes scale drawings of

Galton's composite photography (invented in 1877) provides a good case in point. Unlike the earlier illustrations that documented a gradual transformation of the face of a monkey or frog into a man over the course of several figures, Galton combined multiple photographs of people with similar features into a single face through the process of superimposition (Fig. 9). By hanging the photographs, aligned at the level of the subjects' eyes, "like a pack of cards" and exposing each of them to a sensitized photographic plate for an equal amount of time, he produced "the portrait of a type" rather than of an actual individual ("Composite Portraits" 97). Composite photographs register the ghostly traces of their constituent images in the form of blurring, and this photographic blurring, suggestive of movement, attests to the fluidity of the subjects' appearance as well as the dynamic process through which multiple faces are consolidated into one. The haunting of the composite portrait by the subjects that comprise it, their refusal to be subsumed within the statistical average of their features, belies the singularity of the image produced, emphasizing the schizophrenic, artificial quality of the end result. Although Galton was not troubled by the incomplete melding of the component photographs, even maintaining that "the amount of blur" was a potential asset that provided the opportunity to measure "deviation from the common type," he did acknowledge that his method altered the sitters' faces by producing a "much better looking" composite free from "the special villainous irregularities" that marred each of the individual faces (ibid).

These idealized portraits, then, embody changing faces on a number of levels, including purporting to depict the negative effects of evolution on the human population when natural

the skulls and faces of apes with those of humans oriented along the same horizontal axis. Reading his Table One from left to right implies a gradual development from *simia caudata* ("tailed ape") through orang-outang to Negro and Calmuck (now Kalmuck, or Mongolian), all shown in profile, while Table Three extends this sequence to include frontal views of an European and "antique" head—the Apollo Belvedere—at the pinnacle of the scale. J.C. Lavater's essay "On the Lines of Animality" (from *Essays on Physiognomy* 1775-8) concurs with Camper's findings, and illustrates his own theory of "the degrees of animality" by rendering "the gradual transition from the head of a frog to the Apollo" in 24 figures over three plates.

selection was prevented from operating freely. By identifying the distinctive physiognomies characteristic of each of the undesirable classes (e.g., criminals, the tubercular, and paupers), Galton sought to advance his ultimate goal of making "the battered figures who slouch through the streets and play the beggar or bully" a thing of the past by segregating and sterilizing those whom he deemed "incapable of improvement" (negative eugenics) and instilling a sense of duty, amounting to a "religious obligation" among members of "the best stock" to marry early and bear numerous children (positive eugenics) (Galton "Possible" 663-64). Rather than restricting the news of his experiments with composite photography to purely academic circles, Galton permitted his articles to be (re)published in *Nature*, *Science*, *Scientific American*, and *The Journal of the Photographic Society of Great Britain*.⁷⁴ His composite portraits spawned countless imitations, ranging from the work of amateur photographers to specialists studying its potential applications in the fields of anthropology, criminology, and psychiatry. Composite photographs of Boston physicians, cart drivers, graduates of Harvard University, and members of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences, just to name a few, filled the pages of *McClure's* and *The Century Magazine* during the final two decades of the nineteenth century.⁷⁵ Thus, when the J.B. Williams Company presented its customers with a puzzle that directed them to "watch the man's face change" and asked "Can you explain it?," they would have had little doubt that the real mechanism responsible for producing changes to human physiognomy was evolution, or its dreaded counterpart, degeneration.

⁷⁴ An exhaustive list, including facsimiles, of Galton's publications on this topic can be found at Galton.org. < <http://galton.org/composite.htm> >

⁷⁵ See, for example, H.P. Bowditch's "Are Composite Photographs Typical Pictures?" in *McClure's* (Sept. 1894): 331-342, which includes 8 plates of illustrations, and two richly illustrated articles written by John T. Stoddard for *The Century*: "Composite Photography" (Mar. 1887): 750-757 and "College Composites" (Nov. 1887): 121-5.

Degeneration theory fueled growing fears that human development may not be linear nor mankind's progress indefinite. In his immensely influential *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine* (1857), the French psychologist Bénédict Augustin Morel contended that the internal processes of degeneration were legible on the body's surface in the form of "stigmata," particularly defects localized on the head and face, which included facial asymmetry, abnormally large or misshapen ears, "squint-eyes, hare lips, irregularities in the form and position of the teeth; [and] pointed or flat palates" (qtd. in Brauer 33). Morel's treatise established the pervasive notion of "the degenerate" as an "individual whose physiognomic contours could be traced and distinguished from the healthy," a notion that would dominate the fields of medicine, criminology, and anthropology for more than half a century (Pick 9). As a testament to the enduring power of this idea, forty-one years later, the American Eugene Talbot reiterated in *Degeneracy: Its Causes, Signs, and Results* (1898) that "the stigmata of degeneracy . . . most likely to attract attention are in the order given, those of the face, jaws, and teeth; ear, eye, cranium; body, bodily functions; brain and spinal cord" (37), and he partitioned his book accordingly, devoting a single chapter to exploration of "degeneracy of the body" while dilating for four full chapters on degenerate crania and facial features.

Talbot's subsequent book, *Developmental Pathology: A Study in Degenerative Evolution* (1911) provides a clear indication of the evolutionary subtext of changing faces as well as the racist assumptions underlying "scientific" interpretations of the significance of the facial angle (also called the gnathic index). Based upon Camper's anatomical drawings, an illustration that Talbot considered important enough to print twice in the same book (figures 37 and 91 are identical) depicts a series of faces in profile along an evolutionary spectrum ranging from gibbons and "the anthropoid apes" to the "ideal face of the Apollo Belvedere" (66). Using

prognathism, or the degree of the projection of the jaws combined with the slope of the forehead as a means of measuring evolutionary development, Talbot positions "Negro types" at the midway point, above Neanderthals but lowest among living races (Figs. 10-12). In the orthogenetic narrative affirmed by degeneration theory, mankind progresses toward the perfection of the classical Greek/Caucasian ideal, which due to its arrested facial development possesses the most sophisticated brain, and only through disease or breeding with "lower types" does reversion to an earlier stage of evolutionary development—signaled by the recursion of so-called primitive features—occur.⁷⁶

While degeneration theory established links between physiognomy, race, and medical pathology, the field of criminology claimed to be able to identify "faces of a criminal cast," thus effectively criminalizing abnormal or irregular features and cementing the belief that facial morphology, when properly interpreted by scientific authorities, could serve as a reliable indicator of otherwise undetectable strains of social dangerousness. The controversial Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, founder of the Italian or Positivist school of criminology, derided degeneration for its imprecision and lack of scientific rigor, yet his theory of the atavistic origins of criminality derived in part from it and Lombroso's born criminal bears a striking resemblance to Morel's degenerate.⁷⁷ Based upon autopsies he conducted on convicted criminals, anthropometric measurements gathered directly from inmates of prisons and mental asylums, and

⁷⁶ Talbot hammers home the association of whiteness with intelligence by including a photograph of a degenerate Caucasian man whose "brain is undeveloped" because his "face, jaws and teeth are a return to the lower negro type of face" (167). Talbot's belief in the superior intellect of the Caucasian population is based upon the outdated theory that cranial capacity correlates with intelligence, and thus the high, straight forehead of the Caucasian ideal enabled greater brain development than the bullet-shaped head characteristic of prognathic individuals.

⁷⁷ In the third edition of *Criminal Man* (1884), Lombroso asserts that "the concept of degeneration has become too broad, being used to explain pathologies from cretinism to genius, from deaf-mutism to cancer" and, as a result, he prefers theories, like arrested development, with a sound "anatomical basis" (221). More damaging, however, is his accusation that supporters of degeneration willfully misinterpret evidence and grasp at straws, charges frequently directed against Lombroso's own works, as they "exaggerat[e] the importance of degeneration by claiming that even the most insignificant symptoms of illness prove their theory" (ibid).

data published in colleagues' studies, Lombroso concluded that the criminal is "an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the lower animals" (Introduction xv). Symptoms of criminals' regression to earlier, more primitive forms did not just lurk inside the body (e.g., the presence of the median occipital fossetta or Wormian bones) but were writ large on the head and faces of malefactors, nearly all of whom, according to Lombroso have "jug ears, thick hair, thin beards, pronounced sinuses, protruding chins, and broad cheekbones" (*Criminal Man* 53). In addition to this "family resemblance" resulting from shared traits, criminals also exhibited distinctive physiognomies depending upon which types of crime(s) they committed. Thieves could be distinguished from other criminals based upon their "small wandering eyes that are often oblique in form, thick and close eyebrows, distorted or squashed noses, thin beards and hair, . . . sloping foreheads," and jug ears whereas arsonists are characterized by their soft skin, "childlike appearance," and abundant "thick, black hair that is almost feminine" (*Criminal Man* 51). Although Lombroso's theories had many detractors during his lifetime, they, like the man himself, were also extremely influential. His *L'uomo delinquente* (*Criminal Man*) sold briskly and went through five editions, each significantly expanded, between 1876 and 1897, the last of which ran to four volumes. The demand for *Criminal Man* was so great that it was translated into French, German, Russian, and Spanish, all before 1900, while its companion text, *La Donna Delinquente* (*The Female Offender*) made its first appearance in English in 1895 (Gibson and Rafter 2).

Though the translation history of his most famous work may suggest otherwise, nowhere did Lombroso's ideas take firmer root than in the United States. Lombroso himself remarked on the alacrity with which Americans responded to his theories, noting that while "calumnies and misrepresentations" of his work issued from "all quarters of Europe," America alone "gave a

warm and sympathetic reception to the ideas of the Modern School which they speedily put into practice" (Introduction xix).⁷⁸ Even after Lombroso's death in 1909, his theory of the born criminal endured in the United States, where "American criminal anthropologists popularized Lombroso's ideas in the first decades of the twentieth century to such a degree that a persistent image of the archetypal criminal was established in the popular imagination" (Soper 272). However, as biological determinism gradually lost ground to environmental and sociological explanations of the origins of crime in the 1920s and early 1930s, Lombroso's theories fell out of favor among criminologists, only to be taken up by supporters of the eugenics movement, who used his body of work as proof of the hereditary nature of crime and the pressing need to prevent the dysgenic elements of society from increasing their numbers through procreation (Gibson and Rafter 30; Soper 273).

These examples illustrate that not only can a clear line of descent be established from degeneration theory to Positivist criminology and eugenics, but also that "there was a general consensus among late-nineteenth century human scientists—even among scholars who could not agree on much else—about the value of physiognomic studies" (Horn 66). Far from being a neutral site at the time of the Changing Faces puzzle's inception, the human face was the object of intense scientific and popular scrutiny for signs of degeneracy and incipient criminality as well as racial difference. The academic discipline of anthropology, which emerged in tandem with criminology, placed an equally great weight on the value of physiognomy as a means of

⁷⁸ Lombroso uses the term "Modern School" somewhat idiosyncratically here as a means of distinguishing his own approach to the study of crime, generally referred to as Positivism, from the Classical School of Penal Jurisprudence in Italy. It is not to be confused with the Modern School of Criminal Law associated with Franz von Liszt in Germany.

defining and excluding those that it deemed abnormal, or in this case, less evolved.⁷⁹ From the outset, anthropologists in the United States focused their efforts on racial classification and determining the "relative rankings" of peoples based upon their degree of cultural development "on a scale from 'savage' to 'civilized'" (Fluehr-Lobban 75). The first "American School" of anthropology, led by Samuel Morton, Josiah Nott, and Louis Agassiz, "gave scientific support to pro-slavery forces" by arguing on behalf of polygenism, the theory that denied all humans descended from a common source, and postulated separate biological origins for each of the human races (Dewbury 122; Baker 14-16).

Published in 1854, Josiah Nott and George Gliddon's *Types of Mankind* synthesized the findings of the "American School" and made them accessible to the general public. As the volume's subtitle "Ethnological Researches, Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races" indicates, comparative studies of anatomy played a significant role in the formulation of racial typologies, and Nott ascribed particular value to facial features and expression in this enterprise, writing "However important anatomical characteristics may be, I doubt whether the physiognomy of races is not equally so" (Nott and Gliddon 412). Nott describes the physiognomy of the "Negro type" in minute detail in order to demonstrate how far it diverges from the classical (read Caucasian) ideal of a symmetrical face divided into four equal, horizontal planes, concluding that "the Negro head," in marked contrast, gets progressively larger and more protruding from crown to chin. In an exhaustive, vituperative catalogue that he deems merely "*the most* marked peculiarities of the Negro head and face," Nott disparages the "narrow, flat crown; the low, slanting forehead; . . . the short, flat, . . . broad nose;

⁷⁹ Although anthropology's origins date as far back as the late eighteenth century to the writings of the naturalists Johann Blumenbach (*On the Natural Varieties of Mankind* [1776]), "widely regarded as the father of modern physical anthropology," and Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (*Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* [1749-1788]), it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that anthropology began to emerge from the fields of natural history and ethnology to become a professional discipline in its own right (Fluehr-Lobban 85).

the prominent . . . lips . . . ; the broad, retreating chin, and the peculiarly small eyes, in which so little of the white eyeball can be seen" as well as "the short, crisp, woolly hair, and the black color of the skin" of the "Negro type" (416, emphasis added). Having examined the anatomical "evidence," Nott reaches the conclusion that "the Negro" occupies a mid-point on the evolutionary ladder between apes and Caucasians, and he provides "a comparative series of likenesses," juxtaposing drawings of chimpanzees and orangutans with blacks, as testament to their purported kinship. While *Types of Mankind* was not the first work to dehumanize people of African descent by likening them to monkeys or apes, its scientific veneer lent credibility to racist assumptions of black inferiority, and the volume's extraordinary popularity resulted in further entrenchment of these corrosive ideas.⁸⁰

Indeed, by the time that A.L. Kroeber wrote his landmark *Anthropology* in 1923, it had become so commonplace to associate blacks with apes that even Kroeber, a disciple of Franz Boas who sought to prove that no race was superior to any other, conceded "One thinks of the Negro as simian. His jaws are prognathous; his forehead recedes; his nose is both broad and low" (62). However, as Kroeber acutely observes, evolutionary scales that place Caucasians at the apex and consign "Negroes" to a single rung above the animal kingdom are the result of preconceived notions (i.e., how one *thinks* of another group), selective culling of data, and wish-fulfillment, rather than an impartial review of known facts. As proof, he turns the tables and offers an equal number of traits (e.g., hairiness, hair texture, and lip color) that suggest Caucasians are "nearer to the apes in [their] anatomy than the other races" before affirming the equality of all peoples in terms of their evolutionary development (ibid). The fact that Kroeber takes one race's purported resemblance and kinship to apes seriously enough to refute it point by

⁸⁰ According to Lee D. Baker, the first printing of *Types of Man* "quickly sold out" and the book went through nine editions before 1900 ("History" 94).

point in an academic work demonstrates how deeply engrained this idea remained in American minds nearly seven decades after Nott and Gliddon's *Types of Mankind*, but also provides a glimpse into the changing intellectual climate that would ultimately sweep these outdated, hurtful fallacies away.

Sadly, the seeds of change had not yet begun to sprout by the time that the Changing Faces puzzle debuted, and the site of the puzzle's emergence as well as its marketing scheme underscore the puzzle's involvement in debates about evolution, race, and progress. The Pan-American Exposition, where the Changing Faces puzzle was first introduced to the public, followed the precedent set by the 1893 World's Fair of offering guests the thrill of encountering living ethnological exhibits on the Midway. In contrast to the Ethnology Building,⁸¹ which housed objects of archaeological interest and "Indian relics" in a subdued, institutional setting, the "foreign villages" and their inhabitants on the Midway jostled cheek upon jowl with such curiosities as a miniature version of the Chicago World's Fair, an inverted mansion where visitors entered the roof at ground level (Roltair's House Upside Down), high diving elks in the aptly named Wild Water Sports area, gondola rides, an ostrich farm, and two early devices (the Mutoscope and Cineograph) for viewing moving pictures. Among the many living ethnological exhibits on display at the Midway were an Eskimo village, gypsy camp, "Beautiful Orient" with "bona fide natives," six Indian nations jointly performing "war and ghost dances," and an Old Plantation where "genuine darkey families and their pickaninnies" would "dance and sing" in front of reconstructed slave cabins "exactly as the negroes of the South used to do in the long

⁸¹ The design of the pediment for the Ethnology Building showcases the importance of anthropometry, particularly its subdivision craniometry, to the fields of anthropology and ethnology during the *fin-de-siècle*. After scrapping his original plan to create different sculptures for each side of the building, the sculptor Hermon A. MacNeil settled on a single relief that would be repeated on all four pediments. His final design features two "emblematic figures, a woman on the left holding a pottery vessel and on the right a man in the act of measuring a human skull" meant to signify the "study of man and his arts" ("Scientific Notes" 973).

ago" (Catalogue 39-46; Guide 31).⁸² Consigning living representatives of other races and cultures to the periphery of the Exposition, both in spatial terms (the northwestern corner) and the degree of seriousness afforded them, reflected and re-enforced their marginalized status, and "helped [to] solidify the notion of racial and cultural inferiority imposed on African Americans, Native Americans, and other 'savages' the world over" (Baker, *From* 51). Indeed, appearing on the Midway gave geographical expression to the racist belief that peoples of African descent inhabited the mid-way point on the evolutionary scale. The Catalogue completes the process begun by the exhibits of converting the peoples on display into an exotic other by informing the visitor of how "instructive and profitable" it is to see "the curious and interesting evidences of civilization, so different from our own" (39).

Not just limited to the Midway, the Exposition's evolutionary theme played out on a grand scale, encompassing the design and layout of the buildings, the color scheme, and the position of the allegorical sculptures throughout the fairgrounds (Fig. 13). The chief architect John M. Carrère had arranged the buildings within the natural landscape with the express purpose of conveying man's contest with and ultimate conquest of nature. The primary entrance conducted guests through park land to the Triumphal Bridge, a magnificent structure containing four pillars crowned with monumental statuary where the lofty Electric Tower, representing

⁸² The organizers had the audacity to bill this degrading behavior as "a good amusement" and to elicit nostalgia for the nation's slave-owning past by presenting fairgoers with a fanciful portrait of contented slaves engaged in what the guide euphemistically called their "occupations and pastimes." Despite all evidence to the contrary, the Exposition's organizers claimed to place a premium on authenticity (as the repetition of the terms "genuine" and "bona fide" in the press for the event indicates) and proudly advertised that they had secured "the famous Shelby cabin" itself, "the former home of the old negro" upon whom Harriet Beecher Stowe had, they claimed, based the title character of her novel, for the Old Plantation exhibit. However, by the time that Elmer "Skip" Dundy became director of the Old Plantation, the Shelby cabin had been replaced by two others of even more dubious provenance. Signs attached to two log cabins announced them to be the birthplace of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, and despite the Official Guidebook's assurances that they were "the genuine cabins," some fairgoers were justifiably skeptical. Richard Barry, author of *Snap Shots [sic] on the Midway of the Pan-Am Expo* (1901), observes with a touch of humor that Davis "was born in a mansion," not a cabin, and declares it a "wonder" that "the Abraham Lincoln cabin" could be found when authorities could not even agree about "which county in Kentucky" his father had lived (125-6).

mankind's victory over the forces of nature, first comes into full view (Fig. 14). The main north-south axis leading from the Triumphal Bridge emphasized the "progress of man" as buildings showcasing the abundant natural resources of the Americas (e.g., mining, horticulture, and fisheries) gave way to structures devoted to heavy industry (e.g., manufacturing and machinery) on a "march from savagery to civilization" that led inexorably toward the Electric Tower (Rydell 132). The Exposition's color scheme, designed by Charles Turner, complemented the architectural arrangement by assigning specific colors to the stages of human development. As a pamphlet published by the Exposition Company explained, "an ethical significance is aimed at, in the chromatic arrangement as in the architectural plan; the whole symbolizing progression from a less civilized stage to a higher" (*Its Purpose* 37). In keeping with this plan, Turner had the buildings nearest to the entrances painted with the "strongest[,] crudest colors," which gradually developed into "more refined and brilliant hues" the further one progressed up the main axis.

If visitors had any doubt as to the evolutionary subtext of the Changing Faces puzzle, all they had to do was look around them. The proof of Darwin's influence appeared in the "endeavor to suggest the evolution of man by means of a scheme of color" as well as in more manifest forms, such as an attraction on the Midway entitled *The Evolution of Man* (qtd. in Rydell 136). Here, the Guidebook informed visitors, one could see the theory of evolution "very completely illustrated" by viewing "numerous well-selected examples," ranging from "the lowest type of simian development to 'the missing link'" and even "the polished gentlemen of today" (53). As part of the attraction, a chimpanzee named Esau wore a three-piece suit and hat, played "the Missing Link," and aped human refinement in all but speech (Fig. 15). Audiences marveled as the young chimpanzee ate fastidiously with a knife and fork, even cleaning his teeth with a

toothpick after each meal, wrote his name "quite intelligibly" using pen and paper, and expressed his appreciation for music by banging away on a specially constructed piano. The correspondent for the *Fielding Star* was so taken by Esau's performance that he remarked that "it is impossible when watching this simian paradox to rid one's self of the illusion that one is in the presence of a man and not a beast at all, so well mannered and intelligent the animal has grown" ("The Missing Link" 2).⁸³ On the Midway, visitors came face to face with the changing faces of "the genus homo" in all of its "successive stages of development" (ibid), and were confronted with the surprisingly challenging task of differentiating man from beast. Beneath the fun and frivolity of such acts, lurks the question: what makes us human? If horses can complete advanced arithmetical sums and elk perform "daring feats," how different from humans are they?⁸⁴ The Williams Company would bring each of these threads together in their marketing for the Changing Faces.

The Changing Faces puzzle continued to garner publicity for Williams' product line after the Pan-American Exposition closed in November 1901, and they capitalized on the puzzle's popularity, touting it as "one of the 'Biggest Hits' of the Exhibition" in their advertising campaign

⁸³ Even educated men of science could not resist the challenge of determining whether Esau "is a man or a monkey." During the annual convention of the Medical Association of New York, which took place in Buffalo at the same time as the Exposition, "a spirited discussion arose" among the delegates about Esau's "place in the evolution of man" after they had the opportunity to examine him firsthand ("The Medical Association" 223).

⁸⁴ Two "educated" horses performed on the Midway at the Pan-American Exposition. Trixy formed part of the Wild Water Sports attraction where she went on stage before the high diving elks. Her acts included selecting the proper handkerchief from her trainer's hand when the name of a color was called out and counting the number of people sitting in the front row then grasping a stick with the corresponding number written upon it (Barry 130-31). Bonner, billed as "the talking-writing equine comedian," was the star of his own attraction where he exhibited his "intelligence almost human" by doing advanced sums (Guide 44). In his *Snap Shots* [sic], Barry reported that Bonner "can add a column of eight figures with three numbers in each row, and the result he gives is never askew unless the trainer on the stage happens to make a mistake. In that case, he tries again"(140).

in print media.⁸⁵ From the outset, the Williams Company employed the phrase "a barrel of monkeys" to promote the puzzle, and although the specific wording of their slogan varied over time, monkeys remained a recurring feature in advertisements for the Changing Faces. This begs the question: why did the Williams Company insistently link a puzzle about shaving with monkeys? The large, eye-catching ads published in the *Illustrated London News* provide some insight (Fig. 16).⁸⁶ Three monkeys, depicted in silhouette, stand waist-high in a barrel engaged in poses suggestive of contemplation and wonder. One raises a thoughtful finger to his lips while a companion scratches his head in befuddlement and the third monkey's parted lips and outstretched arms signal his excitement. The stark black and white of the design attracts attention to the monkeys' unusual, distinctly human hairstyles. The monkey in the center of the barrel wears his hair brushed into a pompadour, his companion to the left sports a mohawk, and the one at the far right has a crew cut. Text surrounding the image informs the reader that the "clever puzzle, The Changing Faces" is just as much fun as a "barrel of monkeys," and a line drawing of the puzzle itself, replete with testimonials of its ingenuity and entertainment value, appears below as apparent justification for these claims. At first glance, the design of this advertisement, seemingly geared toward children with its cartoonish, anthropomorphic monkeys seems innocuous.

⁸⁵ Between the summer of 1901 and Christmas 1902, the J.B. Williams Company ran advertisements in a wide range of popular magazines, including *Puck*, *The Youth's Companion*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's Weekly*, *The Literary Digest*, and *The Cosmopolitan*, offering to send readers their "wonderful puzzle" for a mere two cents to cover the cost of mailing. Some of the advertisements published between December 1901 and April 1902 refer to the puzzle by a slightly different name, "The Changing Face." See, for example "We Can't Send you a Barrel of Monkeys, but We Can Send you Our 'Changing Face' Puzzle, Which is almost as much Fun." *The Saturday Evening Post* 21 Dec. 1901: 15.

⁸⁶ Advertisements for the Changing Faces puzzle appear regularly in *The Illustrated London News* during the fall and winter of 1902. I have chosen the December 13, 1902 version as a representative example.

However, the advertisement's placement and content strongly suggest that the Williams Company was not marketing the Changing Faces directly to a juvenile audience and, as we have seen, simians functioned as a shorthand in the racialist science of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century for racial others, who were thought to be less fully evolved than their white counterparts. Located on a page devoted to ecclesiastical news, the Changing Faces ad appears alongside notices for products used to treat adult complaints, such as rheumatoid arthritis and gout, hair loss, hernia, and hemorrhoids. Needless to say, a child would not gravitate toward accounts of sermons given by noteworthy divines or news of the dedication of a stained glass window in the local chapel, and the Wills and Bequeaths page, where advertising for the puzzle was also wont to appear, would be equally dry fare for children. The advertisement also presupposes familiarity with evolutionary debates since the barrel of monkeys pictured thusly are "funny" largely due to the transposition of human attributes onto a simian form, a caricature that treads perilously close to the pernicious doctrine of the Missing Link.⁸⁷ Like Esau and his antics, these apes turning human achieve their comedic effects through the shock of recognition, glimpsing the self unexpectedly in a supposed other, and the catharsis afforded by laughter tempers what might otherwise be an unnerving experience. The layout re-enforces the (d)evolutionary subtext of the puzzle's name by juxtaposing the barrel of monkeys with a rendition of the puzzle card, equal to it in size, featuring the smiling face of the shaving man.

⁸⁷ The extent to which the idea of the Missing Link had captured the popular imagination can be measured by the proliferation of films on this topic. In 1901, the same year that Esau took the stage at the Pan-Am, two films titled *The Educated Chimpanzee*, one by the Edison Company, which also shot extensive footage of the Exposition, and another by S. Lubin were released. Given the duplicate title and similarity of the tricks performed, Oliver Gaycken speculates that both studios filmed the same animal, claiming it was likely touring on "a vaudeville circuit" at the time (99). I would go even further and argue that the animal in question is Esau, who was routinely billed as "the educated chimpanzee." The best evidence in support of this theory is that Esau was known for his "costume imper[s]onations" of Mr. Dooley and Carrie Nation, while the chimpanzee starring in the Edison film impersonates "an Irishman smoking a pipe" then portrays "Carrie Nation and her little hatchet. . . to perfection" ("Esau, the Wise Man Ape" 8; Edison Catalogue).

The thick coating of brilliant white lather applied from the tops of the man's ears to his chin obscures the lower half of his face, leaving only the smiling lips visible, and this whitewashing forms a visual parallel with the monkeys, silhouetted in white against a black background, above. Since the ad reads from top to bottom, the relative position of these figures in space suggests an evolutionary ladder, with the smiling man representing the apex of human development and culture (symbolized by his use of the shaving implements), having evolved beyond the primitive, ancestral forms depicted above him.

Yet, the fact that the man *needs* to shave in order to erase the traces of his kinship to the animal world, the hairiness that Kroeber suggested linked Caucasians more closely to apes than any other race (62), reveals the tenuous, arbitrary quality of his position atop the scale and the vigilant action necessary to retain it. The disembodied hands that hold the puzzle card upright in the advertisement confirm that the Williams Company (unsurprisingly for the time) envisions its prospective customers as Caucasian. One hand of an adult male cups the Changing Faces puzzle, while the other mimes pulling down the slide at its base. At his wrist, a white dress shirt peeks from beneath the dark sleeve of a blazer. The hands, like the man in the puzzle itself, are white, and the absence of calluses or dirt beneath the nails suggests that he is not a manual laborer. The phrase "when he uses Williams soap he looks like this" takes on a deeper meaning, suggesting the civilizing power of soap and razors, capable of separating man from beast. It is this tension between the promise of complacent self-assurance and the threat of degeneration that drives the sale of the product, for as Williams would make clear in a subsequent ad, "every *man* should shave or be shaved" ("To Shave" 24, emphasis added). Through these tactics, the Williams Company targets a white collar clientele willing to fork over cash to affirm their superior taste—paying for the privilege of using the same shaving soap as the "crowned heads" of Europe and

American presidents—and prospects since as one particularly self-serving ad hinted, "It might almost be said to follow, that if one desires to be President he *must* shave" ("J.B. Williams," original emphasis). In the final analysis, Williams would have us believe that it is neither superior intelligence nor courage that distinguishes humans from animals, just good grooming.

Chapter Five: Portrait of the Artist: Jean Toomer's Public Faces

At the height of the Changing Faces puzzle's popularity, Jean Toomer, then only seven years of age drew a series of changing faces of his own in one of his school notebooks (Fig. 17). Entitled "The Evolution of Love," the drawing proudly signed by Eugene Pinchback (as he was known at the time) charts the progression from new love, represented by a heart pierced by an arrow that drips blood, to the fully fledged form of Cupid himself at the end of the sequence of four images. The bleeding heart morphs into the heart-shaped face of a cherub, whose fledgling wings and androgynous features grow more defined in the third figure, and resolve into a decidedly masculine Cupid with a full head of hair, bushy brows, and the hint of a mustache and stubble on his rounded chin. In a visual pun, Toomer depicts the gradual transformation of the Greek god Eros from an abstract concept (the heart) to a fully personified figure that blends the classical conception of an athletic young man with the more familiar image of a winsome child armed with bow and arrow. Fittingly, the god frequently depicted in plural form as the *Erotos* (or Cupids) demonstrates how one individual can be composed of multiple selves, each in the process of becoming something different, without having to choose between them or sacrificing an underlying unity expressed through the continuities across the images. They all signify love/Love.

During childhood and adolescence, Toomer had three personal symbols: the arrow, eagle, and heart (Kerman and Eldridge 38). The presence of two of these symbols in the same drawing raises the tantalizing possibility that "The Evolution of Love" is a symbolic self-portrait. Toomer's own recollection of the imaginative hold that arrows exerted upon him at this stage in his life and the way that they functioned as a personal identifier support this reading. He wrote: "I cut arrows on all possible places. . . . I was fascinated with and proud of the sign itself. It was

my first symbol" (*Wayward* 56). On one level, the drawing documents his first love, which took place at this time, for a neighborhood girl named Dorothy. She reciprocated the young Toomer's affection and became his archetypal image of fair beauty (*Wayward* 53). The first taste of adult emotions and roles—the neighborhood began to call her "Mrs. Nathan"—propels his maturation from androgynous child to the decidedly more masculine, but still youthful Cupid depicted in the final frame. More abstractly, the drawing represents the reconciliation of competing aspects of Toomer's own character, the lover and the fighter, through their fruitful interpenetration. The arrow pierces the heart, but the heart envelopes the arrow, and this violent union gives birth to the figure in the second frame, who unites both forces. He is masculine and feminine, soft and hard, complete but still forming. The size and position of Toomer's signature imply that he is the subject as well as the artist of the drawing. His bold signature, located beneath the title, is double its size and the trailing flourishes underlining his first and last names encompasses the horizontal line of metamorphosing figures above. The term "artis" [sic], skewed as it is toward the left side of the page, seems to be an afterthought added, along with his home address, after completion of the drawing. Yet its presence is significant. One of the very few labels Toomer would embrace during his lifetime is artist, and at a mere seven years of age the precocious Toomer claims it for himself. Having not yet christened himself "Jean," he is nonetheless on the road to becoming the writer of *Cane*.

The contradictory forces within him did not always co-exist so peacefully. Toomer was prone to sudden "internal break-ups" that prompted a lifelong quest for a totalizing system that would enable him to achieve a sense of wholeness and internal coherence (*Letters* 195). One of the first systems that he devoted himself to wholeheartedly was the physical culture movement. Toomer's fascination with bodybuilding began during his third year of high school when he

enrolled in "several correspondence courses in muscle-building and health promotion" and gradually worked his way up to heavy-weight lifting (*Wayward* 89). In spite of his slim frame, the teenage Toomer was able to grow "muscularly strong" through a regimen that included diet, breathing exercises, and techniques adopted from training manuals written by notable physical culturists, including the creator of *Physical Culture* magazine, Bernarr Macfadden (*ibid*). Not only did bodybuilding serve as a corrective to a masturbatory habit that Toomer felt was injurious to his health, but it also presented him with an opportunity to exert control over his appearance by resculpting his physique through targeted exercises. Toomer could, therefore, stop himself from "falling to pieces," while simultaneously piecing together a new version of himself (*ibid*). Mark Whalan has argued along similar lines, asserting that Toomer claimed "artistic agency over his identity" through his involvement with physical culture, and he locates Toomer's bodybuilding within a larger pattern of shifting and contested masculinities ("Taking" 604). Whalan contends that the performative brand of masculinity endorsed by the physical culture movement was potentially empowering for racial minorities because it offered "liberation from biological determinism" through its emphasis on the individual agency, labor, and careful planning necessary to construct the built body ("Taking" 608). By cultivating a muscular physique and appropriating representational modes traditionally reserved for white, middle class males, namely the bodybuilding poses necessary for enacting "idealized masculinity," men from marginalized groups, like Toomer, could gain access to the authority, power, and respect that was otherwise denied them (605).

However, Whalan overlooks the fact that many of the most famous bodybuilders of the early twentieth century, including those featured in Toomer's scrapbook, were immigrants who inhabited the fringes of society as itinerant performers on the Vaudeville circuit or as strongmen

for circus acts until their meteoric rise brought them to general prominence. He thus misses the irony that the masculine ideal meant to safeguard white privilege was itself built (pun intended) on the backs of men who were marked as alien outsiders, or, though white, were treated as racialized others within a fiercely nativist climate.⁸⁸ In this sense foreign-born bodybuilders function as exemplars for Toomer of how to change his social position and move from the periphery to the mainstream. Furthermore, Whalan's emphasis on the potentially liberatory aspects of the physical culture movement leads to a disregard for the various ways in which the movement re-inscribed the status quo, particularly through its affiliation with eugenics. Although he touches upon Macfadden's eugenicist convictions in a footnote, Whalan does not consider how the physical culture movement was implicated within the eugenics program, serving as a conduit for eugenic theories and the chief source of images of the ideal eugenic body, nor does he explore the influence of these ideas upon Toomer.

My discussion of Toomer's involvement with physical culture will remedy these oversights by focusing upon a scrapbook that he assembled during his college years that contains clippings of bodybuilders, classical statues, and personal photographs.⁸⁹ This artifact has received very little scholarly attention in the past largely because the names of the athletic men and women pictured in its pages are no longer well-known. Although they were celebrated figures in 1914, their star has waned during the intervening century. Through extensive research, I have identified these strongmen and women, and knowledge of their backgrounds provides insight into what attracted Toomer to them beyond the sheer beauty of their bodies. By closely analyzing Toomer's scrapbook, I tease out the ambivalences and tensions it exposes at this

⁸⁸ Think, for example, of the aspersions cast upon Irish and Italian immigrants.

⁸⁹ The scrapbook is housed at Yale's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library among the Jean Toomer papers. See Box 65, Folder 1505. High quality scans of the scrapbook are available online through Beinecke's Digital Collections. All pagination mentioned here refers to the digital version.

formative period in his life and self-construction.

The scrapbook, likely compiled between 1914 and 1917, bears testament to Toomer's belief in the perfectibility of the human form.⁹⁰ Between the album's sober, unadorned covers, reproductions of Greek and Roman statues appear alongside photographs of bodybuilders whose muscular development rivals that of the divinities and ancient athletes sculpted in marble. During the "strongman heyday" from 1889 to 1914, many performers sought to make this classical connection explicit by adopting stage names derived from Greco-Roman mythology (e.g., Hercules, Apollo, and Cyclops), emulating the poses of famed works of art, and re-enacting feats of strength from the ancient world (Kent 298). Maria Wyke maintains that bodybuilders not only derived their physical ideal of symmetry and beauty from classical sculpture, but that they deployed classical elements in their routines in order to elevate the fledgling sport and confer respectability upon the public display of the nude or nearly nude male body (358). Classical poses "gave the veneer of high art and instructional purpose" to performances that catered to the voyeuristic pleasure of witnessing a muscular body put through its paces for the purpose of visual delectation (ibid). A canon of classical images began to form within the bodybuilding community, established by pioneers in the field, such as George Barker Windship and Eugen Sandow, that would be expanded upon by succeeding generations of athletes. The statuary that Toomer selected for inclusion in his scrapbook adheres to this canon, and thus it is necessary to examine how that canon emerged and what it contained.

One of the earliest exponents of weightlifting in America, George Barker Windship

⁹⁰ My rationale for the start date is that a photograph of the University of Wisconsin's Armory (better known as "The Red Gym") appears on the fifteenth page of the scrapbook and lyrics to the school songs have been pasted on a later page. Toomer did not attend the university until the summer of 1914 (Kerman and Eldridge 2). After America's entrance into WWI, Toomer was declared unfit for service due to "bad eyes and a hernia gotten in a basketball game" (*Wayward* 106). This rejection initiated a period of wandering and odd jobs before he stumbled upon a new, cerebral passion, George Bernard Shaw, making a later date for the album unlikely.

(1834-1876) was a mere five feet tall and weighed one hundred pounds when he began his studies at Harvard (Todd 5). The arc of Windship's progression from one of the smallest members of his class to being reputed "the strongest man" among them as a result of heavy weightlifting would develop into a convention of bodybuilding literature, repeated *ad infinitum*, even in cases where it was patently untrue (Windship 105).⁹¹ Windship idolized the *Hercules Farnese*, declaring it to be "the bodily outline" best suited to "the exercise of the greatest amount of strength," and he studied the sculpture's contours with an eye to replicating its muscular physique (108). After securing his medical degree, he toured the nation giving public lectures on physical culture from the summer of 1859 to the spring of 1861, and he concluded each of these lectures with demonstrations of his prodigious strength, ranging from doing pull-ups with his little fingers to lifting more than two thousand pounds with the aid of a wooden yoke (Paul 48; Windship 114). In an autobiographical sketch for *The Atlantic Monthly* published in 1862, Windship recalls how classical sculpture inspired and directed the course of his physical training while at Harvard, and he calls for casts of Greek statues to be installed in university gymnasias in order to encourage students to emulate their ideal physiques (108). The statues that elicited his particular "admiration and study were the Quoit-Thrower and the Dying Gladiator," though the Farnese Hercules remained Windship's personal ideal. As he succinctly explains, "Some years earlier I might have been more attracted by the Apollo Belvedere; but it was a Hercules I dreamed of becoming, and the Apollo was but the incipient and potential Hercules" (ibid).

All four of these works of art appear in Toomer's scrapbook, clustered together over two

⁹¹ The inspirational message of weakling turned strongman frequently formed part of a clever marketing scheme—think, for example, of Charles Atlas's "97-pound weakling" campaign—designed to entice scrawny or average sized men into purchasing systems of exercise from paragons whose heavily muscled bodies seemed impossible to emulate. However, in Windship's case, the stories of his youthful weakness neither seem to be fabricated, nor motivated by a desire for financial gain. He never sold a "training manual or printed course," and it was not until long after his lecture tour ended that Windship began to design and sell exercise equipment to the public (Todd 11).

pages (2-3). On the first of these pages (Fig. 18), the Apollo Belvedere and the Dying Gladiator have been arranged in a diamond shaped formation along with Michelangelo's David and a bronze titled "The Disc Thrower" (now known simply as "Runner"). By pairing the Apollo Belvedere with David as the horizontal edges of the diamond, Toomer draws attention to the extraordinary development of their lower abdominal muscles, which exhibit a pronounced V-shape, and the graceful tapering of their limbs. Just as the layout of the clippings encourages the viewer's eye to move freely about the page, the common bond between the sculptures is their sense of movement. Both David and Apollo appear in *contrapposto* with the weight of their bodies distributed toward the planted back foot while the left foot rests partially on its toes as if ready to move at a moment's notice. In the left hand, each hero displays the weapon famously associated with him in story, the slingshot and bow (now missing), respectively, at shoulder level. The Runner stands with his head and shoulders leaning forward, his body tensed in anticipation of the start of the race, and even the Dying Gladiator conveys dynamic motion through the twist of his falling body, the flexed forearm that strains to hold him upright, and the anguished look on his face as the wound in his side drips blood.

Despite the presence of the Apollo Belvedere, Toomer seems to share Windship's preference for the heavily muscled frame of the Farnese Hercules, the only sculpture to be featured twice in the scrapbook (Fig. 19). Positioned alongside the slender builds of the Capitoline Venus and Myron's Discobolus (the Quoit-Thrower), the colossal Hercules looks even more imposing by comparison (Scrapbook 3). As he leans upon his club, the body of this "Weary Hercules" flexes, emphasizing the breadth of his shoulders and arms, the full definition of his pectoral muscles, and tightly knotted abdominals supported by powerful legs. The close-up of Hercules's head through upper thigh region on the subsequent page indicates that Toomer's

fascination with the statue derives from the musculature of its upper body, which some critics regarded as excessive and ungainly, deriding the "clumsy, vast trunk, loaded with superfluous masses of muscle" (Haskell and Penny 230). However, as Jan Todd points out, the Hercules Farnese has "always [been] one of several competing ideals" for men, and during the late nineteenth century when heavy weightlifting was not a regular feature of exercise regimes, "the Farnese's great girths . . . seemed unattainable" (33). Consequently, the Apollo's slimmer proportions became the model that most men, including the tall, fine-boned Toomer, strove to emulate (ibid). Yet, among strongmen, Hercules remained the standard of perfection, and the immense popularity of Eugen Sandow, who was said to "rival the statuesque beauty [of] the Farnese Hercules" (Figs. 20-21), helped to bring the broad-shouldered, heavily muscled build back into fashion (Waller 81). With the exception of the Apollo Belvedere, Sandow posed as all of the statues that Windship admired, and he added some classical poses of his own to the emerging canon, including duplicating Lysippos's Apoxyomenos onstage as well as two sculptures present in Toomer's scrapbook—the Runner and the Wrestler (2-3).

Posing manuals written by Sandow's successors, such as Monte Saldo's *How to Pose* (1914) and Edward Aston's "Posing Course" (c. 1921), reinforced the centrality of classical sculpture to the sport of bodybuilding. In *How to Pose*, the first book on the subject authored by a physical culturist, Saldo selects thirty-six "classical examples," and systematically explains how to duplicate their stances (Webster 19). Among these was Michelangelo's David, which had become such a favorite with bodybuilders by the turn of the twentieth century that not only did the self-proclaimed "father of physical culture" in America, Bernarr Macfadden, have himself professionally photographed as the giant-slayer for commercial cabinet cards (Fig. 22), but *Health and Strength* magazine held a "David Pose Competition" in 1907. Toomer collected

Macfadden's David and Sandow's Hercules for his scrapbook as well as magazine articles that paired strongmen with classical statuary for the purposes of comparison (Scrapbook 10, 8).⁹² In one such instance, Al Treloar (born Albert Toof Jenkins), winner of Macfadden's first physique contest in 1903, has been juxtaposed with the Farnese Gladiator, and the human strongman's chiseled abdominals equal or even surpass the musculature of the classical figure (Scrapbook 11). On the same page, a young Thomas Inch, "Britain's strongest man," lacks the defined chest of the Dancing Faun that appears alongside him, yet Inch's larger biceps and narrow waist produce the inverted triangular shape popular among bodybuilders. Both men capitalized on their celebrated physiques by writing instructional books on physical culture (e.g., Treloar's *The Science of Muscular Development: A Text Book of Physical Training* [1904] and Inch's *Scientific Weight Lifting* [1905]), and became respected physical trainers with Treloar serving as Physical Director of the Los Angeles Athletic Club for over forty years (1907-1950) while Inch advocated physical culture for the masses and taught his popular system of exercise by mail.

Like Inch and Treloar, the majority of the men and women Toomer selected for inclusion in his scrapbook are founders of systems of exercise, including H.W. Titus, Lionel Strongfort, Paul Von Boeckmann, Antone Matysek, and Max Sick, who offered their services to the public for a fee through correspondence courses, textbooks, and subscriptions to gymnasiums.⁹³ The inspirational photographs of their well-built physiques attest to the efficacy of their methods and

⁹² The latter was a regular feature of Macfadden's *Physical Culture* magazine, and the photographs Treloar and Inch were most likely clipped from its pages (Scrapbook 11).

⁹³ H.W. Titus, trainer of the strongman George Rolandow, proclaimed himself the "most successful instructor of physical culture" and offered lessons at his New York gym or by correspondence course. Lionel Strongfort, creator of Strongfortism, claimed to be able to "remedy almost any physical fault through natural means without the use of drugs or medicines" and played upon fears of emasculation to sell his system in magazines for over two decades (ca. 1910-1935). Von Boeckmann was a "respiratory specialist" and creator of the pneumauxetor, which he marketed as "a gymnasium for the internal body." Antone Matysek, a Vaudevillian strongman and protégé of Alan Calvert, parlayed his frequent appearances in *Strength* magazine into a brief career selling Matysek's Muscle Control course by mail during the late teens and early 1920s. Max Sick, who performed under the stage name Maxick, joined forces with Monte Saldo to produce the Maxaldo (later Maxalding) system of isometric exercise.

promise similar results to anyone who successfully completes the course. The possibility of physical transformation appealed to the teenaged Toomer, whose "overgrown lanky body" was "a source of shame" to him, and he strove to turn his "skinny body, with the shoulders drooping and the chest curving in" into a work of art under their tutelage.⁹⁴ His autobiographical writings confirm that Toomer enrolled in the correspondence courses of some of the individuals pictured in the scrapbook, including the wrestler Martin "Farmer" Burns, whose protégé Frank Gotch defeated the Estonian Georg Hackenschmidt to secure the title of world heavyweight wrestling champion in a controversial bout in 1908 and rematch in 1911 (photographs of all three men appear on Scrapbook 17).⁹⁵ Since an exhaustive discussion of all of the athletes pictured in the scrapbook, or even those whose courses Toomer likely took, is not possible, I have selected two representative figures, one male and one female to examine in greater detail. Not only are they both foreign-born Vaudevillians, but based upon the anthropometric measurements that would govern bodybuilding from the late 1890s onwards, Eugen Sandow and Annette Kellermann were the perfect physical specimens of their respective genders.

Born Friedrich Wilhelm Müller in Königsberg in 1867, Eugen Sandow left his native Prussia in order to avoid conscription into the military, and he began his career as a strongman in Brussels under the tutelage of renowned trainer and veteran performer Professor Attila (Kent 34; Black 11). His early routines catered to the public's desire for novelty acts that blended feats of strength with humor or magic. In one such act entitled *L'Afficheur* (the bill-sticker), Sandow

⁹⁴ Book X, Second Draft JTP Box 11, Folder 362. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

⁹⁵ Even Farmer Burns made the obligatory turn on Vaudeville during his early days as a strongman, performing a death-defying routine called the "Long Drop." With a hangman's noose firmly fastened about his neck and hands tied behind his back, Burns would fall six feet through a trapdoor, and hang for three minutes in mid air whilst whistling or humming tunes until his assistant pulled him back onstage (Kent 118). Only the thick musculature around his neck enabled Burns to survive this stunt.

threw an acrobat named Francois about the stage with such ease that audiences thought he was a doll until the acrobat began to bend his body into designs "imitating well-known posters" (ibid; Adams 35-6). Even after Sandow defeated Sampson to earn the title of "the strongest man on earth," his music hall engagements featured comedic elements, like feigning annoyance at the pianist's playing and carrying him offstage, piano and all (Kent 26). After four years of headlining British music halls, Sandow came to New York in June 1893, where Florenz Ziegfeld recruited him to headline the Trocadero Vaudevilles. Already well-known in Europe, it was in Chicago and on the ensuing national tour (The Sandow Trocadero Vaudevilles) that Sandow made a name for himself in America. Backed by Ziegfeld's savvy marketing, including special appearances at the Chicago World's Fair and commercial distribution of the prints made by Sarony, Sandow's symmetrically developed physique became the ideal of strength and beauty aspired to by a generation of men. Dr. Dudley Allen Sargent, director of Harvard's Hemenway Gymnasium and an authority on physical training, provided a scientific basis for this hero worship when he examined Sandow in the summer of 1893. After conducting more than forty anthropometric measurements and subjecting the strongman to mechanized tests of strength, speed, and lung capacity, Dr. Sargent issued a formal statement to the *New York World* concluding that "altogether Sandow is the most wonderful specimen of man I have ever seen. He is strong, active, and graceful, combining the characteristics of Apollo, Hercules, and the ideal athlete" (qtd. in Adam 121).

Following his conquest of America, Sandow returned to England, where he became a naturalized citizen and founded a physical culture empire that included *Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture*, numerous gymnasias, a series of how-to books (e.g., *Strength and How to Obtain It* [1897]), and organized the world's first physique competition, which took place in

London in 1901 (Black 14-15; Kent 140-42). Around the time that Toomer pasted Sandow's picture into his scrapbook, wild rumors were circulating that Sandow had been "executed in London Tower as a German spy" ("Eugen" 4; "Men" III3). The source of these rumors in America, an English woman named Mrs. M.A. Harper, explained that Sandow's German heritage rendered him suspicious at a time when anti-German sentiment soared to new heights following the sinking of the Lusitania. She declared that "nothing connected with Germany in any way is tolerated" in Britain, and interpreted Sandow's disappearance from public life as proof of his death (ibid). While Mrs. Harper's conclusions were incorrect—Sandow was very much still alive—his finances suffered from suspicions of his pro-German sympathies and by 1916, one branch of his empire, Sandow's Cocoa Ltd. was in bankruptcy (Kent 277; Chapman 170).⁹⁶ To make matters worse, by the mid-teens the pendulum of public opinion had swung back in favor of the slimmer Apollonian build with the Apollo Belvedere once again held up as "the classic idea of perfect manly proportions," and Sandow's once "perfect" physique began to be subjected to criticism. In an article on "Proper Physical Development" written in 1919, L.E. Eubanks acknowledges that Sandow "possesses a wonderful body," but warns that at just 5'8 "his shortness of stature and noticeably short legs would, I think, reduce his chances in a 'perfect man' contest" (347). Sandow lived on until 1925, but his glory days were behind him.

The "Diving Venus," Annette Kellermann was born in Sydney in 1886, and she learned

⁹⁶ Other German strongmen appearing in Toomer's scrapbook did not fare as well as Sandow during the Great War. Arthur Saxon (born Arthur Hennig), eldest member of the Saxon Trio, which toured the United States with Ringling Brothers in 1909-10, fought during WWI, seemingly on the German side, and died under mysterious circumstances in 1921, having, according to some sources, never fully recovered after the hardships suffered during his military service (Scrapbook 6, top). The diminutive Max Sick (5'4) was a German strongman of Swiss descent (Scrapbook 9). Maxick was already a successful music hall performer in Europe when Tromp Van Diggelen invited him to come to London in 1909 to challenge Thomas Inch, the world's reigning professional middleweight weightlifter (Kent 138, 176). The contest never took place, and instead Maxick squared off against Inch's successor, Edward Aston, in a series of matches throughout 1910. Between 1914 and 1918, Maxick permitted himself to be interned as a "resident alien" in London, rather than return to Germany.

to swim at a young age in order to treat a debilitating condition that forced her to wear what she described as "painful and humiliating steel braces" whenever she walked (Kellermann, *How* 14). By the time that she was fifteen years old, swimming and calisthenics had strengthened her legs to such a degree that she was able to enter and win her first swimming competition. Kellermann became a professional swimmer in Australia, setting record times in several events, before traveling to England in 1905. Numerous well-publicized long distance swims, including three failed attempts to swim the English Channel, made her a celebrity and launched her lengthy career as a Vaudevillian. First in London, then in theatres across America, Kellermann performed a popular diving act in a custom-made tank. The *San Francisco Chronicle* enthused, "seeing Miss Kellermann as she dashes through her work is a delight. . . . There is no posing, but a swift run, a flash through the air, the bobbing up of the smiling face, [and] the rushing up again for an even more beautiful and difficult dive" ("Annette" 22). Audiences were equally enthusiastic about her shapely figure, which showed to advantage in her signature form-fitting, one-piece bathing suit (Fig. 23). Kellermann's "measurements that almost surpass belief," as her promotional posters put it, had been taken by Dr. Sargent, the same authority who touted Sandow's physique more than a decade earlier. Of the ten thousand women he examined, Sargent declared Kellermann to be nearest to "the ideal type," and the press dubbed her "the perfect woman" ("Modern Woman" SM4). However, Kellermann emphasized that she had to work hard to achieve her extraordinary physique, and in public lectures and advertising for her correspondence course, she encouraged other women to exercise, promising "You can have a figure as perfect as mine—if you really want it!" (*Body* 155).

By the time that Toomer compiled his scrapbook, Kellermann had become a movie star, and she wears the costume featured on promotional posters for her film *Neptune's Daughter*

(1914) in the picture that he chose of her to paste within its pages (Scrapbook 13). Photographed in an elaborately beaded headdress and white bodysuit with a fringed sarong draped about her hips, Kellermann stands in profile, one graceful arm extended above her head (Figs. 24-25). One is struck by the narrowness of her waist and the curve of her breast, yet the serenity of her face and the balletic artistry of the pose prevents the image from seeming vulgar. However, Kellermann experienced her fair share of controversy, and Toomer's interest in her suggests that his views on sexual liberation formed early. In 1907, she had been arrested on charges of public indecency for wearing her one-piece swimsuit on a beach in Boston. Kellermann chafed at the "absurd conventions" governing women's swimwear, and claimed that "the silly styles in bathing costumes . . . make real swimming well-nigh impossible" (*Physical* 88). The publicity from her arrest and hearing did much to alter public opinion in favor of less cumbersome bathing costumes for women, as is illustrated by the photograph of serial film queen Ruth Roland in a skin-baring, sleeveless unitard and swimming cap (ca. 1913) on the subsequent page of the scrapbook (Fig. 26). Although Roland never appeared nude onscreen, as Kellermann famously did in *Daughter of the Gods* (1916), they have much in common. Pioneers of silent cinema who performed many of their own stunts on film, these "New Women" pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable for women to do and wear, and their savvy business dealings ensured that they were prosperous and self-sufficient.⁹⁷ The scrapbook attests that Toomer's taste in women did not incline toward shrinking violets.

The examples of Eugen Sandow and Annette Kellermann, the "perfect" man and woman, illustrate how early physical culturists sought to quantify bodily perfection, and reveal the central role that anthropometry, the system of measurement used to legitimate evolutionary and racial

⁹⁷ Roland founded her own production company, Ruth Roland Serials, and produced six of the films that she starred in between 1919 and 1923.

hierarchies, played in the physical culture movement. Not only did many physical culturists promote themselves by making their measurements freely available to the public, they also encouraged average Americans to turn the measuring tape upon themselves. In tables organized by height, these men and women could compare their measurements (i.e., neck, chest, waist, hips, thigh, and calf) and weight with the ideal values derived from the proportions of Greek and Roman statues. While these charts varied somewhat from one physical culturist to the next, most agreed that symmetrical development was the primary goal, and adhered to "the well-established rule for male perfection" that the neck, biceps, and calf should be equivalent in girth. Some authorities even ventured to offer measurements for what they believed to be "the perfect man." In L.E. Eubanks's estimation, he stands 5'10, weighs 180 pounds, has a 16 inch neck, 43 inch chest, 33 inch waist, and 39 inch hips (346). Alan Calvert, founder of the Milo Barbell Company and editor of *Health* magazine, warned his pupils against consulting these "ideal tables" because they fail to factor in differences in bone structure, and instead he offered a mathematical formula for achieving the optimal proportions for one's own frame (Beckwith and Todd 18). Calvert emphasized that while his methods "turn out men like the ancient Greek athletes," only men with "unusually heavy bones" will develop into a Hercules, whereas an average man can hope to achieve the figure of a Theseus or Perseus, and "small-boned men" will acquire "the proportions of an Apollo or a Mercury" when fully developed (*Super*, 199).

What is notable about the scrapbook is that Toomer has chosen images that do not contain the measurements of the athletes, nor has he written them in the margins. Instead, he permits the bodies of the men and women to speak for themselves. At a time when these measurements were routinely featured in the press, including being printed on promotional photographs, Toomer's refusal to prioritize them is significant and may mark an awareness of the

ways in which numerical values colonize the body and displace its humanity. When writing about his involvement with physical culture from the perspective of middle age, Toomer's discussion of anthropometry captures its erasure of the human subject at the grammatical level. Motivated by the fear that his "questionable and even suspicious" measurements—Toomer was six feet tall and only weighed 135 pounds at the time—would make him the subject of ridicule and too weak to defend himself physically should the occasion require, he began lifting weights. As part of this regimen of exercise, he recalls, "once a week the measurements of my principal parts were duly recorded for comparison with measurements of the week before and the week to come" (Book X 64). By resorting to passive voice, he tacitly acknowledges the way in which the division of the body into measureable units, or "parts," leads to the disappearance of the speaking subject, and he characterizes the act of measuring as the work of a drone mindlessly following the instructions of an unspecified superior. With anthropometry as the foundation of scientific bodybuilding, individuals become little more than columns of figures and sums in a ledger of human perfectibility, and their humanity takes a backseat to the quest to achieve the heroic proportions of the classical age. This is particularly evident in Kellermann's case. When the *New York Times* announced that Dr. Sargent believed her to be the most perfectly proportioned woman of modern times, the only personal information that the article provides about her is the well-known fact that Kellermann is a "professional swimmer" followed by five paragraphs of increasingly (and obsessively) detailed measurements of her body, including her weight, sitting height, instep, and even the distance from her elbow to fingertips. Although Kellermann benefited from the acclaim and would reprint portions of Sargent's measurements throughout her lifetime, she also chafed at being reduced to a purely physical being, quipping that scientific authorities adjudged her the perfect woman "only from the neck down" (qtd. in Walsh).

Prior to the establishment of commissions, like the American Continental Weight Lifting Association, to regulate and authenticate claims, numerical values put forth by athletes—whether their measurements or the weights they purported to have lifted—were notoriously unreliable. Even greats like Sandow padded their measurements. In *Strength and How to Obtain It*, Sandow inflated them to such an outrageous degree, claiming a massive 62 inch expanded chest, that it elicited an outcry from his fellow strongmen. William Bankier, who performed as Apollo, the Scottish Hercules, exclaimed, "the measurements he gives are pure imagination on his part, and I defy him to prove them" while the more level-headed Calvert demonstrated that the measurements Sandow claimed for himself did not tally mathematically and observed that it was "very careless of Sandow (or his publisher)" to include the chart of Sargent's measurements, which contradicted his boasts in the same volume (Bankier 47; Calvert, *Truth*). Numbers were also unreliable because they froze the body at a specific moment in time, and these static figures could be made to distort reality when taken out of context. For more than a decade, Kellermann and her admirers trotted out the measurements that Sargent had taken of her as if no intervening time had passed. Despite claims that "her figure had not changed by a fraction of an inch, or by the least part of an ounce, in over 16 years," it seems extremely unlikely that her measurements remained unaltered, especially given the fluctuations in her physique visible in the photographic record ("I Used" 111). Thus, while conformity to a numerically based ideal remained essential to bodybuilding, savvy performers and their managers could manipulate these figures to their own advantage.

Following the common practice of printing before and after photographs of spectacular transformations in advertisements for systems of exercise, Toomer documents his own progress as a "physiculturist" by pasting photographs of himself alongside the professional bodybuilders

in his scrapbook (Fig. 27). In one full-length photograph (Fig. 28), he stands outdoors wearing a track and field uniform bearing a stylized American flag (Scrapbook 12). Although his body is symmetrical and his arms appear well-defined, compared to the more powerful physiques of the bodybuilders, who wear only posing thongs and strike stances designed to show off their musculature in the photographs adjacent to his, he appears slight.⁹⁸ A few pages later, a noticeably more muscular and darkly bronzed Toomer, wearing a white, body-baring sleeveless shirt and lightly colored pants poses amid a group of friends (Scrapbook 15-16). In one shot he stands in profile with his hand on his hip, exposing a taut pectoral muscle and ropy bicep (Fig. 29), while in another his body squarely faces the camera, arms crossed and flexed across his chest as his face, turned toward one of his companions, erupts into a wide grin (Fig. 30). These images of playful camaraderie contrast markedly with the lonely, slightly downcast looking figure in the previous photograph and suggest that personal satisfaction, acceptance, and companionship are contingent upon physical fitness, or as one of Lionel Strongfort's ads promises: "The strong, healthy, vigorous man is the popular man – the man whom everybody wants for a friend" ("Can You" 99).

Along with regimens for improving his physique, Toomer encountered the ideals of the eugenics movement in literature authored by physical culturists. Advertisements for strength training products routinely played upon fears engendered by eugenicists, urging potential customers not to be "a chronic weakling" or member of "the insignificant class" but instead to

⁹⁸ The striking central image on this page of the scrapbook fuses two photographs of Lionel Strongfort engaged in dumbbell exercises, and the resulting mirror image accompanied the eighth lesson of his correspondence course as illustrations 43A and 43B. The presence of these particular images in the scrapbook confirms that Toomer studied Strongfortism. This represents a significant outlay of funds since the complete course cost \$25 in 1917.

learn to be "a real man" and achieve the "ideal of red blooded manhood."⁹⁹ Bernarr Macfadden, founder of *Physical Culture* magazine and one of Toomer's personal idols, was an unequivocal supporter of the eugenics movement. In his *Encyclopedia*, Macfadden endorses eugenics as "a big and splendid program" led by "earnest and scientific investigators," who have undertaken the essential task of revealing "important truths . . . which the world must eventually learn" (2416). What is more, Macfadden sternly lectures that "the consistent physical culturist" would "naturally concern himself with putting into practice the fundamental principles of this new science" (ibid). Macfadden did just that by marrying the winner of his contest to find "Great Britain's Perfect Woman" and together they produced a brood of physically fit children that he believed marked "the beginning of a new race of human beings" (Adams 85, 88). Toomer purchased all of Macfadden's publications, including the five-volume *Encyclopedia*, and claimed to have "read each page of each book" (Book X 63). As an ardent disciple, he sought to live up to his idol's mandates and proselytized on his behalf, "talking and arguing his ideas with everyone" (*Wayward* 90). The influence of Macfadden's eugenic thinking filters into Toomer's own aspirations at that time to cure "a diseased humanity" by converting them to his mentor's way of life (Book X 63).

Macfadden is not the only physical culturist whom Toomer idolized to espouse eugenic rhetoric. What is less well-known is that the strongman, Lionel Strongfort (born Max Unger), who appears twice in the scrapbook was also deeply involved in the eugenics movement, both in America and his native Germany (Scrapbook 9, 12). Strongfort made a name for himself in America by performing his "human bridge act" on Vaudeville before retiring from the stage and starting a lucrative and long-lasting correspondence course on physical culture (ca. 1910-1935),

⁹⁹ These quotations appear in an advertisement for Matysek's Muscle Control Course ("Listen" 1053) and advertisements for Strongfortism in *Popular Mechanics* from 1922-23 ("Glory" 29; "Man!" 65).

which he modestly called Strongfortism (Fig. 31).¹⁰⁰ The advertisements for this course, billed as "the science of the normal," feature provocative opening lines, like "Constipation Kills!" or "Are you a reject?," and contain some of the most explicitly eugenic rhetoric employed by any of the physical culturists to sell their systems of exercise. In a series of ads published under the tagline "Would the law let you marry?" between 1918 and 1922, Strongfort declares "physical degeneration the curse of the race" and lauds the "wise" States that have implemented legislation to prevent the "physically unfit" from marrying.¹⁰¹ Using scare tactics to solicit potential customers, he asks "would you be doomed by this law" to a life of unhappiness, before offering the assurance that "there is a way out." Assuming a Lamarckian understanding of the laws of inheritance, Strongfort maintains that "You can be the father of strong, sturdy, happy children, no matter what you are now; if you . . . build yourself up into the kind of man you ought to be" ("Are YOU" 135). He invokes the doctrine of biological determinism, proclaiming "the law of heredity can't be evaded," in order to subtly undercut it by promoting his self-help manuals that offer the chance for the "defective" man to transform himself into a "clean-blooded, healthy, vigorous specimen of vital manhood" through his own agency.¹⁰² Indeed, doing so is one's civic duty, Strongfort averred since "we are entrusted with the sacred duty of perpetuating *the race*" (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁰ In Strongfort's version of the "human bridge act," he would lie on his back in the Tomb of Hercules position and support a wooden bridge using his arms and chest. Then an automobile filled with passengers would drive over the bridge while he held it upright. Although Strongfort claimed to be the inventor of "the automobile trick," it was based upon an act that Sandow had performed in the 1890s where a horse took the place of the vehicle. Strongfort's "human bridge act" was immensely popular and spawned a number of imitators. For more information, see "This Modern" 10.

¹⁰¹ I include full citations here, rather than the standard parenthetical notation, due to the potential confusion arising from multiple sources having the same title. "Would the Law Let you Marry?" Advertisement for Lionel Strongfort. *The World 1918 Almanac and Encyclopedia*. New York: The Press Publishing Co., 1917. 96. *Internet Archive* and "Would the Law Let you Marry?" Advertisement for Lionel Strongfort. *Illustrated World* 31.2 (Apr. 1919): 309.

¹⁰² "Would the Law Let you Marry?" Advertisement for Lionel Strongfort. *Photoplay Magazine* 20.4 (Oct. 1921): 122.

Strongfort also founded institutes in major cities across the world, including a branch named for him in Berlin-Wilmersdorf. The Lionel Strongfort Institute had a booth at the International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden in 1930 where eugenics featured prominently, and after the Exhibition concluded, the Institute used "a letter of appreciation for its participation in the event" written by Georg Seiring, "the managing director of the German Hygiene Museum," in its German advertising (Hau 182; Brauer, *Art* 3).¹⁰³ Although Strongfort advocated eugenics, he was not a supporter of the Nazi party, and the Nazis arrested and imprisoned him in Berlin during the spring of 1934 for failure "to report funds" in his possession outside of Germany ("American's" 11). Strongfort survived his ordeal, and the resilient entrepreneur operated his correspondence course out of Munich following the conclusion of WWII.

Toomer's internalization of the eugenic ideals preached by Macfadden and Strongfort takes tangible form in the scrapbook through the absence of athletes of color and the presence of classical works of art with close associations to the eugenics movement. At the time that Toomer assembled his scrapbook, a growing number of black athletes had managed to overcome the color barrier and achieve widespread recognition for their sporting prowess. Marshall "Major" Taylor won the world cycling championship in 1899; Jack Johnson became the world heavyweight boxing champion in 1908; Fritz Pollard and Paul Robeson played to great acclaim on white collegiate football teams; and black track and field stars, including gold medalist John Baxter Taylor, medaled at the 1904 and 1908 Olympics. Yet, despite the availability of black role models, all of the athletes in Toomer's scrapbook are Caucasian. A fair number of them conform to the Nordic ideal of blonde hair and blue eyes, and their light skin tones stand out in

¹⁰³ Following the Nazis' rise to power in 1933, the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden became the institutional face of their program of "racial hygiene." Susan Bachrach, who curated an exhibit entitled "Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race" (2006-7) at the museum, stated that although the German Hygiene Museum had advocated eugenics in the 1920s, "it became a mouthpiece for Nazi racial ideas after '33" (qtd. in Curry).

high relief against a black backdrop or dark clothing in the majority of the shots.¹⁰⁴ Strongmen were known to use powders to mimic the coloration and definition of classical sculptures during their posing acts as well as in professional photographs, and it may be the resemblance of their (enhanced) alabaster skin to the marble of the statues that attracted Toomer's eye.

However, this fetishization of whiteness was part and parcel of the eugenics movement, which equated whiteness with culture, refinement, and sophistication. Classical sculpture operated as the dominant signifier of whiteness, and "in eugenic literature, visual and textual references to Apollo, the 'Periclean Age' and the Golden Age" were so pervasive that "the classical comparison functioned as a trope of the eugenic ideal" (Cogdell, "Future" 258). Eugenists, like J.H. Kellogg, the cereal magnate and one of the financial backers of the Race Betterment Foundation, promised that the establishment of an Eugenic Registry would eliminate "the mighty host of mental and moral cripples" that plague the nation and usher in a new "aristocracy of Apollos and Venuses and their fortunate progeny" ("Eugenics" 22). The Apollo Belvedere in particular, which had been invoked as the symbol of white superiority since the days of Camper's anatomical drawings and Nott and Gliddon's *Types of Mankind*, served as the "traditional and ongoing ideal of the eugenics movement" (Keely 313). Given the hefty ideological freight attached to this sculpture, its presence in the scrapbook, along with the Capitoline Venus and her human equivalent Annette Kellermann, suggests that the beauty of the human form was not the only consideration guiding Toomer's selection of images. He nearly admits as much when, reflecting upon what drew him to Macfadden's philosophy, a disenchanted Toomer confesses, "I was so fascinated by visions of that Apollo body that my critical faculty

¹⁰⁴ In one case, either the image was retouched by magazine editors to avoid censorship or Toomer himself drew black modesty briefs on Antone Matysek, who had been photographed from behind in the nude (Scrapbook 6, right). For the unretouched version of the image, see Calvert's *Super Strength*, Figure 134.

gladly stopped functioning" (Book X 62). Although he refers specifically to his inability (or unwillingness) to detect that Macfadden's intellect fell short of the promise of cultivating a "brilliant mind in the body of a Hercules or Apollo" through his methods, Toomer paints his former self as "pathetic and gullible" and completely writes off "the idiocies of this my first neophytism" (Book X 61, 65).

Despite the insinuation that his critical faculties atrophied under Macfadden's sway, Toomer was not simply a passive recipient of his mentor's eugenic agenda and instead adapted eugenics to his own ends. Like a number of black intellectuals during the 1920s, Toomer espoused a variant of eugenics that countered the purely hereditarian bias of hard-line eugenicists by emphasizing the role of environment. Among the adherents of this "reform" eugenics, as Marouf Hasian Jr. terms it, were Albert Sidney Beckham, author of "Applied Eugenics," and Kelly Miller, Dean of Arts and Sciences at Howard University (64). What distinguishes Toomer's views from those "reform" eugenicists who regarded eugenics as a scientific means of uplifting African Americans, or as Beckham put it, "breeding for tomorrow a better Negro," was that Toomer calls for "a creative synthesis of the best elements" across all races (qtd. in Hasian 64; *Selected Essays* 74). Drawing upon the work of noted anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička, curator of the Division of Physical Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution, Toomer argued that a new, hybrid race was in the process of forming in America as a result of interbreeding and environmental factors, and he calls this group "the American type." At a time when hard-line eugenicists pushed for legislation banning interracial marriage and touted the superiority of peoples of Nordic descent, Toomer saw in the emergence of "the American type," the nation's best hope for the future. Using eugenic rhetoric to subvert the racist aims of eugenicists in his essay "Race Problems and Modern Society" (1929), Toomer denies that "biological fitness" is a

white preserve and urges interracial unions and intercultural exchange as a means of producing "the best possible stock and culture" (*Selected Essays* 74). In direct opposition to adherents of racial purity, who proclaimed that "intermarriage produces halfbreeds, and halfbreeds are not conducive to the higher types of society," Toomer praises "the positive possibilities" presented by multiracial individuals, whose heritage enables them to transcend the "separatist and racial" tendencies that divide the nation (qtd. in Hasian 56; *Selected* 73). For Toomer, "the American type" alone "affirm[s] truly human values" (*Selected* 73).

Although Toomer's most overt engagement with eugenics occurs during the late 1920s, the seeds of his ideas about race and nation are already present in *Cane*. Jessica Hays Baldanzi traces the eugenic undercurrents in *Cane* to Toomer's "policing" of the reproductive capabilities of his female characters, especially those who, in the racial hierarchy of the text, represent "bad heritage" as "non-mixed or insufficiently mixed women" (16). According to this line of thought, Toomer's methods, but not his goal of producing a thoroughly amalgamated race, mirror those of mainstream eugenicists, who sought to control the gene pool by preventing dysgenic elements from reproducing (ibid). While Baldanzi rightly observes that "instances of failed reproduction in *Cane* far outweigh the book's successful births," her focus on character analysis leads her to overlook a pattern of figurative miscegenation in the text that prefigures Toomer's "American type" and offers the promise of joyous multiracial progeny without reducing women to stereotypes or mere "breeders" (18, 9). Indeed, in "Box Seat," the metaphorical union of "the dusk body of the street" with the personified spring reverses the sexual roles, calling for the masculine street to allow itself to be penetrated, to "open [its] liver lips to the lean, white spring" (59). Rather than an act of white domination or an internalization of white norms, this merger does not position one party as victim and the other as victimizer. Instead, having lowered its

barriers, the street consumes the spring, and a quickening ensues. Through the fusion of masculine and feminine, black and white, the male body becomes a womb where the seeds of life begin to fructify and "the root-life of a withered people" begins to "stir" (59). The pointed ambiguity of the indefinite article, which makes it equally plausible to interpret the "withered people" as black or white, hints that the biracial products of this union will revivify both communities, giving life to "the stale soggy wood" of white Washington and hope to its downtrodden black inhabitants by "teach[ing] them to dream" (41, 59).

Just as the "gleaming limbs and asphalt torso" of the street take on both masculine and feminine attributes, Toomer personifies the night as "a pregnant Negress" whose "womb-song" fertilizes the southern landscape (59, 105). In this second instance of figurative miscegenation, Night "throbs evenly against the torso of the South," characterized as "White-man's land," and conceives a child, the day, yet she also inseminates the "cane and cotton-fields, pine forests, cypress swamps, sawmills, and factories," which grow "fecund at her touch" (105). Both fertilizing agent and fertilized body, the hermaphroditic Night breathes life into natural and industrial spaces alike, "set[ting] them singing" (ibid). The birth and ascension of her "gold-glowing child," product of a white father and dark mother, forms the hopeful final image of *Cane*. As the sun "arises from its cradle in the tree-tops of the forest" and takes its mother's place in the sky, it sends a life-affirming "birth-song slanting down [the] gray dust streets and sleepy windows of the southern town" (117). The rising of the sun/Son fulfills the prophecy of "a new-world Christ coming up" from down below, and brings with it the vivifying color and enlightening rays that will awaken the sleeping townsfolk (65). In this scene, Toomer depicts the changing of the guard, the passing of the "dusky cane-lipped throngs" who "somnolently" sing the sorrow songs of old and find consolation in the promise of a better afterlife (e.g., Father

John), and the arrival of a class of biracial leaders, like the "copper-colored" Lewis, whose own "glowing" and call to action kindles an answering "sun-burst" in those he encounters (97, 103). Utilizing his mother's gift of song, this new messiah announces a brighter future in a paean of hope and joy that encompasses the entire town.

Toomer's racial identification during his college years was more complex than the contents of the scrapbook, with its entirely Caucasian grouping of athletes, might suggest. I contend that Toomer derived his most enduring nickname, "The Black Prince," from the pugilist Peter Jackson, "the nineteenth century's most internationally renowned black athlete" (Wiggins 168). Born in St. Croix in 1861, Jackson began his professional boxing career in Australia in 1882 where he became known as "The Black Prince" (Fig. 32). By the time that he arrived in America in 1888, he was the reigning heavyweight champion of Australia, and within a matter of months Jackson stripped the "colored" heavyweight world championship from George Godfrey before setting his sights on the world champion John L. Sullivan. Despite Jackson's extraordinary record—he remained undefeated while fighting regular bouts between 1888 and 1892—neither Sullivan nor his successor James J. Corbett were willing to defend their title against him in the ring.¹⁰⁵ Sullivan made no bones about his reasons for refusing Jackson's challenge, declaring "I will not fight a Negro. I never have and I never will," while Corbett was more coy about his motives (qtd. in Clark 165). Likely wanting to avoid a rematch against an opponent that had fought him to a no contest decision after 61 rounds in May 1891, Corbett dodged Jackson's challenges for three years until making the underhanded concession that he would agree to a match, but only if it was held in the deep South, the one place Jackson specified he could not fight due to concerns for his safety should he win (Clark 177; Wiggins 163-4). Despite the

¹⁰⁵ Box Rec, the online boxing site, attributes Jackson with only five losses during his entire career, two of which were earned during exhibition matches for failure to defeat a challenger in only 4 rounds.

ignoble tactics employed by his rivals, Jackson was immensely popular among both white and black audiences in the United States. At the time of his death from consumption in 1901, the *San Francisco Chronicle* eulogized the fallen legend by acknowledging that "many" believed Jackson "was rightly entitled to the championship of the world" ("Peter Jackson" 4). Renowned referee George Siler remembered him as "the best colored heavyweight pugilist that ever donned a glove" (6).

Although Toomer was only a child when Jackson died, like the "troops of black boys" who chased after their hero's "carriage cheering" in towns across America, the Black Prince Toomer drew his insignia in notebooks littered with "crowns, scepters, jewels, and ermine" (Petersen 118; Kerman and Eldridge 46). By the time that Toomer entered college and began studying boxing, he would recognize Jackson was the embodiment of his personal ideal—a gentleman with a "brilliant mind in the body of a Hercules or Apollo." At a time when prejudice generally barred celebration of black male bodies, the white media praised Jackson's tall, muscular frame, touting it as the classical ideal brought to life. The *Washington Post* declared Jackson "is built like a Greek statue, lithe and supple, but strong," and the *Los Angeles Times* rhapsodized "his magnificent physique . . . can only be compared to that of an ideal gladiator of the Roman amphitheater" [sic] ("Peter Jackson's Visit" 2; "Colored Champion" 3). When Eugen Sandow and Peter Jackson both visited San Francisco in 1894, the *Examiner* published a brace of articles ruminating upon "the perfect man" and debated which of the athletes possessed the better physique (Petersen 177). In a verdict that must have been shocking for the time, a number of authorities came down in favor of Jackson, and, the classicism so intimately entwined with narratives of white superiority would in this instance be used to find the black boxer superior to the Prussian strongman. One of the experts interviewed explained, "Peter Jackson to my mind

approaches the nearer the elegant proportions of the old Greek statues than Sandow. The lines of his contour of figure are more finely drawn, more delicate than those of Sandow" (qtd. in Petersen 178). Toomer considered Sandow's muscles to be "masterpieces," and the fact that Jackson was able to wrest the title of "perfect man" from him would not be lost on Toomer (Book X 64).

Jackson's graceful body also housed a nimble brain. Accounts of his prowess in the ring emphasize Jackson's intelligence and skillful strategy, rather than his brute strength. Indeed, the word invariably used to describe him is "clever." His contemporaries enthused that Jackson is a "wonderfully clever and hard-hitting boxer" and "Jackson impresses one as a wonderfully clever man," while the *San Francisco Chronicle* declared the match between Jackson and Corbett "the cleverest battle ever seen here" (Siler 6; "Peter Jackson's Visit" 2). Patrons of the California Athletic Club where Jackson worked as boxing director lauded the boxer as "a gentleman, a man of polish and culture," and Jackson was so well-regarded in London that he counted noblemen, like the Earl of Lonsdale, as his personal friends (Wiggins 160). For Toomer, who regarded himself as an "aristocrat of culture, of spirit and character," The Black Prince's intelligence, classically beautiful physique, and gentlemanly bearing would make him a model worthy of emulation (*Wayward* 112).

All of these factors may explain why, long after Jackson's death, Toomer continued to cultivate his nickname while serving as leader of a Gurdjieff group in Chicago (1926-1931). He carefully preserved a beautifully drawn, hand-tinted invitation from this period inviting the "King" to join "The Black Prince Toomer," depicted as a lanky stick figure with a jaunty hat and cane (punning on his most famous literary work) for dinner at a Chicago eatery, Cafe Old

Stamboul (Fig. 33).¹⁰⁶ The King wears Peter Jackson's signature fighting colors, the white and sky-blue of his adopted nation Australia, yet consistent with Toomer's belief that multiracial individuals will form the vanguard, leading America to a brighter future, strikingly blue eyes look out from the King's dusky purple face. He is Toomer's Blue Man incarnate, and as if to signal his right to rule, the King with hand on his heart and crown upon his head, is surrounded by a mystical aura formed of black lines and purple clouds. In this seemingly inconsequential bit of ephemera, Toomer recombines significant elements from various points in his life, illustrating that from the dissolution of previous selves, the materials set free ("the stuff of life") recombine to create "new forms—a new cosmos—a new equilibrium" (*Selected* 89). As Toomer himself changes, Peter Jackson gives way to "the man of blue or purple, / . . . Foretold by ancient seers. . . / Struggling for birth through the ages" ("The Blue Meridian" 72).

Throughout his adult life, Toomer conceived of identity as a puzzle. Although he frequently employed the jigsaw metaphor of "gather[ing] together all the scattered parts" of his fractured psyche or searching for "an intelligible scheme of things, a sort of whole into which everything seemed to fit," Toomer's understanding of how identity operates deviates from the traditional jigsaw puzzle in several key regards (*Wayward* 112, 101). In the narratives that we weave about ourselves, a single piece can fit (and be repeated) multiple places, pieces may change shape or orientation (especially with the passage of time), there may be extraneous pieces (pieces that we prefer to leave out depending upon which self we are constructing), new pieces will be added periodically to the puzzle, pieces that interlock at one point in time will not

¹⁰⁶ The chalk drawing of the Black Prince Toomer is part of the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. See JTP Box 74, Folder 1643. Unlike the childhood drawings housed in Box 60, Folder 1405, The Black Prince dates from Toomer's adult life, as evidenced by clues within the drawing itself (i.e., the name and address of the restaurant). The Cafe Old Stamboul, which billed itself as "Chicago's sole specialists in fine oriental dishes," operated from 1928 through February 1931 under the proprietorship of Pedro Mosgofian, until it was raided and shut down by federal agents for serving alcoholic beverages. See "Church" 5.

necessarily do so permanently, and so forth. The static jigsaw puzzle simply cannot account for the changes wrought by time, which is what makes the Changing Faces puzzle a much more realistic tool for conceptualizing selfhood and examining identity formation, especially in light of America's bimodal racial framework.

Toomer's autobiographical writings emphasize that, like the man from the Changing Faces puzzle, he is constantly evolving, always in flux. Shortly after the publication of *Cane*, he compared himself to "broken glass, shifting now here, now there, to a new design" (*Letters* 195). The metaphor of the broken glass acknowledges the violence inherent in the shattering of his previous persona and its shards' capacity to cause damage, yet Toomer chooses to focus on the constructive possibilities occasioned by the rupture. Instead of an aimless or accidental assemblage, he characterizes the pattern formed by the shards as a "design," which implies it is being guided by an active intelligence to a definite end. As the "shifting" glass rearranges into myriad shapes, it evokes a kaleidoscope with its merry colors and orderly geometric patterns, further diminishing the destructive aspects of self-fashioning by likening its most pernicious effects to the action of a child's toy. Rather than wholesale destruction, the component pieces of his former selves continue to live on in new formations, and thus continuity undergirds the process of dissolution and reformation. Toomer explains this paradox when commenting on the many names that he has answered to throughout his lifetime, observing that "had there been many more there would not have been enough to name all the different people I have been. . . . I should by rights have had at least ten more –always having one name as the constant factor in whatever combination, for, beneath all the changes, there has only been one and the same 'me.'" ("Notes"). While acknowledging the "important changes" he has undergone over the course of his life, Toomer distinguishes between personhood (who one is at a given moment) and selfhood

(one's timeless, underlying essence), emphasizing that personas arise through different arrangements of the source material that comprises the self, yet this self remains unaltered during each of the acts of recombination. Like a recessive gene, materials that are not reused to construct the subsequent persona do not cease to exist, rather as part of the ceaseless procession of "internal break-ups" and "inward re-buildings," they will be stockpiled and may play a role in a future construction project (ibid). This model of selfhood encourages risk taking and innovation, knowing that one need not fear losing or forever damaging one's innermost self. However, for those not privy to or unable to accept Toomer's rather schizophrenic conception of identity, his behavior could and often did appear erratic.

One key case in point is his racial affiliation. When Toomer began submitting poems and short prose pieces for publication in magazines during the summer of 1922, he drafted a form letter to the editors that describes his racial background and articulates his position first and foremost as "an American." In letters to John McClure of the *Double Dealer*, Claude McKay, and the editorial staff of the *Liberator* more broadly following McKay's resignation as co-editor, Toomer stresses that his "position in America has been a curious one" due to his complex racial heritage, citing some "seven race bloods" flowing through his veins, and he stresses that rather than choosing between his white or black roots, he has "lived equally amid the two race groups." All three letters make the identical statement that he has "striven for a spiritual fusion analogous to the fact of racial intermingling," and he expands on this point in his correspondence with the *Liberator* staff, explaining "without denying a single element in me, with no desire to subdue one to the other, I have sought to let them function as complements. I have tried to let them live in harmony." In *Cane*, this harmonious union of opposites takes symbolic form in the double arc that prefaces *Kabnis*, and Toomer's dedication of the final section to Waldo Frank, the white man

he called his "brother," counterbalances the volume's dedication to his maternal grandmother, who identified as Negro, once again highlighting Toomer's biracial allegiances. Typographical cues within each of the dedications confirm that they are indeed linked; the dedicatory line to his grandmother concludes with an ellipsis, and the lack of initial capitalization combined with the full stop at the end of the second dedication indicates that they are intended to be read as a single unit: "To my grandmother . . . to Waldo Frank."

However, unlike the man in the Changing Faces puzzle, who effortlessly (even mechanically) cycles through the expressions allotted him, Toomer's wording in these letters subtly acknowledges the difficulties and the tremendous psychological strain resulting from his efforts to maintain dual racial identification. Rather than claiming to have succeeded in this endeavor, Toomer indicates that he has "tried," "sought," and "striven" to do so, highlighting the conscious effort required to unite pieces of himself that remain as stubbornly at odds with each other as the communities he attempted to bridge. What makes the letter to McClure unique is Toomer anticipates that in "the world of race distinctions" his position as an American will not be readily accepted, and presciently foretells that "as [he] become[s] known, [he] will doubtless be classed as a Negro" (*Letters* 40). A year prior to the now famous heated exchange with his publisher Horace Liveright over the marketing of *Cane*, Toomer has already clearly defined his position and predicted the futility of his efforts to operate outside of binary conceptions of race. Tragically, his vow "neither [to] fight nor resent" being categorized as a "Negro" was one of the first casualties in the war with his publisher over how Jean Toomer, the author would be presented to the world (*ibid*).

In order to capitalize on the sudden vogue for primitivism, Boni and Liveright's publicity department marketed *Cane* as the expression of "the primitive rhythm of the Negro soul," and

even went so far as to liken its "rythmic [sic] beat" to "the tom-toms of the African jungle" (qtd. in Soto 169-170, 172). Although early advertisements for *Cane* tended to sidestep the question of the author's race by emphasizing the book's African American subject matter or relied on ambiguous phrasing, like "literature of the Negro," to hedge the issue, the advance notice of publication that appeared in the *New York Times* made no such efforts at equivocation and instead bluntly pronounced *Cane* to be "a book by a negro about negroes" ("Books" BR26). Since this notice appeared three weeks prior to Toomer's angry confrontation with Liveright over the publisher's insistence that he stop "dodging" his race and "feature Negro" in an autobiographical sketch that the firm planned on distributing to booksellers, I agree with Michael Soto's assertion that the publicity for *Cane* predetermined "the public identities" of author and book alike, and dictated the terms of their acceptance (*Letters* 171; Soto 168). Toomer was not so naive as to think that Liveright would fail to take advantage of one of the book's principal selling points and he even gave the firm permission to use "whatever racial factors" they wished in its marketing, yet he drew the line at being required to misrepresent that "fundamental position" himself (*Letters* 171). While Toomer's stance may appear contradictory and the distinction that he was making likely seemed inconsequential to Liveright, he had worked hard to carve out a space for himself as a biracial author in the publishing world, as the letters to the editors attest, and he was unwilling to sacrifice the progress he believed he was making toward being accepted by them on his own terms.

However, as Toomer became widely known as a "Negro" author, he grew more and more frustrated and resentful of Boni & Liveright's advertising strategy, especially when it became increasingly clear that even intellectuals, like Waldo Frank and Sherwood Anderson, with whom he had shared his racial philosophy denied his right to self-determination and continued to think

of him as "Negro." Toomer's reluctance to be classified as a "Negro" author is not as anomalous among members of the Harlem Renaissance as one might think. In an essay written for *The New Negro*, Melville Herskovitz observes that "the proudest boast of the modern young Negro writer" is that "he seeks to be a writer, not a Negro writer," and during the Civic Club dinner, young intellectuals "especially stressed" this point as "member after member of [that] group stated this position as his own—not Negro as such, but human" (356). What differentiates Toomer from his peers is that his stance hardened over time, and he actively began to distance himself from the part of his heritage that he felt had been unduly amplified by others. In unpublished writings from the late 1920s and early 1930s, Toomer stresses how powerless he felt to correct what he believed to be a fundamental and pernicious misunderstanding of his identity, likening his circumstances to a "vice" [sic] in which he was trapped, and he defends himself against the accusation that he turned his back on the black community. Toomer explains that in order to make his "real position" clear, he was forced to "take, for a time, a stand more extreme than [he] really wanted it to be" (*Reader* 103). This "stand" included denying James Weldon Johnson permission to publish his poems in *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1931) and similar efforts to withdraw from the mantle of "Negro" literature (*ibid.*)¹⁰⁷ For these efforts, he was

¹⁰⁷ Scholars often express skepticism about the veracity of Toomer's remarks about this period of his life and criticize him for a lack of accountability for his actions, yet too little attention has been paid to the institutional structures in place that limited his possibilities for recourse against those whom he felt misrepresented him to the public. As a multiracial author submitting his first book to an important publishing house, Toomer had very little bargaining power. In his study of Carl Van Vechten, Leon Coleman notes that out of "the six novels by black authors published between 1920 and 1926, only three . . . were issued by major publishing companies" (42), and Boni & Liveright had published two of them. Significantly, Toomer was the first (Fauset followed in 1924 and Walrond in 1926) of the Harlem Renaissance writers that Boni & Liveright ushered into print, and thus he was in the worst position to make demands of his publisher. Nevertheless, he took a stand against Liveright when principle dictated. Likewise, Toomer felt indebted to Waldo Frank, who had helped to edit *Cane* and encouraged Liveright to offer the fledgling writer a publishing contract. Toomer claimed that it was largely due to Frank's "championing" of his book that *Cane* was accepted, and therefore he "simply could not take him" to task for failure to accurately present his "racial position" in its Foreword (*Reader* 101). Reluctant to chastise his supporters publicly, Toomer's only choice was not much of a choice at all—he could either affirm the binary conception of race he sought to deconstruct by permitting Boni & Liveright's fictitious account of his purely "Negro" heritage to eclipse his "racial

roundly dismissed as a traitor to "his" race, and by April 1934, Henry Lee Moon officially lists Jean Toomer among the "racially expatriated" in his review of Nancy Cunard's *Negro: An Anthology* (9).

Despite his protestations to the contrary, the accusation that Toomer was a Janus-like figure who shuttled back and forth across racial lines until electing to remain in the white world on a semi-permanent basis has had remarkable staying power. In 2011, Rudolph P. Byrd and Henry Louis Gates Jr., editors of the second Norton Critical Edition of *Cane*, issued their "carefully considered judgment . . . that Jean Toomer—for all of his pioneering theorizing about what today we might call multicultural or mixed-race ancestry—was a Negro who decided to pass for white" ("Chronicle;" Introduction lxx). It is not my intention to argue the merits of the case that Professors Byrd (late of Emory University) and Gates build on behalf of this argument. Suffice it to say that it is suspicious, but not perhaps surprising, that Toomer's contacts with African American artists and intellectuals dwindled to imperceptible levels after he began implementing his plan to withdraw from "Negro" literature. Likewise, while Toomer's highly publicized prevarication about whether he even had "Negro blood" in his veins in the fall of 1934 is certainly damaging, it does not seem to me that these, or any of the other facts presented, amount to conclusive proof of a desire on his part to "pass for white."

Rather than arguing the finer points of Toomer's racial identification, it seems more productive to approach the issue from a different angle, considering not just his numerous disavowals, but also a rare instance in which Toomer embraced another artist's vision of him. May Howard Jackson (1877-1931), a sculptress who rose to prominence during the first two decades of the twentieth century for her sensitively wrought, realistic depictions of African

actuality," or he could attempt to correct that faulty portrait and risk offending his supporters in the African American community.

American leaders and mixed-race subjects, completed a portrait bust of Jean Toomer in June 1921 (Fig. 34). In stark contrast to his vehement denunciation of Winold Reiss's painted portrait (c. 1925), which Alain Locke commissioned for *The New Negro*, Toomer was so taken by Jackson's sculpture that he circulated pictures of it among his closest friends, Waldo Frank and Mae Wright. Toomer also made an uncharacteristic foray into the realm of fine art criticism to write a favorable review of Jackson's contributions to the Third Annual Exhibition of the Tanner Art League, which ran from mid-May to early June 1922 at his former high school, Dunbar High in Washington, D.C. Yet, despite Toomer's marked preference for Jackson's sculpture, Reiss's painted portrait has quite literally taken center stage—it now hangs in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery—and on the few, fleeting occasions when literary scholars mention the bust, they consistently misidentify the artist as May Howard Johnson.¹⁰⁸ I capitalize on the opportunity to restore the portrait bust from its unwarranted position at the periphery of Toomer studies by making it the centerpiece of my analysis of his endeavors to shape his public image as an author. The critical neglect into which Jackson's *Jean Toomer* has fallen derives in large part from the shortage of documentation available about it in print—even its present location was not widely known to literary scholars or art historians—as well as the difficulty of locating photographic reproductions of the bust. By coupling my analysis with the first photographs of the sculpture (Figs. 34, 36-38) to be printed since Jackson's lifetime, I restore one of the facets of Toomer's complex self-image that had been lost, offering a counterpoint to the brooding figure Reiss sketched in pastels with the delicate face that Jackson molded in plaster, not in the hope of

¹⁰⁸ To the best of my knowledge, only three of the countless sources written about Toomer mention the bust and all three misidentify the artist (see O'Daniel [1988], Whalan [2006], and Foley [2014]). The error seems to derive from a slip of the tongue on the part of the elderly Mae Wright Peck, who when interviewed by Therman B. O'Daniel in 1980, identified the artist as May Howard Johnson (39). Since all of the rest of the information that she provided about Jackson was correct and O'Daniel died before the interview was published in *Jean Toomer: A Critical Evaluation* (1988), the error has gone undetected.

supplanting the former with the latter, but of gaining greater insight through the interplay of these changing faces.¹⁰⁹

May Howard Jackson's *Jean Toomer* sits, carefully packaged, in storage at the archives of Virginia State University's Johnston Memorial Library. Inside the packing crate, the face of a young Jean Toomer looks out from beneath finely molded eyebrows. His large, almond-shaped eyes bear a thoughtful expression, and their seriousness is counterbalanced by delicate lips that tilt ever so slightly upward at the corners into the ghost of a smile. Thick, wavy hair frames a very high, broad forehead molded in plaster once brilliantly white, yet now dull with age and bearing the patina of years of accumulated dust and grime. A long, broad nose dominates Jean Toomer's handsome face, which terminates in the gently rounded chin of a man still young. As befits the seriousness of the occasion, he wears a three-piece suit and tie, and Jackson has sculpted his clothing to mid-chest level where the lapels of his jacket meet. The portrait bust rests on a short, unadorned, rectangular pedestal. Jackson's *Jean Toomer* captures the hopefulness of an aspiring author perhaps even then in the process of writing the work that would make him famous. There is an openness and gentleness to his expression that contrasts markedly with the darkly intense figure that Winold Reiss painted only a few years later.

Reiss chose to depict Toomer in a seated position with his shoulders hunched and head tilted slightly forward. His face appears in three-quarter profile (Fig. 39). The bags and heavy shadowing beneath his eyes do not diminish the intensity of his gaze, which burns away from the viewer toward the left side of the canvas. The position of the light source draws attention to his high, irregularly shaped forehead by producing a brilliant sheen near the hairline and reflecting off his brow, magnifying it and creating the appearance of a brow ridge. The lighting also forms

¹⁰⁹ Photographs of the bust are courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University. Special thanks to Francine B. Archer for her gracious assistance.

a network of shadows behind his head and shoulders, as if he is radiating creative energy depicted as lines of force. The most striking aspect of Reiss's painting is Toomer's cynical expression. The flare of his nostril, accented in white, conveys scorn, and the pronounced downward curve of the corner of his lips, combined with the slightly raised eyebrow and refusal to meet the viewer's eye suggests disgust. Although Toomer is dressed professionally in a black suit with white shirt and striped tie, the bags around his eyes, heavy creases on his face, and hunched position make him appear haggard, even dissipated. The autumnal color palette of black, gold, red, and beige hues contributes to the darker, more pessimistic tone of the composition. Toomer's seated position with his hands resting gently in his lap resembles the pose Reiss utilized when crafting the portraits of Alain Locke (Fig. 40), Charles Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, and W.E.B. Du Bois for *The New Negro*. Yet, whereas he outlined their clothing using a few suggestive strokes and a substantial amount of white space, Reiss elects to delineate Toomer's garb completely, even shading his coat and pants black. As a result, black is the dominant color of Toomer's portrait, and its heavy, dark tones contrast with the airy lightness of the other likenesses Locke included in the volume. The stylistic differences between these works of art tend to corroborate Toomer's assertion that he did not have "the slightest idea that the portrait was going to be used in Locke's book" when he sat for Reiss (*Reader* 103). Indeed, had Reiss been apprised of the portrait's ultimate destination, one would expect him to strive for greater consistency across all of the works by utilizing the same techniques. Tellingly, however, *Jean Toomer* differs more from the portraits Reiss made expressly for *The New Negro*, which are strikingly uniform, than they diverge from his earlier illustrations for the Harlem edition of the *Survey Graphic* that Locke recycled in the book.

While Jackson's portrait of Toomer is certainly the more flattering of the two, the

different mediums the artists used also influenced his reaction to them. For a writer whose own aesthetic privileges dynamic form, the limitations of a two-dimensional painted likeness, which can only be experienced from a handful of perspectives, would be less appealing than a three-dimensional sculpture that invites the viewer to interact with it on all sides. Indeed, the three hundred sixty degree viewing range of the bust ensures that as the viewer's position changes so does the portrait, which can be examined in full face (Fig. 37), in profile (Fig. 36), from the reverse, and so forth while the painting remains static, its subject perpetually frozen in three-quarter profile. Despite the carefully constructed illusion of depth and how well-executed Reiss's portrait is overall, it remains two-dimensional and therefore cannot compete with Jackson's sculpture in terms of dynamic form or sense of movement. Moreover, Jackson's portrait bust retains the very real capacity for change since it never made the transition from plaster to bronze that would prevent further alterations and concretize its form. Jackson, who despite her manifold talents could not earn a living as an artist, routinely worked in plaster with the hope of later executing her creations in the more costly bronze if funds became available.¹¹⁰ This is the reason why her compositions often have contradictory or inaccurate dates of completion.¹¹¹ Although she does not identify his portrait by name, a remark Jackson made in her correspondence with Toomer suggests that she regarded his portrait as incomplete, confiding to him during the

¹¹⁰ In an editorial for *The Crisis* in 1922, Du Bois notes that even though her "portrait busts are a marvelous contribution to the history of the Negro, in years of work [she] has not received a decent income" ("Art" 9).

¹¹¹ For instance, art historians date Jackson's *Kelly Miller* to 1929, but in an article for *The New York Amsterdam* written in February 1928, Miller notes that "several years ago Mrs. May Howard Jackson, the well-known sculptress, was building a plaster of paris bust of myself, which was hoped would be finally cast in bronze" (20). A photograph of Jackson's completed bust of Miller appears in *The Crisis* for November 1917, more than a decade before its putative date of completion when re-cast as a bronze. Many of Jackson's most famous works, such as her portrait of Du Bois (c. 1912, 1929), *Shell-Baby* (c. 1915, 1929), and *Mulatto Mother and her Child* (c. 1916, 1929) have equally complex dual compositional histories.

summer of 1923, "You know I never finished that piece of work."¹¹² The plasticity of the medium and the fact that Jackson's portrait bust remained unfinished conforms extremely well with Toomer's understanding of individual identity as a work in progress without a clearly defined end point, just a ceaseless process of assembly, destruction, and rebuilding. By retaining the capacity to "shift now here, now there, to a new design," *Jean Toomer* more closely resembles its namesake than even the artist may have anticipated.

The ancient origins of the bust form, which in Classical Greece and Rome was the preferred mode of depicting emperors, senators, prominent poets or philosophers, and other dignitaries, would have struck a particular chord with the young man who expressed his own admiration for classical statues by filling his scrapbook with notable examples. While sitting for any work of art is an honor reserved for the select few, Jackson provided Toomer with the rare opportunity of outdoing his former role models, the bodybuilders who posed as living statues, by becoming a sculpture himself. The plaster she used to mold his head and shoulders heightened the classical associations by achieving the smooth, white surface characteristic of marble, and had she been able to execute the finished version in bronze, the other preferred medium of the classical period, its classicism would have been even more pronounced. The work's neoclassical style did not go unnoticed during the 1920s. When Toomer sent his love interest Mae Wright a picture of the bust to display on her dormitory wall, her roommates "said it looked like a bust of Milton" (Peck 39). Their remarks, made partly in jest at the airs that the young, untried writer seemed to be putting on by posing as if he were a cornerstone of English literature, also tacitly addresses how the portrait whitewashes Toomer, effectively erasing the chromatic indicators of his multiracial status. The possibility that he preferred Jackson's portrait because it made him

¹¹² Jackson, May Howard. Letter to Jean Toomer. 23 July 1923. MS. JTP Box 4, Folder 117. Original emphasis.

look Caucasian cannot be discounted, especially given the heightened use of color in Reiss's painting, which Toomer disavowed as an unauthorized portrait.

However, I contend that Toomer's response to the portraits had as much to do with the artists' backgrounds and the circumstances in which their works of art were created as the likenesses themselves. Toomer's favorable reaction to Jackson's sculpture and criticism of the portrait by Reiss accords with the response that these artists elicited within the African American community at the time. While Jackson was recognized as a "gifted sculptress of the race" and photographs of her sculptures regularly appeared in *The Crisis*, the German-American Reiss and his portraits of ethnic minorities (e.g., the Blackfeet tribe, descendants of the Aztecs, African Americans, and Asian Americans) drew equal amounts of praise and scorn (Studio 299). Alain Locke commended Reiss as a "master delineator of folk character," and lauded how "without loss of naturalistic accuracy and individuality, he somehow subtly expresses the type" (653). Yet, as Arnold Rampersad succinctly states, "his artwork disturbed many blacks" (xviii). Among the most vocal critics were "members of the Harlem elite," such as Jessie Fauset, who objected to what she deemed to be the "primitivist slant of Reiss's portraits," citing the "nappy" hair of one of the women from his type sketch "The School Teachers" as a case in point (Hutchinson 394-5; Farebrother 71). Paul Kellogg, editor of the *Survey Graphic* where Reiss's controversial illustrations had first "created a furore," defended the artist by making the rather patronizing argument that his detractors had so thoroughly internalized "Nordic conventions" that they could not recognize the beauty and dignity of Reiss's Harlem portraits or the "rare service" he had rendered them by being "the first [artist] in America to break with sentimentality and caricature and delineate racial types with fidelity" (277). In his fervent desire to exculpate Reiss, Kellogg reveals his own biases by overlooking May Howard Jackson, Meta Warwick Fuller, and William

Edouard Scott, just to name a few of the African American artists that had been doing just that prior to Reiss's arrival in the United States in 1913. Despite the unremitting support of Alain Locke, the objections to featuring a white artist so prominently in *The New Negro* ultimately carried the day, and Reiss was gradually excised from the volume. After several reprintings diminished his contributions by printing them in black and white rather than color and reduced their number, the 1992 reissue eliminates all of Reiss's portraits, and replaces them with drawings by Aaron Douglas. Ironically, Douglas was once a student at Reiss's New York art school and his compositions for *The New Negro* are far more primitive in style than his mentor's portraits ever were.

May Howard Jackson's chosen field of artistic exploration, studies of African American and multiracial subjects with a particular emphasis on the effects of racial admixture, was far less problematic because she was a member of the communities she chose to depict (Fig. 35). One of Du Bois's talented tenth, Jackson was also part of the "aristocracy," as Toomer termed it, that existed "midway between the white and Negro worlds" of Washington, D.C.—the same circle in which his own family moved (*Wayward* 84). Given their shared social ties and her close association with his alma mater, Toomer would have been aware of May Howard Jackson long before their first formal meeting took place in 1920. Her husband, William Tecumseh Sherman Jackson was principal of M. Street High School from 1906-1909, and he had just stepped down from his administrative post to become "head teacher" of the business department when Toomer began his studies there in 1910. The athletic W.T.S. Jackson, who had played football for Amherst and was the only African American member of its track and field team at the time, coached both sports at M. Street, even organizing the school's first track meet, during the period when Toomer became involved in high school athletics (*Wayward* 90). Although I can find no

conclusive proof that W.T.S. Jackson ever coached him, the photograph of a teenage Toomer wearing a track and field uniform in his scrapbook offers a tantalizing clue that Jackson may have been one of Toomer's first sporting mentors. After M. Street High School was rechristened Dunbar High in 1916, May Howard Jackson received the commission to sculpt a portrait bust of the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar in bronze to grace the entrance of the school and "inspire colored youth" (Brewer 3).¹¹³ She completed the project in 1919, and went on to exhibit more of her work on the school's grounds as a participant in the Third Annual Exhibition of the Tanner Art League in 1922. It was this event that provided Toomer with the occasion to complete the article he had been talking about writing ever since he first met the "very interesting" sculptress known for "interpreting Negro characters" (*Letters* 18). He was not the only one to praise the "complex subtlety" of her sculpting in his review of the exhibition (Calo 113). The correspondent for *The New York Times* singled out the "group of sculpture by May Howard Jackson" as "impressive both for its sincerity and skill and because it was frankly representative of racial characteristics and problems" ("Art" 87). The fact that Toomer knew Jackson personally, perhaps even intimately, and considered her sculpting so intuitive that he called her a "psychic," would increase his receptivity toward her artistic vision of him (*Letters* 18).

Toomer also likely felt a kinship with Jackson due to her multiracial ancestry, whereas Reiss was forever tainted by his association with Alain Locke, the person whom Toomer felt had "tricked and misused" him (*Wayward* 132). Although light-skinned enough to pass for white, Jackson stressed that she was "part Negro, part Indian, and part white," and she chose to live among the colored community and identify as a "Negro" ("Mulatto" E17). Born in Pennsylvania and educated in predominantly white institutions of learning—she was the first African

¹¹³ One newspaper reported the bust of Dunbar was "her first commissioned portrait." See "Mulatto" E17.

American woman to win a scholarship to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts—Jackson may have been unprepared for the many setbacks and injustices she would face while pursuing her career as an artist in the nation's capitol. Many galleries were reluctant to exhibit work by "colored" artists, especially if their subjects also happened to be "colored," yet she initially met with a significant amount of success, showing at important galleries in New York (including a solo exhibition at Veerhoff Gallery in 1916) and Washington, D.C. However, several of these same venues abruptly changed their stance toward her after learning that she was a "Negro." According to art historian Lisa Farrington, Jackson's application to the Washington Society of Fine Arts was initially accepted then abruptly declined after the governing board was informed of her African American roots (74). Likewise, The National Academy of Design, which housed Jackson's portrait bust of Kelly Miller in their gallery "sent a messenger to ascertain whether the artist was colored and thereafter extended her no more invitations" (Brewer 3). These and many other instances of the inequitable and shockingly inconsistent treatment of artists of color soured Jackson's outlook, leaving her deeply embittered.¹¹⁴

In many ways, Jackson represents the alternative path that Toomer could have taken. Both insisted on acknowledging the various strands of their complex racial heritage and unapologetically explored the mixing of the races in their art—she with "her chosen ideal of portraying the American mulatto type" and he with his celebration of the Blue Man. Yet, unlike Toomer, who refused to bow to the label of "Negro" based upon a fraction of his heritage, Jackson embraced the term and strove to encourage other members of the African American community through sculpture that honored black intellectuals, leaders, and artists. Tragically, as

¹¹⁴ One particularly flagrant instance of the inconsistent treatment she suffered at the hands of the art world relates to the Corcoran Gallery and its educational arm, the Corcoran School of Art. Denied admission to the school "because of her color," her works of art were nonetheless displayed at the gallery, including her "Head of a Child," which was shown there to much acclaim between 1917-1919. For more on the prejudice she faced during the early days of her career, see "Women" 10.

W.E.B. Du Bois eloquently observed in his eulogy for Jackson, "the contradictions and idiotic ramifications of the Color Line tore her soul asunder. It made her at once bitter and fierce with energy, cynical of praise and above all at odds with life and people" ("May" 351). Jackson's frustration and profound sense of disappointment as well as her premature death, would hardly recommend her path to anyone, let alone a young man who had witnessed the devastating effects that prejudice wrought upon her firsthand.

If Toomer's fictionalized portrait of Jackson as the painter Mary Carson in *Natalie Mann* is any indication, he regarded her willingness to sacrifice herself for the betterment of the race to be outdated and sorely misguided.¹¹⁵ In the play, the opinionated Mary Carson expresses the view that there are "obligations superior to art," namely that as a member of "the intelligent section" of the "colored people" it is her "duty" to advance the race through artwork that inspires "beautiful thoughts" and appeals to the spirit, rather than the material causes of oppression (245, 258-9). She contrasts her philosophy with what she regards as the selfishness of Nathan Merilh, Toomer's thinly veiled alter ego, warning that "you cannot approach the beautiful over the dead or maimed corpses of others" (245). However, the play emphasizes that Carson/Jackson is herself "maimed," suffering from what she likens to "religious agony" as a result of the thwarting of her artistic gifts, and virtually dead as far as the public lack of recognition of her art or its higher purpose is concerned (295). In one particularly touching scene, Mertis expresses surprise to learn that Carson is in fact an artist, and Law explains she "might as well wash dishes so far as people around here know or care about it" (291). References to Jackson in his correspondence with Waldo Frank confirm that Toomer believed her views and way of life to be antiquated.

¹¹⁵ In the same letter to Waldo Frank in which Toomer enclosed a photograph of Jackson's portrait bust, he discusses the inspiration for the characters in *Natalie Mann*, explaining "Merilh, of course, is mostly myself" and "the Mary Carson of real life is easily the most compelling of them all. She has done a bust of me. . . Nothing short of maturity on my part will do her justice" (*Letters* 35-6). Toomer completed *Natalie Mann* in 1922, but did not publish it during his lifetime.

While discussing the passing of the "old families that rose to prominence after the Civil War" in one such letter, he lumps the much younger Jackson—then only 45 years old—with his grandparents' generation, adding mournfully that "the actual Mary Carson is fading" (*Letters* 37). Like the "old Negro . . . spirit saturate with folk-song," whose passing he hymned in the first section of *Cane*, Toomer acknowledges the beauty and value, but not the utility of Jackson's stance in the modern world. Instead of embracing the "buoyant expression of a new race," the "jazzed, strident, modern" vitality of a generation looking toward the future, she clung to the genteel past, and he depicts her as a relic bound to be smashed by forces that would batter and overwhelm her sensitive spirit (*Letters* 115).

Jackson's side of their correspondence, which Toomer saved and has been preserved as part of his personal papers, strongly suggests that she fell in love with the much younger man while sculpting his likeness. These four letters, written between July 1923 and April 1924, bear witness to major fluctuations in their relationship, as the warm, intimate exchange of personal thoughts and feelings abruptly gives way to the cold formality of the enigmatic final letter. Jackson alludes to her romantic feelings for Toomer early in their correspondence, admitting that "I grieve for physical sight of ____." Although she chooses not to identify the object of her affection by name, favoring the old-fashioned decorum of a loaded blank, this remark comes on the heels of her discussion of the bust, presumably of him, that she never completed. From these guarded hints, her subsequent letter makes what amounts to a full-blown confession of love and expresses her frustration at his blindness to her suffering and lack of reciprocity. Asked to share her impressions of *Cane*, Jackson demurs, explaining that she cannot for "the etheric heart, suffers still a certain inflicted wound which can only be healed or rather lathed together by pure waves of real (Love); which as yet is quite impossible for the 'cause' of the puncture is still

ignorant and incapable of love outside of itself" (original emphasis). By admitting that he has cleft her (spiritual) heart in twain, she dispels his ignorance of her feelings and seeks to make good on the promise of emotional fulfillment held out by the qualifier "as yet," in the hope of transforming his present indifference into "pure waves of real (Love)." Having informed the "cause" of her broken heart how to heal it, she adds the inducement that artists profit from opening their hearts for "until one has evolved into a state of consciousness where it can Love it has little to give." Her final plea takes the form of a reminder of her misery; in turmoil, she confesses that she must feign a complacency that eludes her for the benefit of her husband and guests, and her face has begun to register the strain: "The smile I have been using continuously all summer for company has by now grown gastly [sic] and won't come off."

Although Toomer's response to this sudden overflowing of emotion has not survived, her reply, which quotes from it, documents that he felt overwhelmed and at a loss for words. With a touch of sarcasm, she writes, "Sorry you didn't 'know what to say.'" After baring her heart to him in what must have been an extremely difficult letter to write, she receives no encouragement or understanding in return, just further proof of his self-absorption as Toomer's reply focuses on his own feelings of discomfort. Scorned, she retreats to the safety of formal address in the final letter, referring to herself pointedly for the first time as *Mrs.* Jackson, and utilizes the stilted, formulaic language of social nicety: "Mrs. Jackson wishes to thank Jean Toomer for his very thoughtful note of Feb. 28." to conceal her pain. Yet, despite her efforts to remove all trace of emotion from her writing, the hurt creeps back in toward the end of the missive through the *double entendre* "one must not make very sudden [changes]—they might slip, fall and break something." The case of her own "sudden" change—both falling in love and admitting it in no uncertain terms to her unsuspecting lover—is foremost in her mind, not the nominal subject of

revisions to an unidentified manuscript. With the perspective gained from the passage of time, Jackson reconceives her declaration of love as an error or "slip" made in haste that shattered their relationship and left her in pieces. Without diminishing her own culpability, she also accuses him of bearing some responsibility for the way the painful series of events unfolded by using the plural pronoun "they" rather than the grammatically correct "he" or "she." This substitution suggests that neither she nor their friendship had to be sacrificed if his reaction had been more tactful or feeling.

Toomer was aware of the subtext of her seemingly innocent remarks and recorded his reactions to them in the form of marginalia. Immediately following her warning that those who behave hastily may "break something," a question mark appears in pencil in the right margin written in a hand that is not Jackson's own. This added punctuation eloquently conveys Toomer's confusion and bewilderment at her enigmatic remarks, registering that they possess a deeper meaning as well as his inability to pin it down conclusively. A similar amendment has been made to the postscript, which unaltered reads "She always wishes you well," through the addition of an exclamation point at its conclusion. Like a derisive snort, the exclamation expresses his incredulity at the sincerity of Jackson's well-wishes. A falling out between them has evidently taken place, and her words, though delivered formally in the third-person, serve as a peace offering. Although her delivery may seem less than sincere, it was likely too painful or too reminiscent of her previous, disastrous declaration to address sentiments like these to him in the intimacy of first-person. By giving vent to his feelings in the margins of Jackson's letter, Toomer converts a medium that is inherently univocal into a dialogue and provides us with privileged access into the minds of both parties. Though the rift between them never seems to have healed, Jackson made such an impact on Toomer that he retained her letters throughout his lifetime,

carefully filing them away and preserving the evidence necessary for reconstructing what transpired between them.

Unlike the numerous, intimate connections shared between Toomer and May Howard Jackson, his only link to Winold Reiss was forged by Alain Locke under circumstances that Toomer would later describe as a betrayal by a friend whom he trusted and respected. In two very similar accounts written during the 1930s, Toomer recalls the day that Locke visited him and made the request to include "a new story or a story from Cain [sic]" in the anthology he was editing (*Wayward* 132). Toomer claims to have denied him permission to reprint any of the pieces from *Cane* on the grounds that it is "an organism" that he did not want "dismembered," and offered Locke an article instead (*Reader* 102). Locke declined the article, and Toomer assumed that "the matter was finished" (*Wayward* 132). At the end of their visit, Locke praised the "interesting things" that Reiss was doing in the visual arts, and "urged" Toomer to sit for the artist, "never mentioning that he himself would use the portrait in his book" (*ibid*). Barbara Foley has pointed out numerous inconsistencies in Toomer's version of events, including the fact that his statement about *Cane* as an inviolable "organism" runs contrary to "his own practice" of publishing pieces from it in modernist magazines. She also offers proof that excerpts from *Cane* appeared in numerous anthologies, presumably with Toomer's knowledge and permission, from 1923 to 1941 (77-78). However, none of this changes the fact that Toomer felt, or claimed to have felt betrayed by Locke, and that he was as "furious" about Reiss's portrait as Locke's unauthorized use of excerpts from *Cane*. Toomer made this point expressly, writing that he "felt blocked" when he saw *The New Negro* because he "could not take [his] article *and* portrait out of it," nor could he "publically explain the trick that had been played on" him without his "dear enemies, those who liked to misrepresent [him]" crowing that "Toomer wants to deny his race"

(*Wayward* 133, emphasis added). Significantly, while Toomer's recollection varied about which text(s) Locke used without his permission—even mistakenly calling them an "article" here instead of selections from *Cane*—his memory never wavers about "the Reiss portrait" nor does his opinion of it improve over time.

Of the two poems and two vignettes from *Cane* that Locke republished in his anthology, Toomer recalls only one vividly, "Fern," and this is precisely because Reiss's *Jean Toomer* appears within it, printed in full color and occupying an entire page in the middle of the story. Recollecting the events from the perspective of the early 1930s, Toomer writes, "When *The New Negro* came out, there was a short story 'Fern' from my *Cane* book, and there was the Reiss portrait" (*Reader* 103). The terse, clipped phrasing conveys his barely suppressed fury at Locke's double deception nearly ten years earlier, and the carefully constructed sentence with its clauses that fit together like nesting dolls, traces a relentless movement inward—opening the book, locating the story, finding the illustration within it—to the portrait at its heart. The fact that "Fern" is not the first of Toomer's works to appear in the volume, and he has to flip past "Carma" in order to reach it, reveals that the portrait itself is responsible for arousing a significant portion of his ire. Portraits of the contributors frequently appear embedded within their texts in *The New Negro*, and Locke sets this precedent early in the book by inserting Reiss's drawing of him a few pages into the introductory essay (6). However, what distinguishes Toomer's portrait from the others is that he is the only creative writer whose likeness looks out from the pages of a fictional world he created. All of the other contributors pictured thusly—Charles S. Johnson, James Weldon Johnson, Elise McDougald, Robert R. Moton, and W.E.B. DuBois—are essayists. An illustration of Countée Cullen, the only other poet sketched by Reiss for the book, has been situated among his poems, yet remains clearly demarcated from them, located on a facing page

after a complete poem (132). In contrast, Reiss's *Jean Toomer* interrupts "Fern" in mid-sentence, forcing the reader to process text and image simultaneously, and thus effectively inserting the author into his own story (100). To make matters worse, Locke could not have made a poorer decision about which of Toomer's writings should bear his likeness. In "Fern," as I will demonstrate in greater detail in the next chapter, Toomer shields his title character from prying eyes that would objectify and dehumanize her by emphasizing the fluidity of her profile and the way in which her eyes command the viewer's gaze, drawing it inward to reveal the troubled depths beneath the beautiful surface. In *The New Negro*, Toomer's own face, stripped of the context of his name and frozen in an unchanging expression, interrupts a key passage from his story that highlights freedom of movement and the power of Fern's eyes to redirect scrutiny: "Wherever [her eyes] looked, you'd follow them and then waver back. Like her face, the whole countryside seemed to flow into her eyes" (101). By embedding Reiss's *Jean Toomer* in "Fern," Locke denies Toomer the same protection that he afforded his own fictional characters, leaving him vulnerable to the type of scrutiny that routinely diminished Toomer from a sovereign subject to a mere object, a specimen to be categorized or an illustrative racial type (i.e., an exemplary "new Negro").

Not surprisingly, Toomer's opinion of Reiss was permanently damaged by the artist's involvement in the controversy with Locke and the circumstances leading up to the portrait's unauthorized publication in *The New Negro*. Unbeknownst to many at the time, Toomer never sanctioned the likeness that would define him in the eyes of the reading public, and continues to do so to this day. Reiss's *Jean Toomer* appears on the covers of more scholarship written about Toomer than any other image as well as on numerous reissues of Toomer's own writings, including *A Jean Toomer Reader* (1993) and the most recent Norton Critical edition of *Cane*

(2011). In this way, a whole new generation of readers encounter Toomer's words and unique voice conditioned by an image that he deplored.

It is important to study May Howard Jackson's portrait bust and Winold Reiss's painted portrait because Toomer maintained that the public could not understand his "racial actuality" due to the faulty mental picture of him formed by the marketing, Foreword, and anthologizing of *Cane*. He consistently expressed this misapprehension in visual terms—the public could not *see* him as he really is due to the pernicious stereotypes associated with the word "Negro," which evokes the stock images of primitivism that I argue he sought to destabilize through his strategic rendering of the portraits of African American and multiracial characters in *Cane*. Knowing that the book's publication would mark his debut as an author, or as Toomer expressed it in characteristically visual language, his "first appearance before the public," he was dismayed when Waldo Frank elected not to spell out his complex views on race in the Foreword and instead strongly suggested that the author of *Cane* was of Negro extraction (*Reader* 101). Not only was characterizing him as a "Negro" an oversimplification that reinforced binary thinking about race, leaving no place for Toomer's position as "simply American," but it also distorted the visual impression that readers would form in their mind's eye—Toomer's "appearance" would be colored, quite literally, by Frank's words. Indeed, Toomer believed that Frank had already established an "erroneous picture" of him "in the minds of certain people in New York before [his] book came out," namely the New York publishers and literati to whom Frank had heralded the emergence of a talented young writer and plead the case for publishing his first manuscript (*Wayward* 126). While Toomer's fear of being mistaken for a "Negro" hints at his own prejudices, it also speaks to his belief that every person has the right to be represented accurately, neither idealized nor demonized en masse based upon ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or other

factors conducive to pigeonholing and the resultant loss of individual identity.

Confronted by "how widely the misunderstanding of [him] had spread," Toomer grew increasingly fixated on "destroying" the "pictures and feelings" people had formed about him, and replacing them with "the facts about myself and my life which would enable them to *see me . . . as I was*" (*Reader* 103, emphasis added). This "counter movement" against the terminology that limited him to one aspect of his being resonates with Toomer's belief that "words were the original germ carriers of the majority of our prejudices" (*Reader* 103, 82). In order to circumvent those prejudices, he coined his own uniquely affirmative terms, "American" and "the American type," for expressing multiracial identity as a means of replacing the derogatory word "mulatto" that was so deeply imbricated within the nation's slaveholding past. Choosing to identify as an "American," using a national term rather than an existing, prejudicial racial category, does not represent a renunciation of his African American ancestry, as has so often been claimed, but rather a reclamation of national identity from those who would use it in exclusionary ways. As Toomer explains, "the attitude of the typical white man is that he and his group are Americans whereas Jews, Negroes, and 'foreigners' are in this country but not of it organically and integrally" (*Reader* 96). In a nation known as a biological, if not cultural "melting pot," Toomer reminds us that to think of any race as pure is folly, and thus the road to harmony lies in embracing our shared national identity. By comparing two artists' differing representations of Jean Toomer, we dispel the "faulty picture" conjured by verbal descriptions, and come closer to an understanding of not only how he looked, but more importantly how he *wanted* to be seen.

Chapter Six: Georgia Portraits

Cane relies on formal strategies shared by the Changing Faces puzzle, namely dynamic movement, a circular form, and unstable or metamorphosing faces in order to avoid essentialism and embrace flux. Just as continuous motion explodes dualistic frameworks in the puzzle, Toomer's aesthetic of dynamic movement, graphically represented in *Cane* through the series of semi-circular arcs preceding each of the book's three main divisions, prevents the calcification—ideological as well as literary—that he equated with stagnation. Inspired in part by Waldo Frank's aesthetic of mobility, Toomer claimed that great works of literature build toward a "significant curve" (climax) where their component parts "swing together" and are fully "integrated" (*Selected Essays* 30-31).¹¹⁶ A circular or spherical design, Toomer argued, is the ideal means of channeling dynamic energy, and he makes this point most forcefully in his review of Gorham B. Munson's study of Waldo Frank. In this essay, written shortly after the publication of *Cane*, Toomer articulates his own aesthetic in checklist format, asking of Frank's *City Block*: "Is it a spherical form, do the stories fit into an inevitable circle, is there a curve cementing them together and giving the whole a dynamic propulsion forward?" (*Selected Essays* 27). Although he utilizes these questions as a rubric for assessing another author's writing, they are equally applicable to *Cane* and accurately reflect its governing aesthetic.

In a letter to Waldo Frank, Toomer explains that "*Cane's* design is a circle" when viewed from three different "angles," and he glosses them as aesthetic, regional, and spiritual (*Letters* 101). Authorial intention aside, analysis of the formal properties of the work confirms that the book as a whole and the pieces that comprise it are indeed circular. This is particularly noticeable

¹¹⁶ Toomer met Waldo Frank in August 1920, and the two developed a close friendship. Frank acted as a mentor to the younger writer, and introduced him to other notable figures in the New York literary scene, including Gorham B. Munson and Hart Crane (Kerman and Eldridge 72, 92).

in the prose portraits, which frequently begin with a brief refrain that recurs (generally verbatim) at the end of the story. In "Karintha," "Carma," and "Seventh Street," the refrain appears as four lines of verse, offset from the prose account that follows, and in "Carma," even the quatrain itself forms a circle! Like the puzzle's infinite loop, *Cane's* circular design challenges linear narratives of progress or regression, and prevents rigid thinking since categorical statements cannot be made about a ceaselessly changing entity.

Cane interweaves poetry and prose without any readily discernible pattern, and this constant alternation between genres renders the work unclassifiable.¹¹⁷ Since its publication, literary critics have been confounded by what to call the "queer [little] book" that, depending upon one's point of view, either fuses "verse, fiction, and drama into a spiritual unity" or "is a series of fragments coincidentally unified by a common binding."¹¹⁸ For the attentive reader, verbal echoes, repeated metaphors, and even the occasional recurring character forge connections between and across sections "cementing them together." Yet despite these suggestive links, the labor as well as the pleasure of piecing together what amounts to an unorthodox literary jigsaw puzzle devolves upon the reader, whose task is to create coherence out of seemingly disjointed fragments. Author and reader engage in a similar process of textual assemblage, imposing order and creating unity, but unlike a traditional jigsaw, their "solutions" need not be the same, nor is there necessarily a single correct configuration. Werner Sollors suggests that *Cane's* associational, "poetic structure" enables it to be read in many different sequences, and he likens this technique to filmic montage, claiming that both forms require an

¹¹⁷ Part One establishes a rhythm, one story followed by two poems, that Part Two dissolves by alternating between poetry and prose in seemingly random fashion.

¹¹⁸ These quotations come from two reviews of *Cane*, one by Robert Littell and the other by Montgomery Gregory, that were both published in December 1923, while the third quote derives from John M. Reilly's critical study "The Search for Black Redemption: Jean Toomer's *Cane*" (1970). Excerpted versions of all three sources appear in the first Norton Critical edition of *Cane*.

active audience to "put together" or "'suture'" related images (25). While I agree that *Cane* presents materials that can be (re)combined productively in various ways, my jigsaw model of thinking about modernist textuality offers a distinct advantage over the linearity of filmic montage, which conceives of images as discrete points in time. In contrast, the jigsaw offers a spatial model that registers multiple, non-sequential sites of connection. Through its interlocking edges, a puzzle piece draws attention to the ways in which contact between two elements fundamentally changes each of them regardless of one's temporal priority over the other. The puzzle analogy enables us to visualize how the first in a series of recurring words, images, or motifs in a text does not remain a static touchstone, but rather evolves as a result of each subsequent addition. Thus repetition is always already with a difference insofar as each iteration redefines its predecessors by enlarging their context, or in keeping with the puzzle metaphor, adds to the number of pieces interlocked with the central one, forming ever expanding clusters.

Take the case of pine needles in *Cane*. The first of many references in a book "profligate of pines" occurs when Karintha gives birth to a child in the forest (14). In this scene, Toomer uses pine needles to convey the eerie silence and isolation of the place where only rabbits, their footsteps muffled by the heavy blanket of needles, attend to the birth. In lieu of a human midwife, the needles serve as both a welcoming cradle ("A child fell out of her womb onto a bed of pine-needles in the forest. Pine needles are smooth and sweet") and tomb for the newborn since Karintha returns home alone followed only by the heavy, cloying smoke emanating from "the pyramidal sawdust pile" where she has presumably buried the infant (4). When pine needles recur in Carma's tale, "brilliantly aglow" and burnished by the sun "like mazda," the beauty of the natural image is tainted by its association with a funeral pyre, as if the pine needles stand ready to consume the body of Karintha's unwanted child (12). The narrative subtly confirms this

sinister connection by suggesting the synchronicity of the events presented in both portraits. An ominous image unfolds as the narrative shifts away from the glowing needles in Carma's tale "Over in the [direction of] the forest" where "smoke curls up. Marvelous web spun by the spider sawdust pile" (ibid). The shrill sounds of the "closing whistle" of the sawmill nearby confirms that it is the same patch of forest where Karintha may even now be committing infanticide. She is both the spider draining her poor, unwitting victim of life and a victim herself, caught in the web of desire spun by those who could not wait until "she would be old enough to mate with them" (3).

The poem "Nullo" brings the cluster of related images full circle when "A spray of pine-needles, / Dipped in western horizon gold" falls onto a path in the forest unobserved by rabbits, who "knew not of their falling, / Nor did the forest catch aflame" (20). In a style reminiscent of Buddhist *koan*, this short poem presents a paradox that explores the nature of perception and its connection to reality. By contrasting the appearance of flame with the fact that the forest remains untouched by fire, the poem asks if human perception fundamentally distorts reality. Are we capable of seeing things as they really are? Yet the shower of pine needles falling unheeded by any living creature upon the forest path extends the metaphysical dilemma to consideration of the nature of reality itself, for, like the notorious quandary "If a tree falls in the forest . . .," do the needles fall at all if no one is there to see them? By extension, does Karintha commit murder if there are no witnesses? The title of the poem suggests two possible answers to these interrelated questions. If one subscribes to the first meaning of the term "nullo," then "nothing" or "nought" exists outside of human perception. Seeing is all. However, a "nought" is also a zero, a symbolic placeholder without which the whole mathematical system would collapse. As Fibonacci demonstrated, though zero has no numerical value itself, it is essential for designating real

numbers in a "positional numeral system" where "the place a digit occupies determines its value" (Danesi 13). According to this reading, human perception is itself a placeholder, an approximation to the real, which it can only reflect abstractly, much like the relationship between signifier and signified. In keeping with an author and text that prizes duality, "Nullo" refuses to provide a singular, clear-cut solution, and instead multiplies paradoxes, suggesting that puzzlement is its own reward. My analysis of just three of the many references to pine needles in *Cane* demonstrates how the puzzle model enables us to account for and track recurring elements that form clusters, and highlights the connections between them without subordinating or suggesting one's priority over another. Like the arcs that preface each section, the associational clusters encourage non-linear thinking consistent with the circular form of the book itself, which circles outward from no fixed point, but is constantly on the move.

Cane's generic complexity contributes to a feeling of restlessness that takes tangible form in its movement between regions. Beginning in the rural South with impressionistic portraits of desirable but emotionally unavailable women, the text's center of gravity shifts northward in Part Two to Washington D.C. and Chicago in a move that replicates the Great Migration of black laborers during the first decades of the twentieth century. The patterns of life "whizzing, whizzing down the street car tracks" in these urban, industrial centers differ markedly from the slow pace and oppressive beauty of the South to which the action returns in the final section (*Cane* 41). Thus, movement through space as well as alternation between genres creates a hybrid work that, like the face of the man in the puzzle and Toomer himself, is free from "the compulsion to be this or that" and able to embrace duality, to identify as "this *and* that."

However, if the potential for change afforded by dynamic movement were to be denied, the circular form Toomer lauded threatens to become a pivot, a measure of the limits of freedom

for one constrained. Constraint takes various forms in the text, whether physical, as in the extreme case of Tom Burwell, whom a mob ties to a stake and burns to death in "Blood Burning Moon," psychological like the crippling fear that keeps good men, such as Kabnis and Halsey down, or as is so often the case, a combination of both. These examples from *Cane* suggest that the shackles of slavery continue to exert a hold on nominally free subjects since as "Box Seat" reminds us "slavery [was] not so long ago" (67). In essays from the early 1920s, Toomer expressed concern about the raced and gendered quality of these limitations, writing that "Negroes are as firmly rooted as the pine trees are. Like these trees, black men sprout to life with movement circumscribed" (*Selected Essays* 12). Contact with the life-giving soil is not itself detrimental; however, many men like Kabnis are paradoxically both rooted and rootless, "suspended a few feet above the soil" of African American heritage and traditions "whose touch would resurrect" them (98). Through *Cane's* "everlasting song," Toomer strives to reconnect an "uprooted" and spiritually "thinning" people to the "plaintive soul, leaving, soon gone" of their ancestors, "a song-lit race of slaves" (14). In this sense, his commitment to dynamic movement is political as well as aesthetic.

Toomer maintained that the explosion of crystallized forms, in literature as in life, is desirable insofar as it affords the possibility for new, potentially improved combinations of the materials contained within them. Destruction is, therefore, the necessary precursor to "original creation" (*Selected Essays* 90). Toomer's optimism about the possibilities inherent even in cataclysmic change, a quintessentially modernist sensibility that aligns him with the other authors examined in this study, applies equally to experiments with literary form and potential solutions to the racial divisions within America. In *Cane*, the relationship between them is symbiotic—the experimental fusion of genres parallels racial admixture and accomplishes

creatively what Toomer hopes will come to pass in America itself, the emergence of a new hybrid class of beings, whose multiracial heritage makes them uniquely qualified to lead the nation toward racial harmony.¹¹⁹

Cane presents a kaleidoscopic array of faces that reconfigure as one portrait gives way to the next in the sequence of changing faces that structure the book, and the style of these portraits also varies as the narrative moves through its circular orbit. The poems "Face" and "Portrait in Georgia" in Part One draw attention to Toomer's technique of constructing likenesses that conform with the painterly definition of portraiture by focusing on "the face or head and shoulders" of his subjects (OED). Both of these short poems are macabre blazons that describe a suffering woman starting at the top of her head with the hair and working their way downward to concentrate on her face. Although the woman's hair is "silver-gray," rather than the more expected golden or ebony tresses, "Face" celebrates the beauty of hair "like streams of stars" in traditional blazon fashion, whereas "Portrait in Georgia" inverts this arrangement, comparing "braided chestnut" locks to the ghastly coil of "a lyncher's rope." The coloration and physical attributes of the woman in "Portrait," with her nut-brown hair, dark eyes, red lips, sweet breath, and slim, white body conform with the stock catalogue of the beloved's approximation to the physical ideal, but the unexpected likening of these features to implements of torture (ropes and brands) and the physical damage they produce (blisters and burnt bodies) makes for an

¹¹⁹ Toomer would dub these individuals "Blue Men." The term derives from his long poem "Blue Meridian," which was first published in 1936. It is difficult to determine when precisely Toomer coined this term, however, due to the poem's extraordinarily complex compositional history. He began work on its earliest incarnation, "The First American," as early as 1920 (Kerman and Eldridge 75). Unfortunately, that version is no longer extant, and all that has survived are Toomer's recollections of its contents. In autobiographical writings from the 1930s, he stated that "The First American" articulated his position on "the matter of race and the race problem in America," including his belief that "in America we are in [the] process of forming a new race, [and] that I was one of the first conscious members of this race" (*Wayward* 120-21).

unsettling, haunting effect. Toomer uses the conventional language of romance to depict a lynching and burning that re-conceives of whiteness as "the ash / of black flesh after flame."

"Portrait in Georgia" may also play upon the etymology for blazon proposed by two nineteenth-century philologists, Friedrich Diez and Émile Littré, who claimed that the term derived from "a Germanic word identical either with English blaze" or "German *blasen*" meaning "to blow," or trumpet (OED). Through his choice of subject matter, Toomer insinuates that the blazon form is itself a "firebrand" that consumes the beloved's body, tossing it piecemeal onto the "blaze." Her eyes become "fagots" to feed the poetic flame, the lips "scar" and form "red blisters" from its heat, and her breath takes on the pungent aroma of burning sugar—"the last sweet scent of cane." He draws attention to the insistent cataloguing that dismembers, distorts, and destroys the body and the woman within it through the absence of conjunctions and full stops, minimal use of the verb to be, and abrupt linebreaks. In both poems, dashes appear immediately after each of the body parts catalogued, and these dashes take the place of verbs or the term "like" when forming the simile. For instance, Toomer renders the sentiment her eyes are like fagots as "Eyes – fagots." This extreme compression highlights each of the facial features listed in the poem by isolating them on one side of the dash mark, and replicates the blazon's dismemberment of the body at the grammatical level through the creation of sentence fragments. "Face" goes one step further by inserting line breaks after each feature enumerated (e.g., "Brows– / recurved canoes" and "Her eyes– / mist of tears"), which makes the starkness of the list and the isolation of the body parts visible at a glance. The conclusion of "Portrait in Georgia" in which a living being is reduced to ash warns against the deadly consequences of fixating on isolated facial features in an attempt to make meaning or art from them. By placing undue emphasis on isolated parts rather than a person as a whole, physiognomy and anthropometry

commit a form of violence, killing the subject those parts comprise by reducing her to a type (racial, national, occupational, and etc.) or stock character in a fashion analogous to the blazon. Toomer's decision to link the blazon form to a very specific and racially motivated type of violence, lynching and burning, indicts the unequal and racist application of these systems of measurement and the criminalization of purportedly racially specific features.

The criminological equivalent of the blazon, the *portrait parlé*, provides a detailed written description of the head, face, and body of criminals in order to facilitate the identification of recidivists through their distinguishing marks. Developed by Alphonse Bertillon of the Paris *Préfecture de Police* during the 1880s, the *portrait parlé*, or descriptive signaletics, is the second step in a three-part process that begins with taking eleven standardized measurements of the offender using anthropometric tools (the "anthropometric signalment") and culminates in the enumeration of his physical anomalies, those "peculiarities, which characterize the individual" due to their "exact localization" on the body ("signaletics by peculiar marks") (Bertillon 55).¹²⁰ This technique requires policemen to treat faces, and by extension offenders, as "composite structures," and instead of viewing the body before them in its totality, they scrutinize each feature in turn with an eye to notating deviations from the arithmetical mean (Maxwell 66). The signaletic method, therefore, operates upon a contingent model of identity that defines individuals as nothing more than a random assemblage of interchangeable parts. As if to underscore this point, Bertillon's "Synoptic Tables of Physiognomic Traits," compiled as a visual reference for officers tasked with writing *portrait parlé*, offer a dizzying array of disembodied noses, foreheads, ears, mouths, and so forth, cut from photographs of criminals and organized

¹²⁰ The eleven measurements taken as part of the anthropometric signalment are the subject's height, reach, trunk, length and width of the head, length and width of the right ear, length of the left foot, length of the middle finger, length of the little finger, and forearm length.

into galleries based upon feature.¹²¹ Every conceivable shape and size of facial feature appears in this archive and has been labeled according to the descriptive terminology that Bertillon sought to standardize. Bertillon's method, generally referred to as signaletics or bertillonage, became the standard form of criminal identification utilized by police departments in every major city across Europe and America until after the first World War when dactyloscopy (identification based upon fingerprints), a simpler method with a lower margin of error, displaced it as the favored technique.¹²²

The extreme compression of Toomer's blazons resembles the descriptive portion of signaletic identification cards, and analysis of these poems within the context of bertillonage illuminates suggestive parallels between their methods of creating "speaking likenesses." In order to conserve space, signaletic identification cards contain itemized lists of facial features, each followed by a short dotted blank for the examiner to describe the feature in question using shorthand.¹²³ Toomer's technique of listing one attribute per line of poetry followed by a short, fragmentary description mirrors the signaletic format, and the opening lines of "Face" and "Portrait in Georgia" conform so closely to Bertillon's system that they could be transcribed unaltered under the "Chromatic Characteristics" portion of the card. Chestnut is one of only three approved terms (blonde and black are the others) for describing hair color with a lone exception permitted, "turning grey" may be added in order "to express the mixture of white and colored hair" as in the "silver-gray" locks of the unnamed woman from "Face" (Bertillon 14, 149).

¹²¹ In the original French they are called "Tableau Synoptique Des Traits Physionomiques Pour Servir a L'Etude du Portrait Parle."

¹²² See Fosdick for more details on the wane of bertillonage and the rise of dactyloscopy.

¹²³ Bertillon even issued lists of "authorized abbreviations" and samples of "abridged writing" to encourage greater concision and standardization across languages. See Plates 60c-d and 77 of *Signaletic Instructions*, which appear in the Appendix of the American edition.

Dashes, like the ones that follow each feature enumerated in Toomer's blazons, routinely appear on the identification cards where they signify conformity to the statistical norm. Bertillon explained that while the Descriptive Analysis of the Profile should be filled out in its entirety, "the headings relating to the front[al] view [of the face] are replied to only when the feature examined clearly departs from the mean, which is as much to say as three-quarters of the headings . . . will be answered only by dashes" (250). By concealing the multifarious ways in which human beings resemble each other, dashes function as ciphers that promote the fetishization of difference in a mode that even Bertillon acknowledged reduces subjects to caricatures (250). Whereas most modern audiences would scoff at the thought of employing caricature as a tool for accurately identifying individuals, Bertillon argued that exaggeration of a person's characteristic traits enhances the likelihood of recognition and therefore concluded that the "verbal portrait should give first place to the same physiognomical features as those which would be emphasized by the caricaturist" (ibid). In keeping with the grotesque aspect of caricature, signaletic cards even include clearly defined spaces for cataloguing the forms of violence done to the body in Toomer's poems, such as scars (*cicatrices*), blisters, and "channeled muscles," which Bertillon places under the euphemistic heading of "peculiar marks."

However, despite the numerous correspondences between them, Toomer's blazons counteract the chief aim of Bertillon's system—identification—by maintaining the anonymity of his subjects. In Toomer's hands, the "characteristic traits" that Bertillon proclaimed were more reliable than photography for differentiating individuals steadfastly refuse to disclose the identity of their bearer. Indeed, the description of the suffering female body in "Portrait in Georgia" makes clear that it is not the portrait of a single individual, but rather a symbolic representation of the plight of Southern blacks, and arguably the African American population as a whole, as

conveyed through the language of lynching and burning. "Portrait" presents an abstract version of racial typology that defines racial categories based upon shared sociological experiences as opposed to physical traits, and in so doing resists the biological determinism that plagues many typological studies.

The woman in "Face" also remains anonymous, and although the poem lists each of her features individually, they work together to form a system that combats bertillonage's view of subjects as "composite structures." The poem hymns an older woman whose face is like a sea of suffering formed by the "mist of tears" that veil her eyes. Waves of pain cause her eyebrows to "quiver" and bend like "recurved canoes" in response to each new "ripple" of emotion that convulses her face. Her tears fall upon the furrowed musculature of her worn body, nourishing "cluster grapes of sorrow" that take on a purple cast, reminiscent of bruises, in the fading light of the "evening sun." As the setting of the sun suggests, her physical body will not endure much longer, and her spirit will soon be traveling heavenward to take its place among the "streams of stars" that her hair so closely resembles. Having established the organic unity of her body in the first twelve verses, the poem's stark final line, which likens death to ripeness, expands outward to encompass the circle of life. Although she will die, her physical being will take part in the continuity of all life on earth when her body is reabsorbed into nature, and, as the poem so matter-of-factly states, becomes nourishment "for worms." Despite their brevity, Toomer's blazons engage in a complex dialogue with bertillonage that calls into question two of its chief practices, namely defining individuals based upon their physical features and denying their organic unity.

Toomer had good reason to examine Bertillon's methods critically. Although Bertillon made invaluable contributions to the field of criminology, he reinforced the belief that the bodies

of criminals testify against themselves and that anthropometry provides an objective, scientific basis for interpreting that testimony. While publicizing the signaletic method during the 1890s, Bertillon firmly casts himself in the camp of the Italian criminalists, proclaiming the compatibility of his system of anthropometric identification with their "new theories" since both rely "on osteometric observations" (Mouat 196). Chief among those "new theories" was Lombroso's belief in the atavistic origins of crime and his fanatical search for a "criminal type." According to Lombroso, only a small percentage of the criminal population, the so-called "born criminals," exhibit the "full criminal type" characterized by numerous physical "anomalies in the limbs, trunk, skull and, *above all, in the face*" (Lombroso-Ferrero 24, emphasis added).¹²⁴ He and his followers describe these "criminal" attributes in explicitly racial terms, noting the "flattened, negroid" noses of thieves, the "fleshy, swollen, and protruding [lips] as in negroes" of the "violators of women and murderers," and the enlarged sinuses and the "oblique eyelids" shared by criminals and "Mongolian[s]."¹²⁵ As if stigmatizing facial features thought to be representative of minority populations proved insufficient, Lombroso felt compelled to reiterate that the appearance of the born criminal "recall[s] the black American and Mongol races and, above all, prehistoric man much more than the white races" (*Criminal Man* 48-49, 238).

Toomer's description of multiracial individuals in Part One of *Cane* combats the racist applications of anthropometry and physiognomy promulgated by Lombroso and his followers by blurring the faces of his characters while celebrating their rich range of hues. Each of the prose

¹²⁴ Lombroso was notoriously inconsistent, especially when it came to statistics. His estimate of the percentage of "born criminals" within the criminal population as a whole varied from 25% in the Third Edition to "close to 40%" in the Fourth, and "up to 35%" in the Fifth (*Criminal Man* 205, 224, 338). The number of anomalies required to qualify as a "born criminal" was equally variable, ranging from 3 or more in the Third Edition to 5-7 in the Fourth Edition.

¹²⁵ These quotations appear on pages 8-16 of Gina Lombroso Ferrero's *Criminal Man According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso* (1911). Cesare Lombroso sanctioned his daughter's summation of his theories and praised her "precision" in an Introduction that he penned for the volume shortly before his death (xx).

portraits provides minimal identifying physical information and what little they do contain is often highly metaphorical in character. We catch occasional, fleeting glimpses of specific features—Esther's high cheekbones, Fern's "aquiline" nose, Becky's "stringy" neck, and Louisa's firm, upturned breasts—but none of these disconnected parts evoke a clear mental picture of a particular woman. Instead, imagery drawn from the natural world fleshes out the sketchy physical descriptions and provides a sense of character that is not solely dependent upon appearance. Metaphors likening these women to birds, plants, and elements (e.g., water and wind) emphasize their freedom of movement and changeability, attributes that deny the fixity necessary for reductive readings and encourage analysis of the motivating spirit within the body.

However, all of the portraits describe the color of the title character's skin, and this close attention to pigmentation provides the occasion for Toomer to laud the beauty of darker tones. In Part One, a spectrum of coloration emerges, ranging from Karantha's glorious dusky hue to Carma's "mangrove-gloomed, yellow flower face" and Esther's "chalk white" complexion. Although metaphorical language veils and partially obscures the finer points of the characters' appearance, it conveys a vivid sense of riotous color that challenges monolithic, stereotypical notions of blackness and affirms the wide range of phenotypic variation within the African American community. As the coldness and crumbling fragility of Esther's "chalk white" complexion suggest, *Cane* undercuts the automatic association between pale skin and beauty, yet does so in a manner that does not simply invert the prevailing standards or limit beauty to a single type. Esther is a dried out husk, a pale gray facsimile of a "little white child," whose "flat and dead" cheeks, hair "like the dull silk on puny corn ears," and face "the color of the gray dust that dances with dead cotton leaves" convey her emotional sterility through the absence of vivifying color (22-5). Yet, the agricultural metaphors hint that her outcome was not

predetermined. Had she had the courage to act, to seek out the nourishment necessary for her continued development, the husk may have made good on its promise of fruit, yielding a stronger woman with corn-gold hair and softly glowing skin the color of a cotton flower. However, this female counterpart of Kabnis lacks the necessary resolve, and unlike her biblical namesake, she flees her audience with King Barlo having failed to achieve "her purpose" (26). Like a "frightened child," she retreats to the safety and consolation of fantasy, where the dissonance between the "magnificent" man of her dreams and what she perceives as the "hideous" reality need no longer trouble her. Despite her surname's association with fertility, Esther Crane remains caged by restrictive sexual morality that prevents her from taking wing and ensures that her development will remain perpetually stunted.

The other bird-like women of Part One, Karintha and Fern, feel no such compunction about expressing their sexuality. *Cane* begins with the portrait of Karintha, a woman with skin "like dusk on the eastern horizon," whose extraordinary beauty drew men to her prematurely, much to the detriment of her emotional development. Unaware of the damage their desire for her has done, her suitors do not recognize that her soul "was a growing thing ripened too soon" (4). Karintha regards them with disdain, and her emotional distance confers a type of power upon her that the narrative brings to bear on the reader. The narrator repeatedly asks us to envision Karintha, "carrying beauty, perfect as dusk when the sun goes down," in a refrain marked by increasing urgency that culminates in his crying out, "O cant [sic] you see it, O cant [sic] you see it" (4). Like the men drawn to Karintha by her heady combination of physical availability and emotional inaccessibility, the narrator longs to capture her powerful mystery on the page, to make the reader feel her pull through the medium of his words. Yet, as his anxious repetition hints, she cannot be contained because Karintha refuses to remain still. She is "a wild flash,"

constantly on the move, and thus she appears only as a blur, "a bit of vivid color, like a black bird that flashes in the light" (3). She can be glimpsed indirectly in the traces left behind by her "whir[ring]" feet, such as the spiral of red dust in the road that signals her passing through town, yet her face remains elusive. We know nothing of her features. Karantha "carr[ies] beauty" with her, spreading it everywhere she goes, but also staggers under its weight. Her beauty is a burden, something she seeks to outrun and with good reason since "men had always wanted her, *this* Karantha, " the physical shell (3, emphasis added). Denied access to the specific details of her appearance, the reader must come to know the woman beneath the lovely surface, the Karantha who gives vent to her own anguish indirectly by stoning cattle, beating her dog, and leaving the body of her newborn to burn to ash upon the "pyramidal sawdust pile." This technique, reminiscent of putting blinders on horses, diminishes the likelihood of "see[ing] a surface and assum[ing] it is a center," as her suitors have done, by re-prioritizing vision over the merely visible, insight over sight (*Reader* 109).¹²⁶ We encounter Karantha on her own terms as a complex, multifaceted individual who, like the man in the Changing Faces puzzle, cannot be limited to one of her constituent and ever-evolving selves.

Whereas Karantha resists definition through the ceaseless movement of her body, Fern's mobile face deflects scrutiny by drawing the viewer's gaze relentlessly back to her eyes. The hypnotic power of Fern's "strange eyes" short-circuits the narrator's efforts to provide a detailed account of her features for wherever he looks, "the curves of her profile, like mobile rivers," lead back "to their common delta," and she, as shapeless as the water to which he compares her, slips from his grasp (16). He marvels at how Fern's face seems to "flow into her eyes," and tacitly

¹²⁶ I allude here to a passage from one of Toomer's letters to Alfred Stieglitz where he defines the fundamentals of his art as the unity of "the person, the medium, and the material." He glosses "purification of the person" as "that movement which leads from sight to vision; from a chaos of surfaces to a conflict of selves, from a conflict of selves to a pure unified center" (*Selected Letters* 192; 19 Jan. 1924).

acknowledges the futility of his efforts to describe her since "wherever your glance may momentarily have rested, it immediately thereafter wavered in the direction of her eyes." The narrative documents this process in action when he reflects upon the "creamy brown color of her upper lip" that reminds him of "the soft suggestion of down slightly darkened," and catches himself wondering "why, after noticing it, you sought her eyes, I cannot tell you." Like Karantha, Fern's sexual initiation occurred at an early age and "men were everlastingly bringing her their bodies" (16). However, Fern retreats inward behind a protective barrier, leaving her own body in its habitual, "listless-like" pose on her front porch safeguarded only by eyes that "gave the impression that nothing was to be denied" yet warned there was "nothing [she desired] that you could give her" at least "nothing that was obvious and tangible and that one could see" (ibid).

Drawn to the inexpressible sadness of those eyes, the narrator senses the emotional depths within Fern, and attempts to do what no man before him has been able to accomplish—to commune with her on a purely spiritual level. As they walk toward the creek together at dusk, he feels as if she intuitively understands his efforts at non-verbal communication and this unspoken connection renders her soul "visible" to him in a way that it had never been before. However, his thoughts shade imperceptibly away from pursuit of the mystical union between them to concentrate on his own feelings, so much so that he is surprised to find that he has taken her in his arms "without at first noticing it" (19). When he awakens from his reverie, Fern's eyes appear "unusually weird and open," and he experiences the sensation that they "Held God. He flowed in as I've seen the countryside flow in." At that moment, the narrator does something unspeakable that prompts her to rush "some distance" away from him, fall to her knees, and emit "plaintive, convulsive sounds, mingled with calls to Christ Jesus," before singing brokenly and inarticulately under the cover of darkness. He never discloses what precisely takes place,

prevaricating "I must have done something—what, I don't know, in the confusion of my emotion," but it seems clear that she regards his action as a betrayal. This scene closely echoes and reverses the sequence of events of Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus, feeling "deeply grieved, even to death," removes himself a short distance from his disciples, "thr[ows] himself to the ground and pray[s]" to be spared the trials (the bitter cup) that stand before him. Having become reconciled with his fate, he chastises his followers for falling asleep, and laments that "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Judas then betrays him with a kiss (Matthew 26.36-51; Mark 14.32-46). The parallel scene in *Cane* conflates the Magdalene—Fern is after all a promiscuous woman who "became a virgin" once again through the superstitious idolatry of the local men—with Christ, and suggests that the narrator, like Judas, has given into the weakness of the flesh and violated the spiritual compact between them through an act of blasphemous physicality committed under the pretense of friendship (16). Distraught that the promise of a connection above the body, one capable of touching the spiritual void ("something left vacant") within her has come to an abrupt halt as the narrator engages with her on a purely physical plane, Fern lashes out at the flesh that cages her soul, shaking her hands "as if they burned her" and "pounding her head in anguish upon the ground" until the painful awareness of his betrayal fades and she loses consciousness.

In the final glimpse the story has to offer of her, Fern has returned to her perch on the porch, seemingly unfazed by what has come to pass, with her eyes "vaguely focused" on the setting sun. She is no less magnetic for having sought the shelter of her haven, and the narrator finds his gaze drawn to her face as he leaves town. From his seat on the train, he watches "the countryside, and something [he] call[s] God" flow into her eyes, and he reflects that "Nothing ever really happened. Nothing came to Fern, not even I" (19). The extraordinary ambiguity of

this passage ensures that it can be read in various ways—as an admission of guilt, an accusation, or a statement of fact, just to name a few. This indeterminacy mirrors the fluidity of Fern's own profile, which denies physiognomy a foothold by compelling the viewer's gaze to rest on her eyes, the gateway to a soul in turmoil beneath the placid exterior. Fern's portrait, like Karinthia's before it, demonstrates that sight, especially fixation on physical appearance, deters understanding, and in order to truly know another person, one must see "her in a quick flash, keen[ly] and intuitively" (18).

The only physical description that *Cane* offers of Louisa, the woman at the center of the deadly love triangle in "Blood Burning Moon," is that "her skin was the color of oak leaves on young trees in fall. Her breasts, firm and up-pointed like ripe acorns. And her singing had the murmur of wind in fig trees" (30). Although her portrait appears last, it is typical in many ways of those that form the first part of the book. Natural conceits give an impression of the woman's beauty and sadness in a highly condensed form that requires a significant amount of imaginative labor on the part of the reader to unpack instead of providing a straightforward account of her appearance in the realistic mode. Louisa's association with the generative portion of the oak emphasizes her fertility as does the fruit-bearing fig, which adds a note of menace due to its connection with the Fall and the loss of innocence resulting from the primordial pair's sudden, shameful awareness of their nudity (Genesis 3:7). Her connection with autumn, the season of harvest and harbinger of winter, combined with the role that oak will play in Tom's murder—"hand-hewn beams of oak" fuel the fire that burns him alive—signal the potential dangerousness of Louisa's beauty (30, 36). "Young trees" suggests her pliability as well as her resilience since trees bend but do not break while still full of youthful vigor. As the only survivor of the triangle, Louisa's baleful song like a low "murmur," foreshadows the dirge that she will sing for both her

lovers once her efforts to dissuade that evil omen, the full moon from lingering over the "fact'ry door" fail, and Tom meets his death there by story's end. She, like so many of the women in the first section, is a palpable presence and absence, part ethereal or elemental like the wind used to give voice to song, and part fecund body, an oak leaf clinging to the tree in inclement weather. As my reading of this passage demonstrates, the portraits in Part One are richly ambiguous and highly evasive. They insinuate without making definitive statements, and in so doing, they force potentially resistant readers to encounter people of color as more than just a surface to be read, but as complex beings with names, feelings, and a history of their own. Withholding information about the size, shape, and arrangement of facial features denies purchase for anthropometric and physiognomic readings that submerge individual identity into generic statements about types, or arbitrarily elevate the significance of a single trait, like the breadth of the nose or the slope of a forehead, above the person that bears it.

The vague, impressionistic portraits of the first section of *Cane* give way to much more detailed descriptions of men and women in Part Two that gravitate around two of the most frequently stigmatized traits, bushy hair and full lips. Even the thunder of "Storm Ending" becomes endowed with "full-lipped flowers" of sound, and Thirteenth Street is personified as "a dreaming nigger" with "liver lips" and "curled wool-blossoms" of hair (51, 59). Why does this abrupt change occur? On a formal level, the contrast can be explained through the series of binary oppositions that structure the first two sections of the book into point and counterpoint (e.g., passive/active, South/North, rural/urban, female/male, and physical/cerebral) as has so frequently been observed in previous scholarship.¹²⁷ However, if, following Toomer's own

¹²⁷ Waldo Frank was the first to liken *Cane* to a musical composition, writing in the Preface that Toomer melded his materials into "an unforgettable music" (140). Frank added that while "the notes of his counterpoint are particular (i.e., Toomer's focus on African American subjects), the themes" themselves are universal (140). Many scholars

account of the spiritual development of *Cane*, Part One emphasizes unconscious physicality and Part Two marks dawning consciousness and the emergence of intellection,¹²⁸ one would expect to find a greater emphasis on physical description in Part One than Part Two, but the reverse is true. Although Toomer claimed to be unconcerned with "physical coverings" from an artistic point of view, and was "very likely to be satisfied with a character whose body one knows nothing of" (*Reader* 95), Part Two acknowledges the limitations of this representational strategy, which ultimately is a form of evasion since it is impossible for living beings to lead a faceless existence or to exempt themselves from the welter of meanings associated with physical traits. Perception is subjective, and even the well-inclined project their interpretations upon the faces they behold, transfiguring them through an unconscious act of distortion or worse, bigotry. The detailed portraits of Part Two and their emphasis on spectatorship argue that awareness of how others perceive one's appearance, not necessarily agreement with their assessment, is an essential step in the process of self-acceptance and self-mastery. Concern with physical appearance is a symptom of social conformity, the very human desire to be part of something larger than one's self, to not be an outcast. Transcendence comes from having the strength to act honestly and impulsively without concern for who is watching or their judgment. The product of this indifference is serenity, the peace of being true to one's self. However, as the failed romances of Part Two attest, very few people are capable of achieving complete independence of thought.

have used Frank's musical analogy as a jumping off point for their own observations about the structure of *Cane*. See for example, B.F. McKeever's essay "*Cane* as Blues" (1970) and Michael Krasny's "The Aesthetic Structure of Jean Toomer's *Cane*" (1975). George Hutchinson briefly mentions jazz as a formal influence on *Cane* in "The Novel of the Negro Renaissance" and *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (1995), but this idea receives a much more thorough treatment in Michael North's *The Dialect of Modernism* (1994).

¹²⁸ Toomer expresses this view in an essay entitled "The South in Literature" (1923). The relevant portion reads: "In Part Two the milieu shifts to Washington. . . life becomes more conscious, more restless and stirring, hence more complex. . . .This is a section of spiritual growth and psychological subtlety" (14).

Only the messianic Dan Moore has the courage to shout his defiance, then walk calmly away from the petty restrictions he has renounced.

In "Theater," Dorris's passionate innovation nearly succeeds in breaking through the reserve of her educated admirer John, yet their mutual concern with appearances ultimately prevents them from acting upon their feelings for each other. Set in Howard Theater during an afternoon rehearsal, "Theater" provides access to the interiority of both would-be lovers, the chorus girl Dorris and the manager's brother John. As John watches the dancers warm up, he criticizes how the show panders to white tastes, thinking, "Soon the director will herd you, my full-lipped, distant beauties, and tame you, and blunt your sharp thrusts in loosely suggestive movements, appropriate to Broadway" (52). Despite his criticism of their conformity, John is no freer to act on his impulses than the women he dehumanizes through comparison with wild animals, and his feelings of impotence filter through in the phallic language of blunted thrusts. Even as he feels drawn to the "throbbing jazz songs" and "loose passion" of the dancers, John represses the corresponding emotion within himself, forcibly separating his mind from "the desires of his body" in an effort to remain within the bounds of propriety (53). Dorris's vibrancy and unconstrained energy set her apart from the other dancers, and she catches John's eye. Toomer emphasizes the subjectiveness of the detailed description of Dorris that follows by directly attributing it to John: "John sees her. Her hair, crisp-curled, is bobbed. Bushy, black hair bobbing about her lemon-colored face. Her lips are curiously full, and very red" (53). John projects his anxieties upon Dorris's face and rationalizes them through an interpretation of her features that hints at his internalization of the very standards he condemns. Fixating on Dorris's full lips as emblematic of her sensuousness, he judges them to be overly large and glaringly red when unconsciously weighed against his own muted passion. Dorris's bobbed hair suggests that

she, too, is conflicted. The cut announces her rebellious rejection of traditional femininity and association with New Womanhood, yet the "crisp-curl" speaks to her use of a flat iron to straighten the natural bushiness of her hair in compliance with white standards of beauty.

The only physical description of John is in turn filtered through Dorris's consciousness, but rather than naturalizing her impressions, Dorris calls their validity into question. Having observed John watching her, she seeks to draw him to her through the seductive power of her dance, yet all the while, she suffers from the same insecurity and doubts of reciprocity that plague him. As her eyes "burn across the space of seats" to John, Dorris worries that he will never respect her, even if she manages to win him, due to the difference in their social standing, and this anxiety causes her to be of two minds. She ruminates, "I bet he can love. Hell, he can't love. He's too skinny. His lips are too skinny" (54-5). As a defense mechanism, she interprets John's mouth according to physiognomic principles, just as he had done to hers, in order to transfer the blame for his perceived lack of interest in her. Reliance on physiognomy is thus depicted as the last resort of the weak, fearful, and unaccountable. Almost as soon as Dorris makes this typological argument, she reverses course and undercuts the entire line of thought by adding, "Maybe he'd love. I've heard em say that men who look like him (what does he look like?) will marry if they love" (55). The parenthetical aside—directed as much at the reader as Dorris herself—draws attention to the fact that she has told us nothing concrete about John's appearance, and casts doubt upon any purported correlations between facial features and behavior or spiritual endowments by demonstrating that they are often arrived at *a priori*. That is, physiognomic readings are arbitrary and largely incidental to the actual appearance of a given individual since Dorris considers what John looks like only *after* she reaches the hopeful conclusion that he may be the marrying type. This passage also parodies the hearsay evidence of

the unscientific "them," showing how theories become detached from their original context, watered down, and may even be parroted by those whom they place beyond the pale. Despite her ignorance, Dorris achieves something that the cerebral John can only dream of doing—"she forgets her tricks" and acts, throwing herself wholeheartedly into a dance that offers the promise of "canebrake loves and mangrove feastings" (55). Sadly, her efforts are all for naught since he can only respond to her overtures in the fantasy realm he has constructed, forsaking her offer of union for a pale reflection of it.

"Box Seat" examines the damaging psychological effects of racial stereotypes through the violent reaction they elicit in Dan Moore, and the threat they pose to his spiritual enlightenment. While searching for the doorbell to Mrs. Pribby's house, Dan fears he will be mistaken for a burglar and the injustice of this unfounded assumption provokes a violent fantasy in which he revenges himself upon his imagined accusers by enacting their most outrageous fears: "I'll show em. Grab an axe and brain em. Cut em up. Jack the Ripper. Baboon from the zoo" (59). Dan's vivid sense of persecution while standing alone and unmolested on the stoop reveals the perniciousness of racial stereotypes, and how they bolster inequality by taking root in the mind of the oppressed. Dan momentarily indulges in the vicarious pleasure of meeting intolerance with violence, and the hyperbolic excess of that violent rage mocks the ludicrous image of the murderous black beast lodged within the brains that his alter-ego targets with an axe. However, prejudice also limits the possibilities for resistance since employing violence would seem to confirm the very stereotype he seeks to overturn. Dan may register this paradox when he stages a mental confrontation with the police in order to reclaim his right to self-definition, explaining, "No, I aint a baboon. I aint Jack the Ripper. I'm a poor man out of work" (60). Even in his fantasy, Dan's pleas for understanding fall on deaf ears, and he appeals to the unyielding

policemen to "look into my eyes" (ibid). Just as Fern's fluid profile encourages viewers to connect with her on a spiritual level, Dan's urgent request holds out the hope that his eyes will communicate his sincerity and humanity to those who are blinded by difference. Their answering laughter rekindles Dan's anger, and he threatens to peel the policemen's fingers "as if they were ripe bananas" (60). The surreal, almost cartoonish image diminishes the gruesomeness and brutality of flaying while the choice of metaphor pinpoints the source of his rage. Convinced that the brutish policemen regard him as simian, a "baboon from the zoo" or one of the shadowy "gorillas" he sees reflected in the glass of the door, Dan warns that he will embrace the stereotype and use it against all those who deny his humanity; he will develop a taste for bananas (59-60). What this scene vividly illustrates is how prejudice dehumanizes both the victim and the victimizer. The policemen sink to the level of "bull-necked bears," and Dan's desire to respond to their unthinking physicality in kind, to "show em," narrowly avoids transforming the self-proclaimed prophet, who "came to a sick world to heal it" into a destroyer (59).

Dan's love of Muriel draws him back to the petty, unforgiving world of social convention where he "doesn't fit," and her unwillingness to risk censure or expulsion from respectable society by publically reciprocating his affections suggests that it is easier for men to behave unconventionally because the sexual double standard raises the stakes of defiance substantially for women (61, 65). Once inside the censorious Mrs. Pribby's house, Dan waits anxiously for Muriel to receive him. Although it is clear that they share a romantic history, she responds to his impromptu visit with a cool formality that contrasts sharply with the vibrancy of her features and their warm hues. Muriel's face appears "fleshy," yet attractive due to "the fresh fragrant something which is the life of it. Her hair [is] like an Indian's. But more curly and bushed and vagrant. Her nostrils flare. The flushed ginger of her cheeks" glows orange beneath the light of a

lamp (61). While this account retains some of the ambiguity that characterizes the portraits of Part One, it provides a much greater amount of realistic detail that conjures the image of a young woman with a heavy face tending toward "coarseness" and a lively expression framed by dark, voluminous hair.¹²⁹ The flair of her nostrils conveys Muriel's disdain for Dan's long absence and the heightened color of her cheeks signals her discomposure. Their oblique conversation provides the first clue why Dan has the power to unsettle her. His remarks, less guarded than hers, hint that their prior dalliance resulted in pregnancy, and Muriel lost, aborted, or gave the child up for adoption. This is the painful ordeal that she had to endure without him during "the last few months" when he longed to see her and offer encouragement (61). In contrast to Dan's belated words of consolation, Mrs. Pribby offered tangible assistance during her actual time of need, and this kindness binds Muriel to her and her way of life out of a sense of indebtedness. As a result, Muriel suppresses her instincts and submerges her identity, forcing herself to "become prim and cool" out of loyalty to her chaperone, whose likeness she assumes (63). The marked change between the Muriel who shook her posterior, "rolled and wobbled," and "pulled up her dress and showed her pink drawers" when she danced, and the newly demure woman, who conceals her bobbed hair beneath her hat, speaks volumes about the pressures exerted upon her to conform (67). No longer free to behave spontaneously, Muriel must atone for her lapse in order to regain the respectability necessary for retaining employment or securing a husband.

¹²⁹ Readers at the time of first publication would likely interpret the bushiness of her hair as a clue to the light-skinned Muriel's African American heritage for, as renowned anthropologist A.L. Kroeber noted, "the texture of the hair is now [1923] universally regarded as one of the most valuable criteria for classifying races, possibly the most significant of all" with "wooly" hair thought to be characteristic of peoples of African descent (39). Despite his respect for Professor Kroeber, Toomer contended that fixation on "differences of textures of the hair" is a product of social conditioning, and those textural differences are no more meaningful than the contrast between "the hair of different animals—a shaggy dog, and a sleek cat" (*Selected* 65). By likening Muriel's hair to "an Indian's," Toomer undermines the easy association between hair texture and race while also suggesting her hybridity. If Muriel were "strong enough to buck" convention by loving freely, she would number among the American type, whom Toomer believed would usher in a better future (61).

Even the free-thinking Dan acknowledges what has been drilled into Muriel, that a fallen woman is damaged goods, when he avers, "I want you, whatever the world of Pribby says" (63). It is her entanglement with Mrs. Pribby that precludes Muriel from achieving the same realization as Dan in the pivotal scene in the theater, and thus "Box Seat" highlights how the sexual double standard binds women more firmly to convention and places obstacles on their path to transcendence.

Dan follows Muriel to Lincoln Theater where he experiences a profound sense of identification with Mr. Barry, the prizefighting dwarf, in a scene that closely parallels his own fantasy of persecution on Mrs. Pribby's stoop. While the dwarfs "pound and bruise and bleed each other" for the entertainment of the uproarious crowd, Dan ruminates on his own troubles, registering only the signs of the fighters' difference –their "huge head[s]" and "foreheads bulging like boxing gloves" (66-7). However, when the victorious Mr. Barry celebrates by singing "a sentimental love song," and jokingly targets Dan with his flashing mirror, Dan emerges from his reverie and looks closely at the dwarf for the first time. He registers the signs of pain carved into the dwarf's face with its "tortured wrinkles," and from this new vantage point, "the bulging, tight-skinned brow . . . grows profound. It is a thing of wisdom and tenderness, of suffering and beauty" (69). Visual acuteness correlates with the capacity for empathy in this story, and Muriel is "blind as a bat" to the plight of the man standing before her with hatred and longing for acceptance warring across his face as he proffers her a blood-stained white rose (65, 69). Afflicted by the same impairment as the weak-eyed Mrs. Pribby, Muriel cannot perceive the "words form[ing] in the eyes of the dwarf," urging her not to be afraid and entreating her to accept the flower (61, 69). Instead, she "see[s] black" and shies away from him in revulsion until the roar of applause from the crowd compels her to overcome her resistance and reach forth her hand (69). Just as Dan appealed to the police officers to "look into [his] eyes" and acknowledge

his humanity, Mr. Barry's expressive gaze communicates that he "too was made in His image" and calls upon the audience to "see how my eyes look at you" (59, 69). Only Dan, who "never miss[es] eyes," has the keenness of vision to look beyond superficial differences and empathize with Mr. Barry through the sudden recognition that the dwarf's painful feelings of exclusion mirror Dan's own experience of marginality (68). Empowered by this realization, Dan publically expresses his solidarity with the dwarf as he jumps to his feet and shouts, "JESUS WAS ONCE A LEPER!" (69). By reminding that the son of God was also a pariah ("leper") reviled by the people he came to save, Dan elevates Mr. Barry to the level of a prophet and accepts the mantle of "new-world Christ," preaching compassion and tolerance to the unawakened audience (60). Dan's newfound serenity attests to the transformative power of his act of identification with the prizefighter and the concomitant message of non-violence. Having acted on behalf of a fellow member of the oppressed, he grows "as cool as a green stem that has just shed its flower" (69). No longer alone and powerless, Dan's violent rage drains away, and he is blissfully unaware of the "rows of gaping faces [that] strain towards him" as he tries to leave the theater (69). Even the momentary distraction of a man that shoves Dan when he inadvertently treads on the man's feet elicits only "a slight swift anger" that fades before they can reach the alley for the second prizefight of the evening. The temptation to act the part of Jack the Ripper has gone, and with it so has Dan's anger. He is at peace.

"Bona and Paul" stages a Du Boisian moment of double consciousness that offers the key to transcendence, yet it remains just out of reach because Paul's mindfulness of appearances deters him from acting on his feelings for Bona. Like Dan, Paul is "out of step" with his friends and classmates, his "red-brown face" a barrier between them, and his refusal to define his racial identity, to "come out, one way or the other," leaves others floundering in epistemological

uncertainty (72, 77). Although "Bona and Paul" has consistently been interpreted as a narrative about passing, it does not conform with Toomer's understanding of the term, or standard definitions for that matter, since Paul is not "taken for white among the white group" (*Selected Essays* 57). Instead, from the outset, his closest companions fixate on the color of his skin as a sign of racial difference. Bona alternates between poetic odes to the beauty of its hue, "he is a harvest moon. He is an autumn leaf" and self-censure for her attraction to a man believed to be "a nigger. . . . [D]on't all the dorm girls say so?" (72), while his roommate Art's analysis of Paul's temperament unwittingly devolves into preoccupation with the reddish brown color of his skin as Art muses, Paul is "moony. Nut. Nuttish. Nuttery. Nutmeg" (77). Rather than thinking of "Bona and Paul" as a story of passing, it is more productive to regard it as a parable about the costs and challenges of maintaining racial indeterminacy in a nation determined to "place a person in either the white or the Negro group" (*Selected Essays* 55). Paul's unwillingness to reduce his complexity through the application of a reductive label, like Toomer's insistence on his own multiplicity, can be difficult to fathom for those who have grown accustomed to binary formulations of race, hence Paul's refusal to explain himself to Art, who mutters "Thinks I won't understand. Said so" (77). The tragedy of "Bona and Paul" is that neither Paul, nor the world in which he lives is fully prepared to embrace colorblindness since as Charles Scruggs and Lee VanDemarr astutely observe, "Paul can't have both the black and white worlds—when he joins one he loses another" (184).

Paul's efforts not to be defined by race come to a screeching halt at the Crimson Gardens night club where strangers stare and speculate about his ethnicity, inquiring of each other, "What

is he, a Spaniard, an Indian, an Italian, a Mexican, a Hindu, or a Japanese?" (76).¹³⁰ As they squabble over how best to classify him, "a strange thing happened to Paul." Under the weight of their scrutiny, he experiences what Du Bois termed double consciousness, the sense of "looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (3). Rendered uncanny by their defamiliarizing gaze, Paul has an epiphany: "suddenly he knew that he was apart from the people around him. . . . Suddenly he knew that people saw not attractiveness in his dark skin, but difference" (76).¹³¹ Yet, instead of finding this knowledge burdensome, as Du Bois did, it liberates Paul: "their stares, giving him to himself, filled something long empty within him, and were like green blades sprouting in his consciousness" (76-7). Paul's yearning for validation from the white crowd evaporates as he recognizes their myopia, and his sudden indifference to their views enables him to reclaim his right to self-determination, to, as Toomer put it in "The Negro Emergent" (1924), "find out what lay beneath the creature that America made for him" and "discover a self, an essence, interior to this crust-compound" (*Selected Essays* 51, 54). Paul's realization brings with it a sense of peace as he sees himself unimpeded for the first time, "cloudy" because still forming, "but real" (77).

Whereas Du Bois regarded double consciousness as something that ripped the soul asunder, Toomer depicts it as the key to Paul's rebirth. Their widely divergent responses to this

¹³⁰ Without diminishing the fact that "Bona and Paul" is a work of fiction, Toomer appears to have based this scene upon his own experience of being mistaken for a wide range of national and religious types. In an unpublished essay from 1935, Toomer wrote: "I have been taken for an Englishman, a Spaniard, a Dutchman, a Cuban, a South American, a Russian, a Japanese, an American Indian, a Hindoo, an Egyptian, a Frenchman" (*Reader* 100; cf. *Wayward* 18). The close similarities between the list of peoples in the story and his autobiographical writings bears out this line of thought.

¹³¹ Compare to Du Bois's account of his first experience of double consciousness, which occurred when he was a small child. Prompted by the disapproving glance of a white classmate, "it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil" (2). Denied the "dazzling opportunities" afforded his white classmates, Du Bois resolved to outperform them, but he observes that many other black youths did not fare as well, falling into "tasteless sycophancy, or into silent hatred of the pale world about them and mocking distrust of everything white" (*ibid.*).

phenomenon ultimately boil down to how each author views duality. According to Du Bois, double consciousness is a source of misfortune because it fractures the psyche and pulls the pieces in competing directions, and thus "one ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body" (3). For him, duality is an impediment to be overcome, and the ultimate goal is "to merge his double self into a better and truer self" (4). Although Du Bois emphasizes that neither of the "older selves" would be lost in the process, they become secondary to the achievement of unity (the new "better self"), just as the individual pieces of a jigsaw puzzle become subsumed within the image they produce. The Changing Faces puzzle, with its two differing representations of the same man, provides an apt visual representation of double consciousness and would therefore serve as an unnerving reminder of unresolved tensions for Du Bois, whose desire for closure conforms to the traditional model of a single solution. Multiplicity must be resolved to singularity. All dissonant elements must be reconciled. An individual can be comprised of only one self. However, for Toomer duality and the productive tensions it creates confer a distinct advantage both personally and artistically, as we have seen. He maintained that, "unrest is a help to creativity because it automatically breaks and dissolves many of the encrusted and obsolete forms which impede original creation," releasing the energy necessary for the formation of new selves from existing materials or the development of "new ideas, symbols, [or] forms" (*Selected* 90). None of these selves are "better" or "truer" than the others, rather they are all facets of "the formless immeasurable I AM" that he believed imbues all humanity with a spark of the divine ("Book of Family" 8).

Although similar language heralds the arrival of both Dan's and Paul's epiphanies, the promise of green sprouting fails to yield its flower in Paul's case, and his is ultimately only a

partial awakening. The final scene of "Bona and Paul" centers on Paul's interaction with the black doorman, whom he greets as "brother," and this "male-male union disrupts and displaces the heterosexual plot" (J. Miller np). Prior to this point, Bona and Paul have had a dispute on the dance floor, yet the friction of their bodies as they dance overpowers their mental reservations and "passionate blood leaps back into their eyes" (79). Yielding to instinct, they rush impatiently to collect their coats and hurry past the doorman, who has seen "too many couples" leave the club "flushed and fidgety, for him not to know" that they are going home together (ibid). However, in an echo of Paul's first epiphany that highlights the differing outcomes of these scenes, "a strange thing happens" when he meets the doorman's "knowing" eyes (79). Instead of feeling indifference, as he did in response to the scrutinizing gaze of the white clubgoers, Paul feels compelled to leave Bona and return to the doorman to justify his actions. In a long, poetic speech, Paul denies that he is motivated by base passions, and instead avers that "something beautiful is going to happen" when he finally has the chance "to know her whom I brought with me here to these Gardens" (80). Lest the doorman think that his involvement with the white Bona signifies a renunciation of the African-American community, Paul resolves to love without consideration of race, explaining "I came back to tell you, brother, that white faces are petals of roses. That dark faces are petals of dusk. That I am going out and gather petals" (80). Yet Paul's concern for the good opinion of the bouncer blinds him to Bona's feelings, and by the time that he has finished speaking and shaking hands with him, she has vanished. Unlike Dan, Paul has been unable to free himself from concern with appearances, and he has succumbed to the same fault that he criticized in Bona, "talking love" instead of making it (76). The text underscores the conventionality of his behavior at this pivotal moment by aligning it with the color purple, which represents lifelessness and insubstantiality in the story. Paul's "red passion" fades to a "purple

pallor" that leaves both lovers cold and derails the consummation of their interracial romance (75). Unaware of the situational irony, Paul touts his colorblindness to a man that he was drawn to based solely upon the color of his skin, only ever referring to him as "the black man" and never bothering to learn the doorman's name because Paul conceives of him not as an individual, but as a representative "Negro" (79-80). Thus, at the very moment that he expresses his resolution to live beyond race, Paul fails the test and falls imperceptibly back into the habit of judging others based upon appearances.

While none of the characters in *Cane* succeed in forming lasting emotional connections, the play of emotion across their faces engages scientific debates about race and criminality, and these constantly changing faces combat the notion of race as a biological given. Even at their most impressionistic, the portraits in all three sections of the book concentrate on affect, the micro-expressions that convey how a character feels. *Cane* suggests that certain expressions, especially wistfulness around the eyes and a wry twisting of the mouth, may be more effective racial determinants than the facial features that perform the emotions. Environmental factors, specifically what one endures and how s/he is treated, dictates one's racial status, which affirms what "Portrait in Georgia" has already concluded, that race is a social construct.

During the nineteenth century, studies of emotion figured prominently in debates about "what it meant to be savage or civilized, male or female, black or white" (Horn 108). One of the litmus tests for determining civility was the capacity to blush because blushing was "believed to be an effect of a conscience, dependent upon moral sense" (Horn 115). However, since blushes were not readily discernible on darker skin tones, it became commonplace to assume that people of color were incapable of blushing and thus devoid of "moral sense." These faulty assumptions not only reinforced the belief that darker skin tones were indicators of earlier stages of

evolutionary development, but also lumped people of color with criminals, who were thought to share their inability to blush and purported insensibility to pain. As late as 1872, this idea held such sway that Charles Darwin offered numerous pieces of evidence in *The Expression of the Emotions of Man and Animals* in order to demonstrate conclusively that "negroes blush, although no redness is visible on the skin" (n.p.). Although Lombroso cites Darwin's study, he rejects its conclusions and forges a direct link between criminals and those he deems to be "savages" in his discussion of their shared moral and physical insensibility.¹³² He argues that due to atavism, criminals exhibit "insensitivity to their own and others' pain," which "closely resembles" the behavior of "savages," and he offers the ghastly and clearly fictitious example of "Negroes" who "laugh as they mutilate their hands to escape work" (*Criminal Man* 64, 69). While Lombroso's explanation for the origins of crime is primarily biological, he did increasingly acknowledge that environmental factors may serve as contributing causes. Among the environmental factors he considered are ambient temperature (especially extreme heat), food shortages, and the Dorian Gray effect, which argues that lifestyle has an often quite pronounced influence on one's appearance. Had prejudice not prevented him from seeing it, the Dorian Gray effect offers an environmental explanation for other phenomena thought to be biological in origin, including race itself. Indeed, his description of the way that "environment shapes the face" of criminals as "fear" and "anxiety" "mold their expression," is equally applicable to the toll that the experience of oppression takes on Toomer's characters as conveyed by their twisted smiles and wistful eyes (*Criminal Man* 214). By emphasizing the role that environmental factors play in the formation of

¹³² For more detailed information, see "Emotions of Criminals" in the first edition of *Criminal Man* and "Sensitivity and Blushing in Criminals" from the third edition. The two most likely reasons why Lombroso rejected Darwin's conclusions are both a function of his prejudice: 1) it was better support for his theory of atavism if so-called savage peoples were physically incapable of blushing and 2) Darwin used the universality of certain expressions, including the blush, to argue in support of the theory of monogenesis, which posited that all peoples derived from the same human ancestors.

expression, Toomer weighs in on the debate, given new urgency by eugenicists, about whether heredity or environment determines the outcome of an individual's development.

The pronounced similarity between the white character Becky's habitual expression and the wry faces of the African American and multiracial female characters reinforces that race is a socially defined category and one's racial status is subject to change within certain limits. Becky has been ostracized by both the white and black communities for giving birth to two interracial children. Martha Jane Nadell argues that "white" is a sociological term, rather than a descriptive one that defines Becky's "social position" in the town (148). While this may be true initially, Becky has effectively been blackened as a result of her involvement with the father or fathers of her children, and "when the first was born, the white folks said they'd have no more to do with her" (7).¹³³ Denounced and cast out by both groups, Becky's "mouth set[s] in a twist that held her eyes, harsh, vacant, staring," and she withdraws to a shoddily built cabin on the outskirts of town, never to be seen by the townsfolk again (7). Yet, the daily appearance of her children, the wisp of smoke curling from her chimney, and later, the flapping pages of the bible left on her makeshift grave make Becky's presence all too palpable for those who have publically turned their backs upon her. The conspicuous visibility of her cabin, located on an "eye-shaped piece of sandy ground" between the road and railroad tracks, results in an agonizing, compulsive search for signs of her continued existence on the part of the guilt-ridden townspeople, and as the years pass without sight of her, "a creepy feeling came over all who saw that thin wraith of smoke and felt the trembling of the ground" (8). While "Becky" suggests that a punitive, alienating gaze can be redirected against its source, this reversal does not come without a cost. Becky has become

¹³³ Since the story is told from the limited perspective of the townsfolk, we never learn who the father of her children is. He chooses not to come forward, and Becky refuses to name him.

such a potent symbol of the town's wrongdoing that when her chimney collapses they are afraid to come to her aid, despite hearing her groan, and she is left to die, as she lived, alone.

Becky's grimace of pain and frustration resurfaces in the portrait of Halsey's great-grandmother and on the face of the "large-eyed, brown-skin girl," Stella (107). The second scene of *Kabnis* begins with a long, detailed description of Fred Halsey's parlor, including the portraits of his great-grandparents hanging above the fireplace, that defies the conventions of the dramatic genre. The portraits establish that Halsey and his younger sister Carrie Kate are the descendants of a mixed race union. Halsey's "nature and features" resemble those of his aristocratic English ancestor, while Carrie's "dazed" expression and "wistful smile" find their echo in the painting of her great-grandmother (87, 103). The unidentified observing eye, like the lens of a camera, zooms in on the portraits and interprets them for the reader, dilating at length on the face of the great-grandmother:

That here there is a Negro strain, no one would doubt. But it is difficult to say in precisely what feature it lies. On close inspection, her mouth is seen to be wistfully twisted. The expression of her face seems to shift before one's gaze – now ugly, repulsive; now sad, and somehow beautiful in its pain. (87)

This passage takes aim at the tendency to define race based upon what Toomer would later call "an obvious variation of a single feature, such as color of the skin" (*Selected* 63). None of her features can be categorized as stereotypically African American, and their ambiguity exposes the folly of attempting to ascribe racial significance to physical traits. Instead, the only clue to her biracial heritage resides in the pained, shifting expression that on "close[r] inspection" indicates the presence of a "Negro strain." "Strain" is a particularly loaded term to use in this context, and couples the denotative meaning of lineage, stock, or "inherited quality" with the suggestion of

constraint (i.e., to strain against limitations), injury (to strain a muscle), and violent force (to strain to the breaking point) (OED). These associations allude to the psychological toll, the "excessive tension" that threatens to tear apart the mental fabric of those who experience exclusion, and the vigorous striving necessary to survive those forces intact (ibid). In one of the most overt examples of changing faces in *Cane*, her facial expression seems to morph before the viewer's very eyes. Whether this transformation results from conflicting emotions finding their expression in turn upon the surface of her face or the viewer's changing affective response to the woman after prolonged study remains unclear due to the ambiguity introduced by the passive construction ("is seen"). Characteristically, the text tantalizes and demurs, neatly sidestepping definitive statements in favor of uncertainty.

Like Becky, the adversity that Stella, a young prostitute, encounters leaves its imprint upon her face in the "twisted line of her mouth" (107). Except for this pained expression, "there is about her no suggestion of the life she's been through" (ibid). Halsey is her lover, and her conversation at the small gathering he hosts reveals the horrific events that shaped her path. We learn that her mother was raped by a white man and that her father, filled with shame and heartbroken, died shortly thereafter (109). Alone and cognizant of her powerlessness to combat these injustices, Stella feigns indifference for if she does not care then she cannot be hurt again. She almost carries this pose off, yet her twisted mouth gives her away. Her sardonic, painful grimace attests to the profound depths of emotion experienced by a young woman, who cannot even take refuge in the local church, which has closed its doors to her in condemnation of her sinful behavior (107). Although the circumstances of their lives were quite different, Nina Pinchback Toomer also developed what her son remembered as an "injured, baffled, somewhat hardened and defensive look" after her first husband, Jean's father, abandoned her and she was

forced to return in disgrace to her father's household (*Wayward* 31). Toomer likely had this expression in mind when crafting the portraits of his female characters, whose faces unite a melancholy yearning for a better life with frustration and anger at its present outcome. Since we know next to nothing about their actual facial features, the resemblance between Becky, Carrie Kate, Stella, and Halsey's great-grandmother derives not from biology, but a shared experience of adversity that transcends race and stamps their faces with a "wistfully twisted" expression.

In his introduction to the newly reissued volume, Arnold Rampersad asserted that "*The New Negro* was the first literary attempt to revise the collective portrait of black America painted by [Du Bois] in his own epochal collection *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903" (xiv). Although he hedges this claim with the qualifier "in many respects," I must respectfully disagree with Rampersad's assessment. Jean Toomer's *Cane*, published two years prior to *The New Negro* offers a highly sophisticated literary representation of the lives and experiences of African American and multiracial individuals from across the nation, ranging from the agricultural South to the industrial North. True, Toomer's portraits are unorthodox. They frankly address taboo subjects like miscegenation and female sexuality, and they often stubbornly refuse to provide a physical description of their titular subject. However, they accomplish what renowned literary critic William Stanley Braithwaite regarded as all too rare in writings about African Americans at the time, moving beyond preoccupation with merely "skin-deep" qualities and "penetrati[ng] into the heart and flesh of Negro characters" (31). Toomer was so successful, in Braithwaite's estimation, at conveying the humanity of his characters that Braithwaite dubbed him "the very first artist of the race"(44).

Playing upon the various registers of changing faces in *Cane* enables Toomer to combat stereotypes without replacing them with a singular image, for even the venerable figure of the

Noble Negro promulgated by many other Harlem Renaissance writers would "nevertheless share the false and constricting nature of all superimposed images" if African Americans were expected to model their behavior upon it (*Selected* 54). Instead, Toomer offers portraits of a variety of individuals without ascribing praise or blame to any of them. Given the inordinate emphasis placed on appearance by both whites and blacks alike, his strategic blurring of the faces of the characters in Part One forces the reader to encounter the female subjects on a psychological and spiritual plane. This strategy is as much for the benefit of the potentially prejudiced white reader as the black one, who "judged by appearance," Toomer maintained takes "appearances seriously" (*Selected* 54). Despite these efforts at perceptual re-education, Toomer expressed his frustration that readers still could not grasp the meaning of some of his stories due to the "inhibitory baggage" they brought with them, writing in a letter to Georgia O'Keeffe: "When I say 'white,' they see a certain white man, when I say 'black,' they see a certain Negro" (*Letters* 191). Although not always successful at overcoming entrenched beliefs, Toomer's strategy of changing faces by rendering them in impressionistic fashion also combated one of the more malicious scientific interpretations of changing faces (i.e., abnormal physiognomy) as proof of degeneration and regression to lower levels of development frequently characterized in racial terms. The shifting expressions of many of his female characters, like Fern's mobile profile or the "wistful" curve of Avey's lips, not only attract attention away from their objectified bodies inward to their suffering souls, but also engage scientific debates about the role that heredity and environment play in the molding of an individual (46).

Regardless of whether one understands changing faces in the sense of shifting expressions; distortion resulting from prejudice, subjective interpretation, or strategic obscuration; or a non-repeating sequence of portraits that vary stylistically as the text moves in

its spherical orbit, all of these meanings challenge the simplistic belief that looking at or measuring an individual's face can tell you everything you would care to know about him or her from racial background to moral character. As Toomer would later observe, "despite the exact anthropological knowledge associated with measurements of physical features, the difficulties encountered [in determining race] tend to mount faster than one's understanding" since "it is not possible to analyze the racial composition of a person as we can analyze the chemical composition of a stone" (*Selected* 63, *Wayward* 91). Even the professional anthropologist "can only draw inferences as to what racial strains" comprise an individual due to uncertainty about what race actually is and the absence of clear correspondences between specific features and races (*Wayward* 91). *Cane* undermines the stereotypical image of an "African with dark skin, so-called 'wooly' hair, thick lips and nose" (qtd. in Du Bois, *Health* 16), but refuses to substitute another in its place. Rather than reducing any of the individual characters to a type, it offers a proliferation of faces, some more, some less visible in a shifting, kaleidoscopic display. Changing faces is thus the medium and the message of *Cane*.

APPENDIX



You've no idea, unless, of course, you're a cross word fan, what a help puzzle solving is to the vocabulary. Meet Miss Mahler, the boss' secretary, ready and willing, when the occasion arises, to use OBI, BOA and their synonyms in the firm's correspondence.

Figure 1: Detail of W. E. Hill's Cartoon "Cross Word Puzzles" from *Chicago Daily Tribune* 21 Dec. 1924: J1.

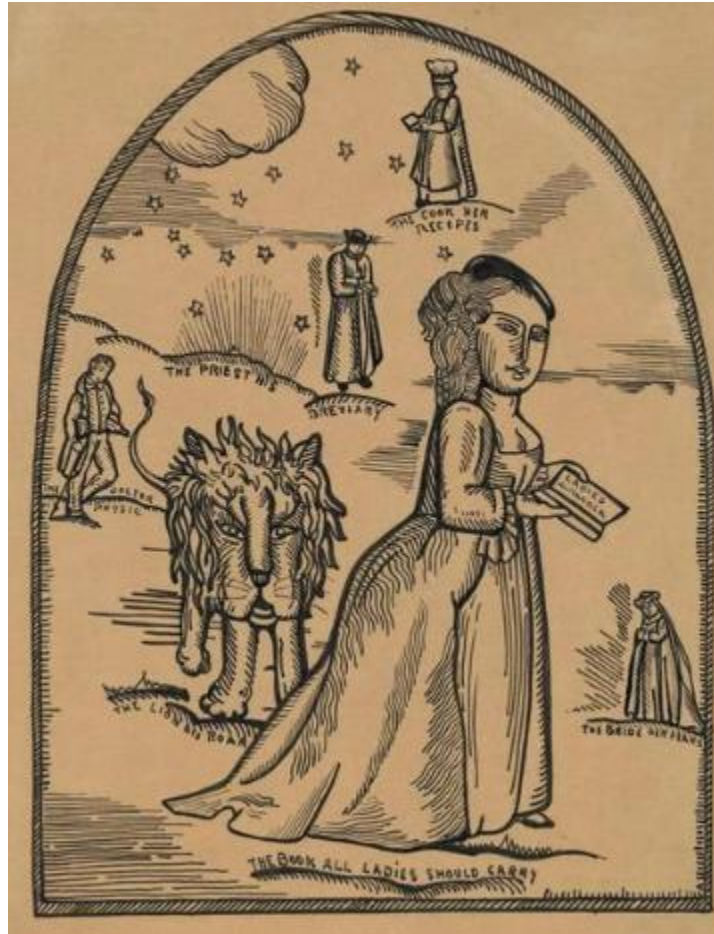


Figure 2: Second Frontispiece of *Ladies Almanack* (1928). Ink on paper. © Copyright, The Authors League Fund and St. Bride's Church, as joint literary executors of Djuna Barnes. Image courtesy of University of Maryland Digital Collections with permission of The Authors League.



Figure 3: Vignette from the title page of *Ladies Almanack*. Ink on paper. © Copyright, The Authors League Fund and St. Bride's Church, as joint literary executors of Djuna Barnes. Image courtesy of University of Maryland Digital Collections with permission of The Authors League.



Figure 4: Front and Back Wrapper of *Ladies Almanack* (1928), ink on parchment with colored pencil. © Copyright, The Authors League Fund and St. Bride's Church, as joint literary executors of Djuna Barnes. The coloration of the illustrations for the 1928 edition varies (sometimes wildly) because Barnes and Tylia Perlmutter hand-colored fifty total copies from the original print run. For the 1972 reissue, Barnes oversaw the choice of colors directly, resulting in a black and white scheme with red accents. Image courtesy of University of Maryland Digital Collections with permission of The Authors League.



Figure 5: Zodiac from *Ladies Almanack* (1928), ink. © Copyright, The Authors League Fund and St. Bride's Church, as joint literary executors of Djuna Barnes. Image courtesy of University of Maryland Digital Collections with permission of The Authors League.



Figure 6: "This is the Part About Heaven that has never been told!" from *Ladies Almanack* (1928), ink. © Copyright, The Authors League Fund and St. Bride's Church, as joint literary executors of Djuna Barnes. Image courtesy of University of Maryland Digital Collections with permission of The Authors League.



Figure 7: "November" from *Ladies Almanack* (1928), ink. © Copyright, The Authors League Fund and St. Bride's Church, as joint literary executors of Djuna Barnes. Image courtesy of University of Maryland Digital Collections with permission of The Authors League.

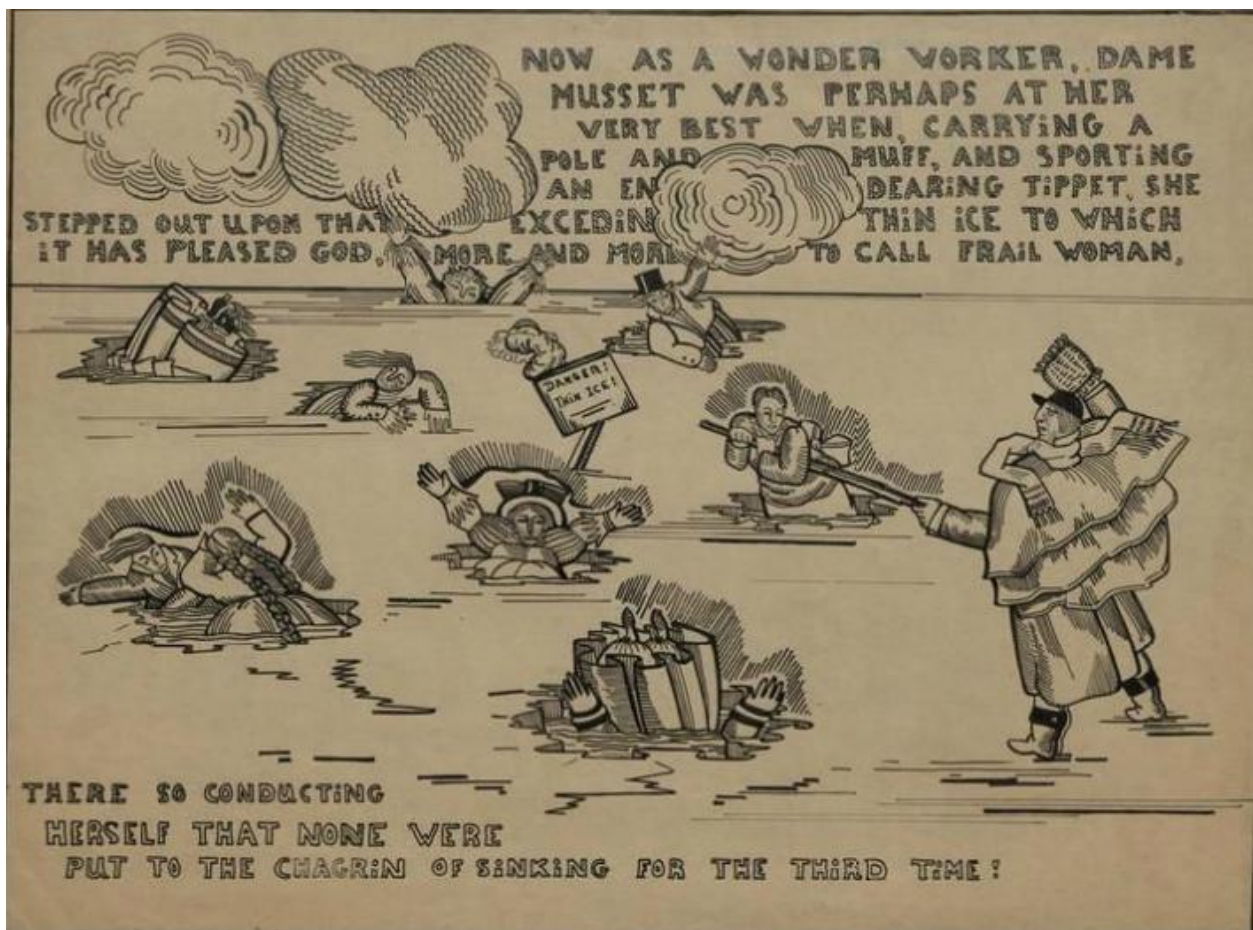


Figure 8: Frontispiece to *Ladies Almanack* (1928), ink. © Copyright, The Authors League Fund and St. Bride's Church, as joint literary executors of Djuna Barnes. Image courtesy of University of Maryland Digital Collections with permission of The Authors League.

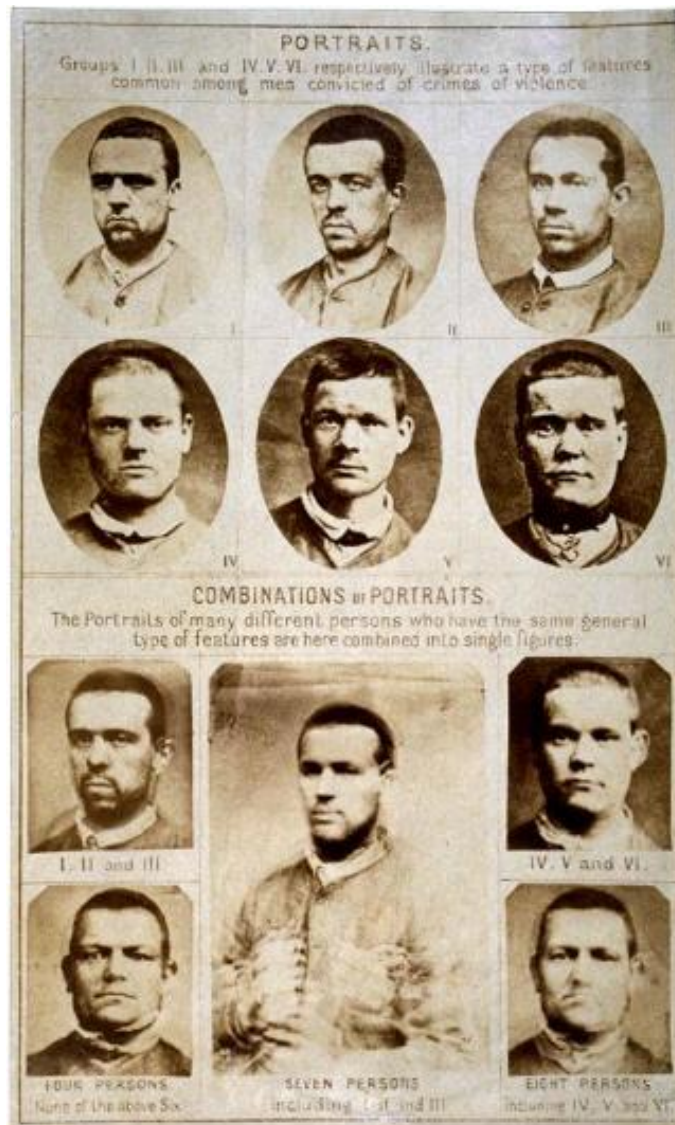


Figure 9: Composite Photograph of Violent Criminals. Reproduced with the permission of University College London, Special Collections Galton Papers.

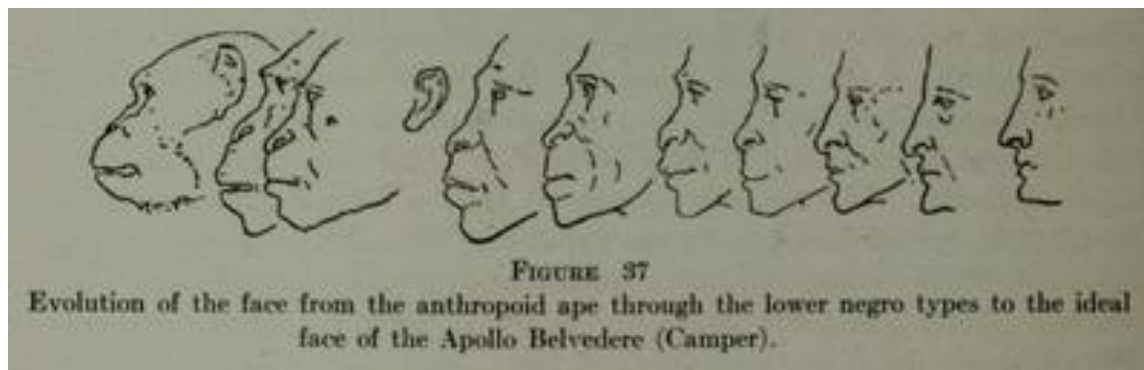


Figure 10: An evolutionary spectrum of changing faces based upon Camper's facial angle as illustrated in Eugene S. Talbot's *Developmental Pathology* (1911). Image courtesy of *Internet Archive*. Public Domain.

TAB. I.

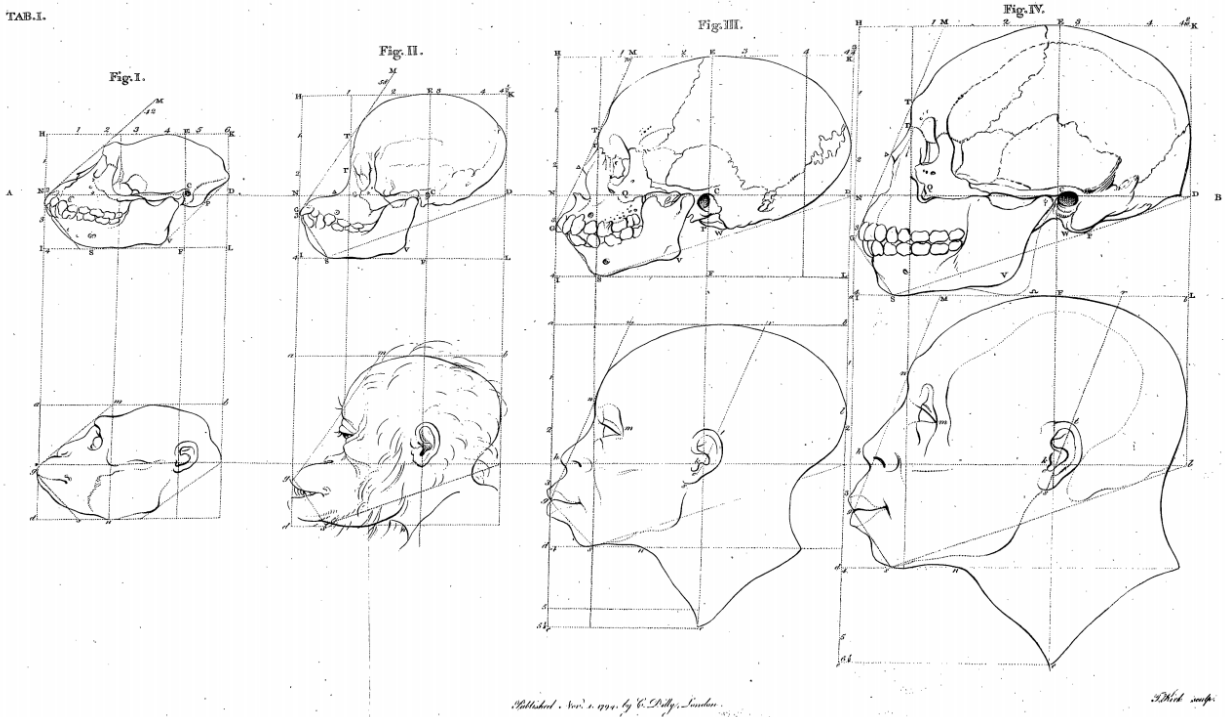


Figure 11: Camper's Facial Angle as pictured in *The works of the late Professor Camper, on the connexion between the science of anatomy and the arts of drawing, painting, statuary, &c.* (1794). At far left is the "simia caudata" with a facial angle of 42°, next is the orang-outang at 58° followed by a "young Negro" at 70°, then a "Calmuck" whose facial angle is also 70°. Image courtesy of Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

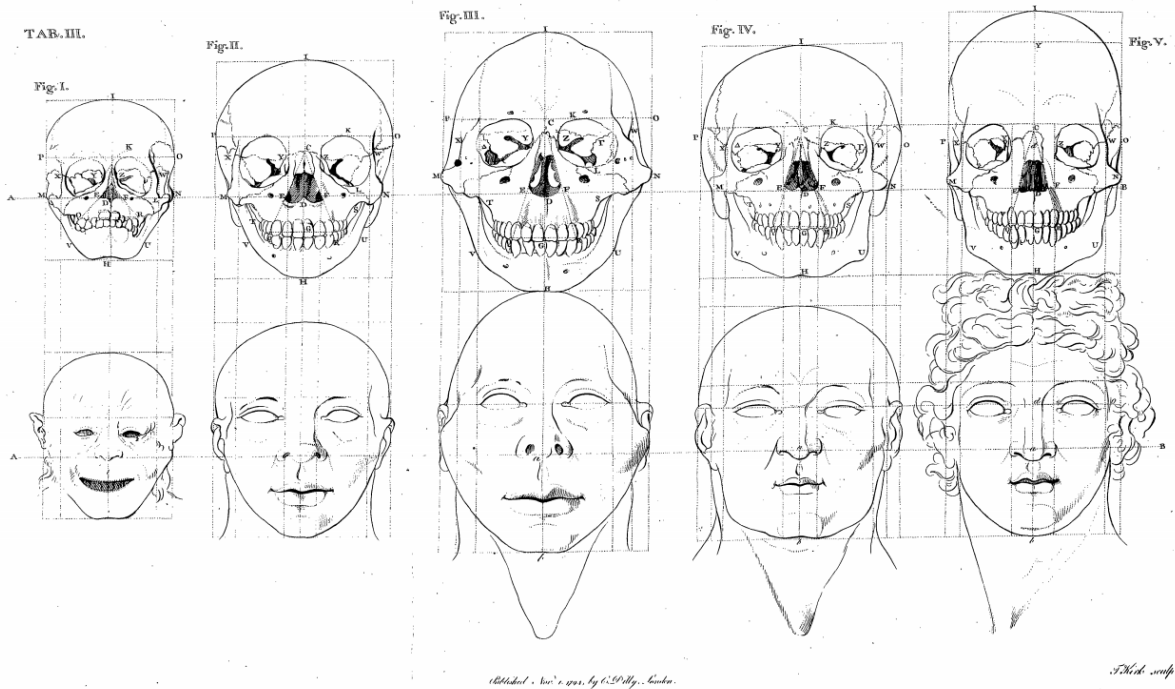


Figure 12: Frontal View of Camper's Facial Angle from *The works of the late Professor Camper, on the connexion between the science of anatomy and the arts of drawing, painting, statuary, &c.* (1794). From left to right are drawings of the skulls and heads of: an orang-outang, "Negro," "Calmuck," European, and "Antique"—the Apollo Belvedere. Image courtesy of Eighteenth Century Collections Online.



Figure 13: "Birdseye View of the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo. May 1 to November 1, 1901." Print by the Pan-American Exposition Co. (c. 1900). Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



Figure 14: The Triumphal Bridge with a view of the Electric Tower at the Pan-American Exposition (1901). Photographed by C. D. Arnold from *The Pan-American Exposition Illustrated* by C. D. Arnold (1901). Image courtesy of the University at Buffalo Digital Collection.



Figure 15: Esau, "The Connecting Link" from *Snap Shots on the Midway of the Pan-Am Expo* (1901). Image courtesy of Internet Archive. Public Domain.

A barrel of Monkeys



is pretty funny, but not more so than our clever puzzle

"The Changing Faces"

What People Say About It:

"The most mysterious thing I ever saw, and very fitting that it should be distributed by the makers of the best shaving soap in the world."

"The greatest puzzle of the century."

"A wonderful piece of ingenuity."

"Every one is mystified, and no one is able to see how the change is made."

"I puzzled over it nearly all one forenoon, before I resorted to the trick. It's the slickest thing I ever saw."

This puzzle

FREE

for 1d. stamp to cover cost of mailing.

THE J. B. WILLIAMS CO.,
83 Great Russell Street,
LONDON, W. C.



Figure 16: Advertisement for the Changing Faces Puzzle from the *Illustrated London Times* 13 Dec. 1902: 922. Image courtesy of Google Books. Public Domain.

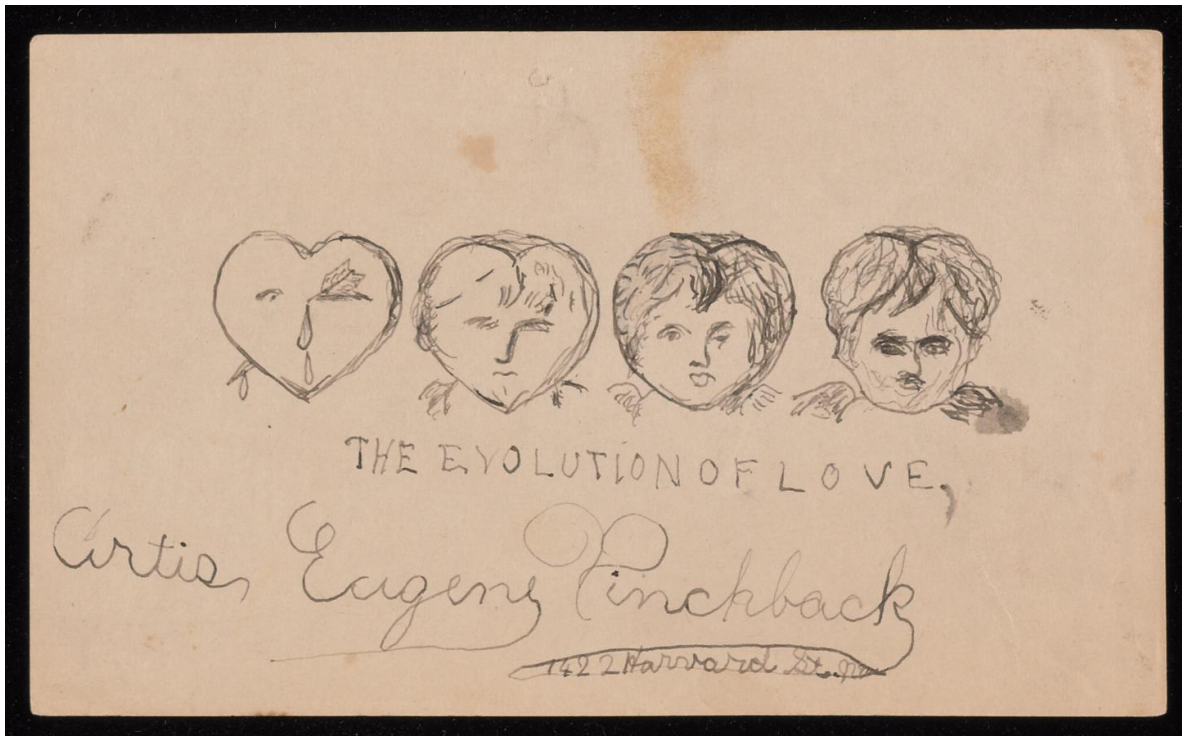


Figure 17: The Evolution of Love drawn by Jean Toomer (ca. 1901). "Jean Toomer Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, (c) 2016 Yale University. All rights reserved."

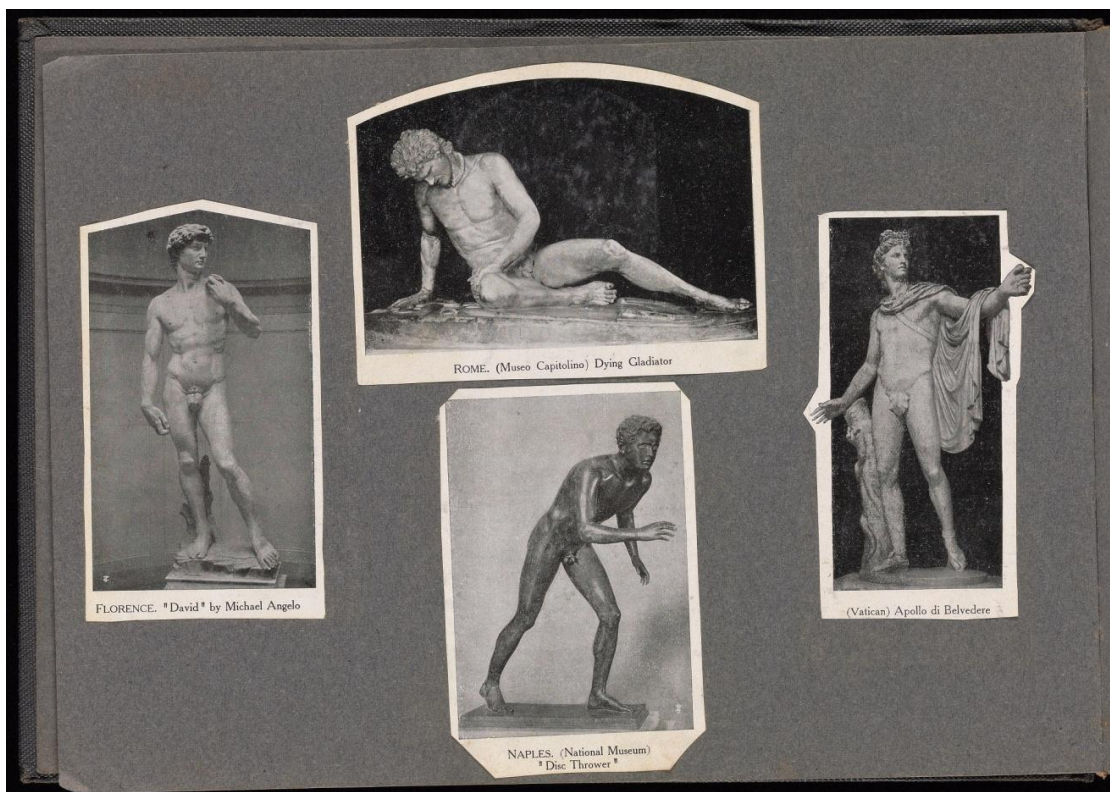


Figure 18: Jean Toomer's Scrapbook page 2. "Jean Toomer Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, (c) 2016 Yale University. All rights reserved."



Figure 19: Scrapbook page 3. "Jean Toomer Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, (c) 2016 Yale University. All rights reserved."

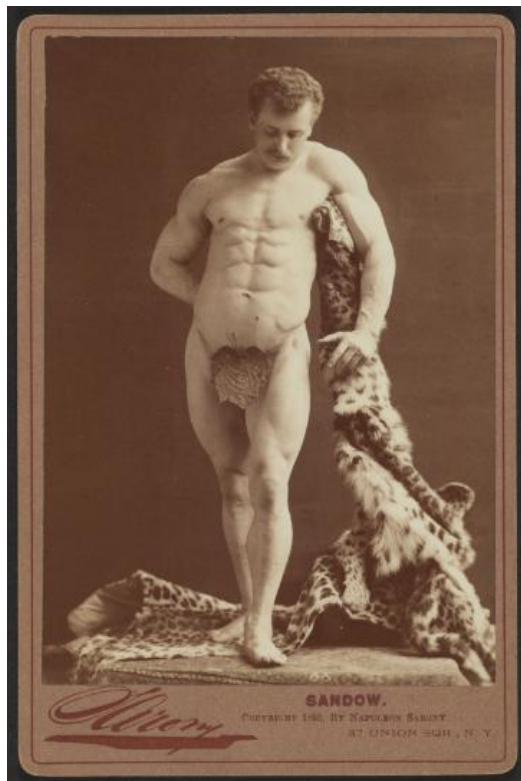


Figure 20: Eugen Sandow as the Farnese Hercules. Cabinet Card by Napoleon Sarony (1893). Public Domain. Image courtesy of Harvard University, Houghton Library's Theatre Collection.

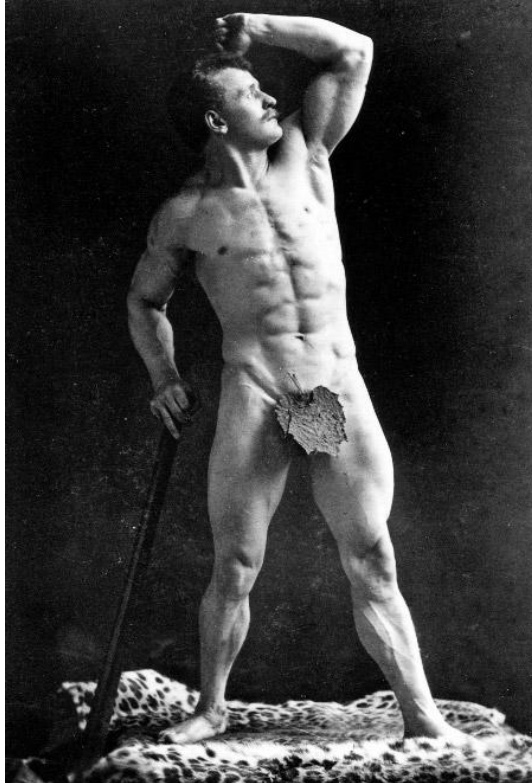


Figure 21: Eugen Sandow as Hercules. Photograph by Napoleon Sarony (c. 1893)
Public Domain. This image appears in Toomer's scrapbook on page 8.



Figure 22: Cabinet Card of Bernarr Macfadden as Michelangelo's *David* (c.1905). Unknown Photographer.
Public Domain. Image courtesy of Harvard University, Houghton Library's Theatre Collection



Figure 23: Annette Kellermann in her controversial one-piece bathing suit from *How to Swim* (1918).
Image from Google Books

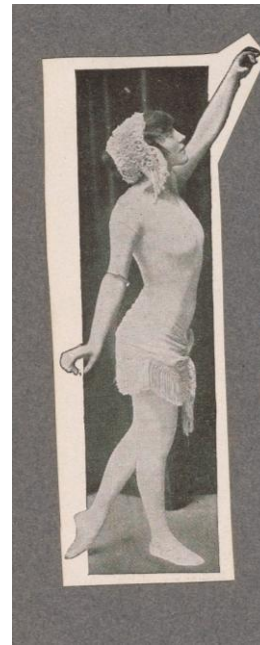


Figure 24: Annette Kellermann, detail Scrapbook pg. 13
Note the same costume in image below. "Jean Toomer Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, (c) 2016 Yale University. All rights reserved."

FREDERIC SHIPMAN ENTERPRISES, LTD
PRESENT

ANNETTE KELLERMANN
"THE PERFECT WOMAN"
AND A COMPANY OF 1000 PLAYERS
IN
NEPTUNE'S DAUGHTER
THE FILM MASTERPIECE OF THE WORLD

MEASUREMENTS THAT ALMOST SURPASS BELIEF

	ANNETTE KELLERMANN	VENUS DE MILO	DIANA
HEIGHT	54	54	53
HEAD	21.3	21.3	19
NECK	12.6	12.5	11
CHEST	33.1	33	35
WAIST	26.2	26	27
HIPS	37.5	35	37
THIGH	22.2	22.5	24
CALF	11	13.2	13
ANKLE	7.7	7.4	8
UPPER ARM	12	12.6	15
FORE ARM	9.4	9.5	11
WRIST	5.9	5.9	6

STAGED BY HERBERT BRENON
WRITTEN BY CAPE LESLIE T. PEACOCKE

A GORGEOUS AND THRILLING SPECTACLE IN **7 PARTS**

Figure 25: Promotional Postcard for *Neptune's Daughter* (c. 1914)
Image provided by National Library of Australia Digital Collections



Figure 26: Ruth Roland from "A Daughter of the Sunlands" in *Cosmopolitan* 58.2 (Jan. 1915): 202. Google Books. This image appears in Toomer's Scrapbook on pg. 14.

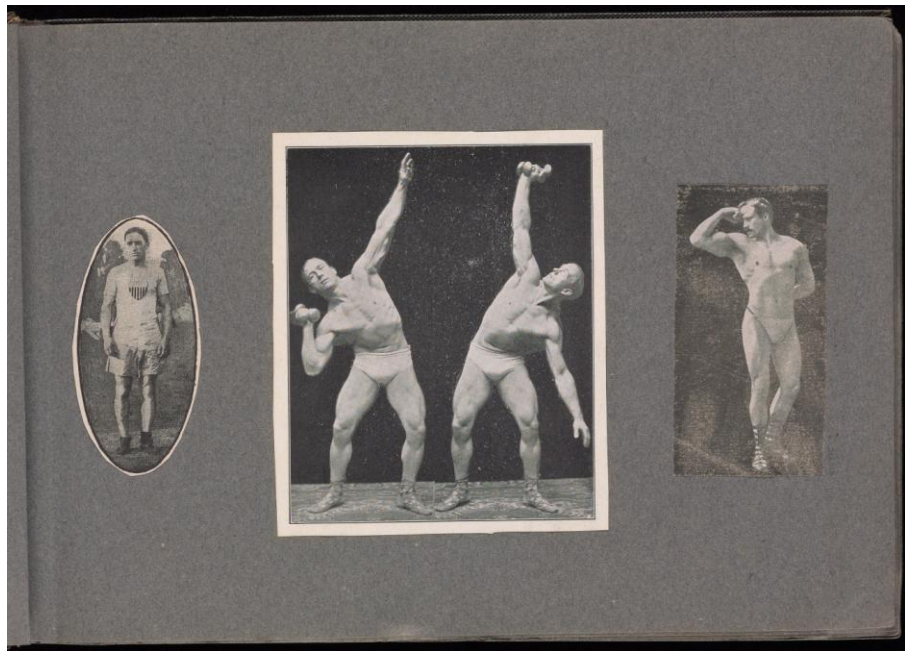


Figure 27: Scrapbook Page 12. Toomer appears at left, beside Lionel Strongfort (center) and H.W. Titus (right). "Jean Toomer Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, (c) 2016 Yale University. All rights reserved."



Figure 29: Scrapbook 15. Jean Toomer second from right. "Jean Toomer Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, (c) 2016 Yale University. All rights reserved."



Figure 28: Jean Toomer, detail from Scrapbook 12. "Jean Toomer Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, (c) 2016 Yale University. All rights reserved."

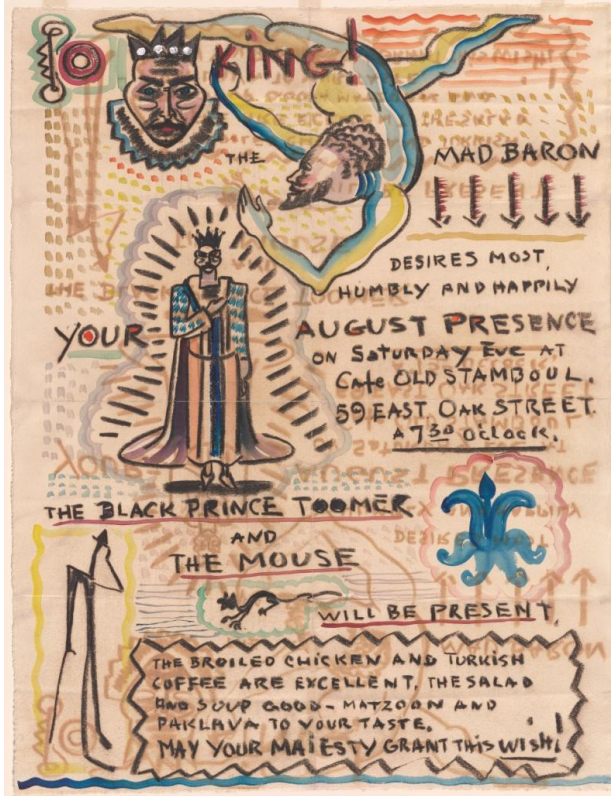


Figure 33: The Black Prince Toomer. "Jean Toomer Papers, James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection in the Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, (c) 2016 Yale University. All rights reserved."



Figure 34: Jean Toomer (1921) by May Howard Jackson. Reproduced by permission of Special Collections and University Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University



MAY HOWARD JACKSON
Working on a bust of Dr. Du Bois in his office in New York City.

Figure 35: Photograph of May Howard Jackson from *La Follette's Weekly Magazine* 4 (1912): 10. Public Domain. Courtesy of Google Books.



Figure 36: Jean Toomer (1921) by May Howard Jackson. Reproduced by permission of Special Collections and University Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University



Figure 37: Jean Toomer (1921) by May Howard Jackson. Photograph by Laura Lorhan. Reproduced by permission of Special Collections and University Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University



Figure 38: Jackson's signature on the pedestal. Dated June 1921. Photograph by Laura Lorhan. Reproduced by permission of Special Collections and University Archives, Johnston Memorial Library, Virginia State University

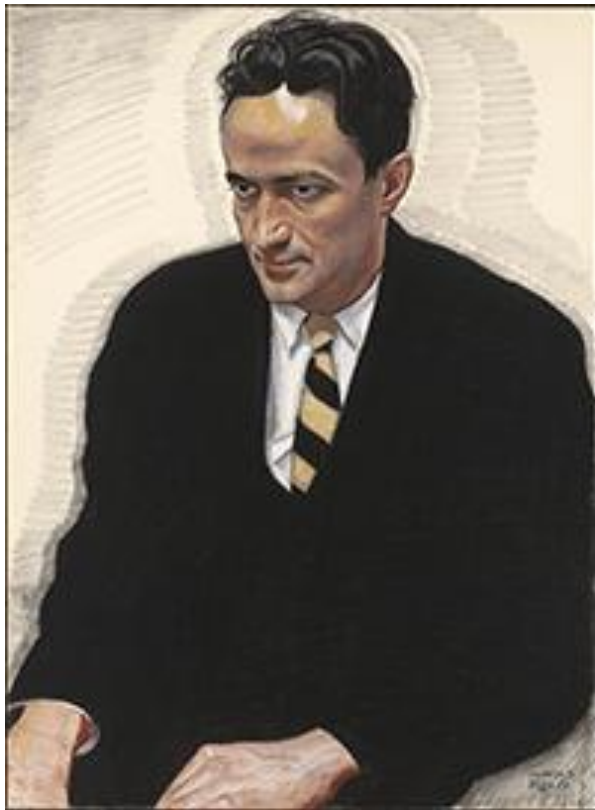


Figure 39: *Jean Toomer* (1925) by Winold Reiss. Image courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, National Portrait Gallery. Permission to reproduce image granted by Renate Reiss

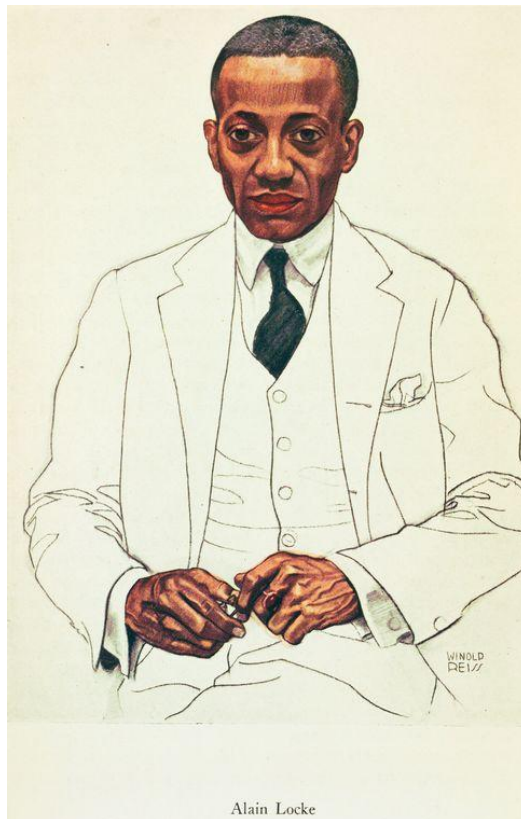


Figure 40: *Alain Locke* (1925) by Winold Reiss. Image courtesy of New York Public Library Digital Collections, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Archives and Rare Books Division. Permission to reproduce image granted by Renate Reiss

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