Real Queer: Lesbian Modernity and American Realism

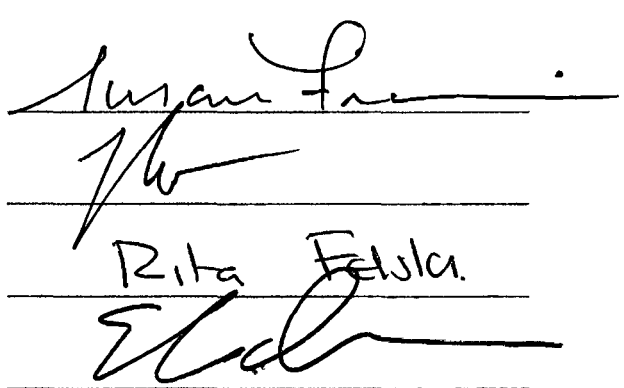
Dona Loraine Yarbrough
Charlottesville, Virginia

B.A., University of West Florida, 1992
M.A., University of Virginia, 1996

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

University of Virginia
May, 2005



**Abstract**

This dissertation complicates most histories of lesbian literature in English, which place the origins of modern lesbian narrative in "Sapphic modernism"— avant-garde, experimental writing from the 1920s and 1930s. In the vast majority of lesbian and queer literary criticism, nonnormative sexualities are assumed to be best expressed through experimental forms, especially in discussions of work from this early period. However, if we look not at modernist but at realist lesbian texts from the same period, texts which have received virtually no critical attention, a different picture of early lesbian narrative, and early lesbian subjectivity, emerges. Through an examination of four realist texts, this dissertation argues that realism has been a central aesthetic in the narration of queer identities. Through close readings informed primarily by work in queer studies and feminist genre criticism, the project demonstrates how realist texts reshape traditional forms and concepts in an attempt both to express lesbian subjectivity and to interrogate or transform heteronormative, sexist, and/or capitalist systems. Chapter one argues that in combining the coming out narrative with the survivor narrative, Mary Casal's *The Stone Wall* (1930) prefigures late twentieth-century radical lesbian feminism by suggesting that heterosexuality is the most unnatural sexual option for women. Chapter two examines how the conventions of epistolary narrative are used in Elisabeth Craigin's *Either Is Love* (1937) to circumvent the heterosexual structure of Western plot. Chapter three considers how race and class privilege structure the narrative of American individualism, and the narrative of emerging "lesbian pride," in Diana Frederics' *Diana: A Strange Autobiography* (1939). The final chapter argues that Helen

Anderson's *Pity for Women* (1937), the first social realist lesbian narrative, presents working-class lesbian subjectivity as a narrative impossibility within completely imbricated systems of gender, sexual, and economic oppression. In looking at the way techniques of realism are used (and are useful) in these works, this project not only interrogates the aesthetic assumptions underlying much lesbian and queer scholarship, but also suggests that lesbian narrative during the thirties was perhaps not as marginal as critics have thought.

## Contents

In memory of Peggy Doherty

**Acknowledgements**

As with all dissertations, this one could not have been completed without the support of many people. I would first like to thank the members of my dissertation committee – Susan Fraiman, Rita Felski, Eric Lott, and Elisabeth Ladenson – for their guidance and patience. I am especially grateful to Susan for her insightful comments and for her belief in the importance of this project from inception to completion, and to Rita for her razor-sharp intellect both as a reader and as a scholar whose work became a central theoretical influence.

I am also thankful for the love and support of my parents, Anita Yarbrough and Hugh Yarbrough, particularly during my early years of graduate school, and of Heather Trout, particularly during the writing of my first chapter. Many friends and colleagues in Charlottesville made living there a supreme joy, but I am particularly grateful to my mentors and advisors outside of the English Department, including Donna Plaskett, Lou Bloomfield, Vicki Hawes, and Wynne Stewart. The members of my dissertation group were essential in helping me figure out the process of writing a dissertation, particularly my dear friend Kim Roberts, who was also instrumental in helping me find my path academically, professionally, and personally.

I could not have made it through the final stages of this project in Boston without the support of many friends and colleagues at Tufts University, especially Lisa Coleman, Kalahn Taylor-Clarke, Leon Braswell, Yolanda King, and Peggy Barrett. I am also particularly grateful to Bruce Reitman, the Dean of Students at Tufts, for his continued support and encouragement.

John Charles and Chris Nagle have been continual sources of support, wisdom, and laughter from practically the first day of graduate school to the last, and I am eternally grateful for their care and love. Finally, I would like to thank Alex Kreuter for meticulously proofreading the final draft, for taking over for me practically all of the mundane functions required for living during the final stages of writing, and for her unwavering love.

# Introduction

## Real Queer: Lesbian Narratives of the 1930s

Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) was the first lesbian novel. After Hall's book was banned in England, the realistic depiction of overt lesbianism became unpublishable, so lesbian content became covert, primarily encoded in modernist experimental forms exemplified by Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), and Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936). It was not until the 1950s that the overt depiction of lesbians in a realist form returned with the publication of Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt* (1952), which was also the first lesbian narrative with a "happy ending" for the lesbian couple. The fifties and sixties saw an explosion of sensationalistic and sleazy lesbian pulp paperback novels, and then in 1973 Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*, an unapologetic realist picaresque novel about lesbian Molly Bolt, spawned an eruption of lesbian feminist narratives, many of them produced by small feminist publishing houses. Since the 1970s, lesbian narrative has expanded into a multitude of genres—most importantly postmodern fiction, but also formula fictions such as romances, mysteries, and detective novels.

This is the standard history of lesbian narrative in English expressed, for example, in Sherrie Inness' entry on the lesbian novel in the 2002 edition of *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage* (490-494), as well as in the 1995 Introduction to *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Companion* (Malinowski and Brelin xvii) . This dissertation focuses on the first half of this history in the United States, specifically the period Lillian Faderman refers to

as a lesbian "wasteland" with few "oases": the 1930s (*Odd Girls* 93). During the 1980s and 1990s, the idea that "lesbian literature" existed in the 1930s only in encoded, experimental, modernist forms was supported by feminist literary critics such as Catharine Stimpson, Karla Jay, and Bonnie Zimmerman, all of whom were central in defining the generic features of "lesbian literature" and in establishing a lesbian literary canon.[1] This dissertation aims to complicate this standard literary history by placing at its center a cluster of Depression-era texts which are all but invisible in the field of lesbian and queer literary criticism.

The banning of *The Well of Loneliness* in England and the failed attempt to ban it in America did not drive all lesbian narrative into code or out of publication.[2] In fact, because Hall's book became a best seller in America as a result of the publicity afforded by its obscenity trial, one could conjecture that the trial *encouraged* the publication of American books containing overt lesbian subject matter. These books run the gamut from condemnation to celebration of women's same-sex relationships, and they range from realist novels about women's colleges containing episodes of lesbian seduction, to pseudonymous autobiographies focused on the development of a lesbian identity. According to Jeannette Foster, whose 1956 *Sex Variant Women in Literature* remains the most comprehensive history to date of pre-sixties literature related to female same-sex desire, the thirties constituted a "rapidly augmenting flood" of lesbian themes in literature (288). Similarly, acclaimed lesbian historian Lillian Faderman notes, "With the American publication of *The Well of Loneliness,*[. . .] there was suddenly a great interest in the lesbian as a sexual freak, and the floodgates opened. Each year saw the production

of new novels that were even clearer than Radclyffe Hall's book had been in their treatment of lesbian sexuality" (*Odd Girls* 101). Foster argues that cries for censorship which erupted in the thirties were an inevitable reaction to the increased visibility of lesbianism—as well as of overt heterosexual sexuality—in literature, but that this censorship focused not on preventing publication but rather on local ordinances directed at booksellers (313). These uneven restrictions might mean that one would have to travel to another city to obtain books, but on the other hand one could read reviews of some overtly lesbian narratives in, for example, *The New York Times Book Review* and the *Nation.* Although the Motion Picture Producers and Directors Association of America adopted a code in 1930 that abolished "sex perversion or any inference of it" from the silver screen, such blanket national regulations did not exist for the American publishing industry (Faderman, *Odd Girls* 103).[3] Certainly censorship did exist, and certainly many authors must have been unwilling to attach their names to overtly lesbian texts for fear of being "tainted" by association, but the thirties were in many ways less repressive of sexual material than the twenties, and the landmark Supreme Court case clearing *Ulysses* from censorship in 1933 signaled a turning of the tide (Trebbel 642).[4] While the National Organization for Decent Literature and similar organizations may have encouraged publishers to prefer fiction that in the end punished its lesbian characters or converted them to heterosexuality (Faderman, *Odd Girls,* 102), the thirties also produced the first narratives in English to end with the lesbian couple intact and looking toward a happy future.

Virtually all criticism on thirties lesbian literature has focused on what are often called the "Sapphic modernists," mostly middle- to upper-class white women (Woolf, Stein, Barnes, and others) associated with the literary salons of London and expatriate communities of Paris, who shared an interest in both experimental aesthetics and same-sex desire. Yet the majority of offerings in the "flood" to which Foster refers are actually far removed from the Sapphic modernist scene. The four texts which comprise the focus of this dissertation are set in the U.S. (though some characters occasionally sojourn in Europe); are written in a realist, rather than a modernist, mode; and have been all but ignored by critics of lesbian and queer literature. In centering my attention on Mary Casal's *The Stone Wall* (1930), Elisabeth Craigin's *Either Is Love* (1937), Helen Anderson's *Pity for Women* (1937), and Diana Frederics' *Diana: A Strange Autobiography* (1939), I hope not only to recover for "lesbian literature" texts which challenge normative ideologies in complex, creative, and problematic ways, but also to complicate the history of lesbian literary production and interrogate the ideological and aesthetic assumptions upon which the "oppositional" canons of lesbian and queer literature are formed.

**What Is Real? What Is Queer?**

The short title of this dissertation, "Real Queer," seems appropriate on a number of levels. Colloquially, "real queer" means "really queer" or in this case, "really lesbian," as in "So are these characters *really* lesbians?" This question, which I have been asked often in relation to the project, refers back to the suppositions apparent in the standard

history of lesbian literature just described. Many people assume that, with the exception of *The Well of Loneliness*, lesbian identity, as well as same-sex sexual activity, must be "read into" narratives of the 1930s, that "overt" lesbianism did not exist in print. As Julie Abraham has pointed out, the critical tendency to figure "overt" realist writing as the polar opposite of "covert" modernist writing oversimplifies a host of complex literary issues, such as the role of signifying tropes in all writing (consider Stephen Gordon's narrow hips and scarred cheek) as well as the extent to which realist texts sometimes employ modernist techniques, or the extent to which modernists saw techniques like stream-of-consciousness writing as "closer to life" than traditional realist techniques (*Are Girls* 23-25). But if one means by "really" (overtly) lesbian that characters use the word "lesbian," or an equivalent term like "invert" or "homosexual," to name their identities and/or desires, then *The Stone Wall, Diana,* and *Either Is Love* qualify. In *Pity for Women* the characters never explicitly name their desire "lesbian" but instead say things such as, "she loved me as a lover might" (93). Nevertheless, thirties reviewers of *Pity for Women* certainly seem to have gotten the point: one bluntly refers to the book as a "novel about Lesbians" (C.H.M.) while another simply compares Anderson to Radclyffe Hall, a slightly more decorous way to announce lesbian content (Feld).

But if one means by "really lesbian" that female same-sex sexuality is described in the narrative, then each book meets this criterion as well. Though hardly pornographic by current or even 1930s standards, these narratives are clearly about, in part, sexual passion between women. Often that passion is most overtly named when it is perceived as potentially dangerous. In *The Stone Wall,* for example, the narrator assures her readers

that she and her lover did "indulge in sexual intercourse" but only in healthy moderation, unlike those in whom "overindulgence" causes "loss of vitality and weakened health, ending in consumption" (Casal 185). And the narrator of *Either Is Love* worries that she will somehow be punished because the "holy unspeakable joys" she experiences with Rachel won't be followed, as for heterosexual women, with the "suffering" of childbirth (Craigin 105). At other times sex is presented elliptically or metaphorically, though not necessarily unintelligibly for most readers, not unlike the way it tends to appear in Sapphic modernist texts. In *Pity for Women,* for example, the description of Judith and Ann's first "enchanted" nights together ends with Ann's internal voice saying, "Hm-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m-m. Ah. [. . .] Hm-m-m-m-m-m-m-m. Hm-m-m-m-m, my Judith love, my Judith, always and forever ever love! . . . " (Anderson 166). In other textual moments, sexual pleasure between women is openly discussed, such as when Casal's narrator talks about bringing Gladys "her desired relief" (99), or when Diana describes the beginning of her sexual relationship with Leslie:

> Now, in Leslie's passion, as hungry for my body as it was demanding of its own satisfaction, I knew a pleasure I had never known before. [. . .] [T]hat Leslie should be so eager to please me was a constant delight and, more than any other one thing, told me that I had never appreciated what mutuality in the sex act could mean. [. . .] Leslie's skill dissolved all the bitter fears I had known with Jane: the fear of strain in an effort to grow together, or of anxiety that consummation might not be achieved. (Frederics 188)

My point here is that because they reference both sexual desires and sexual identities, these texts seem always to be read as being about lesbians, whether in thirties book reviews, fifties bibliographies of lesbian literature, or contemporary academic histories. The "lesbian content" in these texts seems always to have been impossible to

ignore, a fact which distinguishes them from most Sapphic modernist texts. Moreover, I argue, these realists texts all connect same-sex desire to an identity, however ambivalently; and their plots revolve around the construction of that identity, for better or for worse. This tends not to be the case in Sapphic modernist texts, where desire is much more fluid and the disintegration or fragmentation of identity is more apt to be the point. In contrast to that fluidity and fragmentation, *Diana*, for example, contains chapter titles such as "Am I a Lesbian?" and "I Am a Lesbian!" that unmistakably signal her story's focus on the development of a specific sexual identity. And I would argue that the other three texts are fully, though a bit less obviously, engaged also in the issue of the homosexual as, in Foucault's words, "a species" (43). *Either Is Love* maintains perhaps the most tenuous connection between its narrator's sexual acts and her identity. Since the autobiography's primary point is that the narrator's earlier relationship with a woman and her later relationship with her husband were both bonds of love (and both sexually satisfying), it is not surprising that she characterizes her same-sex *relationship*, rather than her *self,* as "interfeminine" or "Lesbian" (107, 147). Nevertheless, the narrator is clearly haunted by the congenital invert or "mannish lesbian" as portrayed by Hall. This is why she repeatedly insists that her lover Rachel does not have masculine features, that Rachel is not the narrator's "pseudo man-mate" but rather a feminine "woman-mate" (69-70). In fact, as I argue in chapter two, *Either Is Love* is deeply invested in creating an utterly feminized lesbian identity. *Pity for Women,* which as I mention above does not use the term "lesbian" or any of its synonyms, nevertheless indicates a connection between sex and identity when, for example, Ann asks Delilah, "Does your mother know

what Judith is?" and Delilah answers, "Oh yes! [. . .] She thinks it's perfectly natural—for some women, anyway" (220). In *The Stone Wall,* an entire chapter is devoted to the narrator and Juno's association with a group of female inverts, though the narrator's feelings about the group are ambivalent. Although she is relieved to know that, in her words, "I was not a creature apart as I had always felt" (180), she and Juno also "always felt out of place among the people who were 'different'" (183) and believed their "lives were on a much higher plane than those of the real inverts" (185). Here "real" seems to refer to inverts who have same-sex "sexual intercourse" uppermost in their minds, unlike the narrator who has sex merely as "an outlet for emotions" (185).

Mary Casal's use of the term "real" here points out the extent to which what is considered "really lesbian," and indeed what is "real," is historically contingent, vastly subjective, and highly mutable. But before I discuss this project's relationship to "the real" and particularly "realism," I would like to stress that attaching the adjective "lesbian" to this group of texts is not a hopelessly retrograde attempt to impose current notions of sexual identity onto earlier, different experiences of erotic subjectivity. Obviously definitions of "lesbian" vary widely among social groups and individuals both in our present moment and in the 1930s.[5] But interestingly G. Legman's "The Language of Homosexuality: An American Glossary"—published in 1941 as part of Dr. George Henry's groundbreaking two-volume study, *Sex Variants*—defines "lesbian" the same way that current dictionaries do, as a "female homosexual." "*Homosexuality,*" says Legman, "is the generic term for sexual attraction to persons of the same [. . . ] sex," and he goes on to note that etymological difficulties have "resulted in the current usage of

*homosexuality* to refer only to male homosexuality; female homosexuality usually being termed *Lesbianism*" (1149). By 1941, Legman claims, "homosexuality" and "lesbianism" were "more widely used than any other of the many terms that have been proposed," including "sexual inversion," "third sex," "transsexuality," "intersexuality," "uranianism," and others (1149). This movement toward "lesbian" can perhaps be witnessed through a comparison of *The Stone Wall,* which in 1930 uses the term "invert" exclusively, and *Diana,* which nine years later most often employs the term "lesbian." It is important to note, however, that *Diana* also uses a number of synonyms for "lesbian," including "invert" and "third sex." (Possible reasons for this are discussed in my third chapter.) Meanwhile, Dr. Victor Robinson's 1939 introduction to *Diana* mentions "lesbians" and "homosexual[s]" as well as "Sapphism" and the "third sex" (xxxvii). This tendency to use terms interchangeably is evident as early as 1905, for example, in Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex,* where the words "invert, "homosexual," and "lesbian" are used synonymously, though Ellis prefers "invert" ("Sexual Inversion" 210, 214). Jay Prosser skillfully argues that *The Well of Loneliness* and other stories of inversion reveal not a heteronormative attempt to describe homosexuality, but rather the narration of what we would now call a transsexual subjectivity. But by the early twentieth-century, what Prosser calls the "categorical slide from invert to lesbian" had for many already occurred (137). In *The Stone Wall* (1930), for example, the term "invert" does not necessarily refer to the "man-in-woman's-body" construction so clearly indicated in *The Well* and elaborated by Prosser. Rather, Casal

takes pains to assert her "dual nature," one that is both feminine and masculine, and her "inversion" is characterized primarily by her sexual attraction to women (93).

In employing the term "lesbian" to categorize these realists texts, I am not attempting to subsume them into some monolithic and unhistoricized notion of "lesbian" or "lesbian literature." Rather, I am attempting to point out how these narratives participate in the contentious and contradictory construction of "lesbian identity" that is never completely stable nor complete. As David Halperin argues in *How To Do the History of Homosexuality,* what Eve Sedgwick calls the "irreducible incoherence" of different models of homosexuality today is the cumulative effect of the fact that, under the rubric of homosexuality, "we have preserved and retained different definitions of sex and gender" from previous historical eras (12). While these realist texts were in their own and subsequent decades recognized as "lesbian" according to Legman's definition, different takes on this sexual identity (as, for example, congenital or learned, or predominately masculine or predominately feminine) are apparent both within and between texts. These contradictions are perhaps so visible because they occur at a unique historical moment when many words, and their concomitant theories, were beginning to be funneled, though not necessarily homogenized, into one.

**Lesbian Realism**

The "real" of my title does not only refer to the question of whether texts in written in the 1930s can "really" be lesbian. This dissertation also argues that these texts are part of a genre of "lesbian realism" that could be said to begin with *The Well of*

*Loneliness*; for despite its decidedly romantic and melodramatic tendencies, *The Well* is typically read as a realist novel, as well as an "authentic" and autobiographical one.[6] By calling these texts "realist," I am not announcing my Aristotelian belief in the mimetic properties of language, nor am I proposing that realist narratives reflect material reality more than, for example, modernist ones. Rather, I am suggesting like Guy de Maupassant that realists are "Illusionists" who provide not "truth" but "the illusion of the true" through their artfulness (47), or like Roland Barthes that realism produces an *"effet de réel"* (reality effect) (16). There are many different kinds of realism, and realism's meaning and mode—for example, what is considered to be "realistic"—differ according to historical period and cultural context. But realism can more-or-less be distinguished from other modes in its deliberate attempt to present itself as a record of reality.

Quite a number of American and British narratives about lesbian desire written in a realist mode were produced between the publication of *The Well of Loneliness* and the beginning of World War II, which was also the beginning of the pulp paperback era. In addition to the four upon which this dissertation focuses, these texts include Wanda Fraiken Neff's *We Sing Diana* (1928); *Against the Wall* (1929) by Edna St. Vincent Millay's sister, Kathleen Millay; Sheila Donisthorpe's *Loveliest of Friends* (1931); Idabell Williams' *Hellcat* (1934); Lilyan Brock's *Queer Patterns* (1935); Lois Lodge's *Love Like a Shadow* (1935); and Mary Gordon's story of the Ladies of Llangollen, *Chase of the Wild Goose* (1936), as well as texts that could perhaps be called "hybrids" of realism and modernism such as work by British writer Dorothy Richardson and American Gale Wilhelm. These texts are invariably about white and middle-class women. *Pity for*

*Women* is the only published lesbian narrative from this period focused on working-class women, and there are no overtly lesbian narratives about women of color, though Alice Dunbar-Nelson's diary, written between 1921 and 1931 and published as *Give Us Each Day* in 1984, does briefly describe some of her romantic relationships with other black middle-class women. I decided to limit my focus on narratives that take place and were published in the United States, and I chose these particular four for what I see as their complex and interesting engagement in key issues surrounding women and sexuality during the period.

My conception of thirties lesbian realism is much influenced by critical work, particularly by Rita Felski and Bonnie Zimmerman, that has focused on feminist and lesbian-feminist realist works published in the 1970s and 1980s. In *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics,* Felski notes that the "crisis of confidence in science and language which marks the entry into the twentieth century," moved writers away from the idea that social reality can be objectively depicted (80). This idea had been the cornerstone of nineteenth-century realism, and there were two aesthetic responses to this crisis of meaning. One was modernism, a fragmentation of the "observing self [. . .] into a collection of unstable elements and language forms" (81). The other less critically examined but equally significant response was a "retreat into the self," what Felski calls a "subjective autobiographical realism" that tended to replace the nineteenth-century omniscient narrator with a personalized and subjective one "whose perspective is either identical with or sympathetic to that of the protagonist" (82). This shift begins to become apparent, for example, when Maupassant writes in 1888 that the realist writer presents a

"personal vision of the world," recording the way life looks "in a certain way peculiar to him" (46).

Felski identifies a particular manifestation of subjective realism focused on the (feminist) heroine's development of self-identity as central to Second Wave (post-1960s) feminist literature. This form is dominated by sincerity and a tendency "to avoid irony, self-reflexivity, and other markers of self-consciously literary discourse" (*Beyond Feminist* 82).[7] Somewhat similarly, in *The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969-1989* Bonnie Zimmerman argues that despite many critical attempts to identify a "lesbian style" of writing that is experimental, most lesbian-feminist fiction of the 70s and 80s is written in the "representational mode" of classic expressive realism (16, 24), meaning a realist mode based on the conviction that art can and should both faithfully portray "reality" and express the writer's thoughts and feelings (Belsey 8-9). Zimmerman maintains that this fiction is "written to be useful, and to be useful it must be true." "In general," she says, "lesbian readers and writers equate authenticity and truth with a clear reflection of reality," though a reality subjectively described (*Safe Sea* 24). For both writers and readers, the purpose of the writing is to say "*this* is what it means to be a lesbian, *this* is how lesbians are, *this* is what lesbians believe" (*Safe Sea* 20-21). Like Felski, Zimmerman identifies the elucidation of *identity* as of primary importance in the narratives she considers.

The narratives examined in this dissertation are very much precursors to the texts looked at by Felski and Zimmerman in the sense that the impact of both relies not on their stylistic innovation or self-conscious use of literary technique, but rather on their

*erasure* of perceived literary technique, in their ability to be read as authentic expressions of a subjective reality. As Felski notes,

> The more obviously 'literary' the text – the more clearly it signals its fictional status [. . .] – the less likely the reader is to respond to the text as the authentic self-expression of an authorial subject. It is for this reason that feminist confession often imitates such personal, nonliterary forms as the diary or the letter in the attempt [. . .] to achieve the reverse of the defamiliarization which Russian formalism identified as the key function of literature, in order to inspire a process of involvement and identification (*Beyond Feminist* 97-98).

For the heterosexual readers who I argue are the primary target audience of the thirties narratives I examine, lesbian realism relies on the recognizability and accessibility of popular realist forms, the depiction of a "realist" fictional world, and the presentation of a "sincere" authorial voice in order to lure readers into identification with a lesbian subjectivity. Because written during a period when lesbians were most commonly represented as either myths or monsters, these narratives make the urgent point that lesbians are "real" human beings. Though this is a normalizing impulse ("real" means "like heterosexuals"), it can nevertheless also be a politically useful one. For lesbian readers, lesbian realism may seem to mirror personal experience and help to establish a sense of identity and community, especially important, as Tamsin Wilton notes, for pre-Stonewall-era readers for whom "lesbians in books [were] the only other lesbians to be found" (123).

**Autobiography, Authenticity, Authority**

Rita Felski, Bonnie Zimmerman, Julie Abraham, and other critics have observed that the privileging of "authenticity" and subjectivity in late twentieth-century lesbian and

feminist realist narrative led to a blurring of the boundaries between fiction and autobiography.[8] But for lesbian narrative, this blurring has always existed. *The Well of Loneliness* begins with an introduction by Havelock Ellis, who "authenticates" the book in part by his assertion that Hall "presents, in a completely faithful and uncompromising form, one particular aspect of sexual life" ("Commentary"). Similarities between Stephen and Radclyffe Hall (both are writers, see themselves as inverts, wear similarly "masculine" clothing, and so on) have encouraged a tendency to read the novel as highly autobiographical; and as Julie Abraham notes, the back cover of a recent edition of Hall's book claims that it is "the thinly disguised story of Radclyffe Hall's own life" (Introduction xx). If we locate the origin of lesbian narrative in the sexologist case study, which sometimes transcribed the actual words of a lesbian subject but always filtered those words through the sexologist's pathologizing interpretive framework, the desire to produce (and read) more "authentic" texts, texts that appear to communicate an unfiltered lesbian experience directly from writer to reader, is easily understood. In the thirties, lesbian realist texts were typically "authorized," deemed worthy of reading, by the male professionals who sometimes wrote introductions to these books or by book reviewers, based on their status as "true accounts," and obviously this criterion placed autobiographical narrative at the highest value. Even Sapphic modernist works, which originally were typically not read as either lesbian or autobiographical, became "authorized" by lesbian critics as part of an emerging lesbian canon by first "outing" the authors as lesbian and then reading this biographical information back through their texts ( Wilton 114). Much critical work, for example, has focused on the autobiographical

aspects of Woolf's *Orlando,* Stein's *Q.E.D,* and H.D.'s *HERmione.* Biographical "evidence" of an author's lesbianism was strengthened by "evidence" of lesbianism derived through lesbian readings of key texts, and vice versa. These mutually reinforcing projects created the lesbian literary canon. In these ways, lesbian "authority," "authenticity," and "autobiography" have always been deeply intertwined.

In keeping with this tradition, *The Stone Wall, Either Is Love, Diana,* and *Pity for Women* all have close but contentious connections to the autobiography. In fact, the first three of these four texts are self-proclaimed autobiographical narratives. The full titles of *The Stone Wall: An Autobiography* and *Diana: A Strange Autobiography,* combined with their first-person narrators, confessional tones, and *Billungsroman* plots, leave no doubt that they are intended to be read as autobiographies. In its first sentence, *Either Is Love* announces itself to be a "memoir" (3). In addition, it is an epistolary narrative, and in making the bulk of the narrative a series of letters written between the narrator and her husband, Craigin reinforces the authenticity of her text. As Felski notes, narratives in the form of diaries or letters strive for familiarity and encourage identification and intimacy by persuading readers that they are witnessing a personal communication written without artifice (*Beyond Feminist* 97).

Given these self-declarations, one might ask, why am I insisting that these three texts are examples of realism instead of autobiography? First of all, by subsuming self-defined autobiography written in a realist mode under the rubric of "realist narrative" (a rubric which also includes realist fiction), I hope to point out that autobiography is no more able than fiction to mimetically represent material reality, that its absence of

"literary technique" is in fact a literary technique. That is, the un-ironic self-declaration of one's text as an autobiography is a technique of realism, one which deliberately aims to present the text as a record of reality. Here we can see a clear generic distinction, for example, between *Diana* and the modernist text *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas,* which because its cover announces its author to be Gertrude Stein, ironizes and destabilizes the claim to autobiography in its title. Secondly, in my individual readings of these texts, I refer to them as narratives rather than autobiographies in order to sidestep the issue of whether or to what extent *The Stone Wall, Either Is Love,* and *Diana* are "really" autobiographies. Although it is common to "prove" the authenticity of lesbian texts (even fictional ones) by referring to the lives of their authors, such a task, even if I wanted to pursue it, is quite impossible in this case. All evidence suggests that "Mary Casal," "Elisabeth Craigin," and "Diana Frederics" are pseudonyms, and no biographical information about the authors is available. While the pseudonymous nature of these texts makes their relationship to autobiography more ambiguous in the sense that narrative events cannot be confirmed as autobiographical, Felski suggests that pseudonymous authorship can also "*intensify* rather than decrease the authenticity generated by the text, the implication being that the author has been forced to resort to a pseudonym precisely because she is disclosing the most intimate and revealing details of her private life" (*Beyond Feminist* 207). In this project, I am ultimately more interested in the realist techniques authors use to authenticate and authorize their texts than I am in proving "authenticity" or "true" authorship.

*Pity for Women* differs significantly from the other three texts I examine in that it is not written as an autobiography and is not written pseudonymously. But although the story is told through third-person narration, this text also has an ambivalent relationship to autobiography. One can't help but suggest that it may not be a coincidence that the only text written in third person is also the only text whose authorship is known; such an observation lends evidence to the power of the stigma of lesbianism on an author's ability to claim particular kinds of stories. As I argue more extensively in my final chapter, biographical information about the author on the original book jacket, presented primarily in the form of direct quotes from her, serves to simultaneously distance Anderson from her characters' sexual deviancy and authorize her to author a social realist novel centered on poor and working class women. That is, social realism's generic prescriptions, as strictly defined by authorities such as the consummate social realist writer Mike Gold and the Communist Party of the United States, required that the literature be "by, for, and about" the proletariat (Rabinowitz 73), yet the social stigma attached to writing about lesbians presumably made a firm distinction between author and subject vital. In attempting to straddle the line between identification and disavowal in her autobiographical statements, Anderson attempts to fulfill the social requirements of each genre.

But in addition to being connected by virtue of their use of realist techniques and their reliance on autobiography to "authorize" their existence, the four texts I examine also similarly engage in conversation with a number of nonfictional genres and contemporary debates. Like feminist and lesbian realist texts of the seventies and

eighties, these texts employ realist forms as way to engage more-or-less directly some of the key political and social issues of their day. Each text draws itself into conversation with a number of other "truth-telling" genres, not just the autobiography and the social realist novel, and by doing so shows its "usefulness" and relevance to "real life." As I discuss in chapters one and two, *The Stone Wall* and *Either Is Love* not only occupy the space of the autobiography and the memoir, two forms of communication assumed to be intimate and "true," but also engage with a number of new nonfiction genres aimed at the most intimate familial relationships, namely the "sex and marriage" manual and parent education literature. *Diana* is very much embroiled in scientific discourse about the lesbian, throwing herself in Freud's camp and against eugenic ideas aimed at getting rid of homosexuality. *Pity for Women* draws heavily upon a book of the Bible, that text so often proclaimed to reveal the ultimate "Truth," as way of connecting the economic (social realist) and romantic (lesbian) concerns that dominate the novel.

**Queering Realism**

In engaging with other genres and discourses which also claim to tell the "truth" about women's nature, women's sexuality, and women's roles in culture and in the family, these texts demonstrate their connection with the "queer" in my title. For although queer literary theory favors modernist and particularly postmodernist literary forms because of their facility in articulating the disintegration of the subject and in challenging the very notion of a unified experiencing self, lesbian realist texts are also related to queer theory's aims, though in perhaps more modest or subtle ways. If the

queer problematizes notions of what is "natural" and "normal," and most basic definitions of "queer" agree that it does, then these texts are queer.[9] Each text challenges heteronormativity directly, though perhaps not fully, and each is in part about the pervasiveness of the heterosexual matrix, the inability of lesbian narrative to avoid a deep and abiding attention to heterosexuality.[10] That is, although these texts do not use the language of poststructuralism, or the structures of postmodernism, to express the extent to which, in the poststructuralist language of Judith Butler, the "abjected outside" of the subject is always already "'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation," their struggles over what constitutes the normal, what constitutes the subject, are indicative of the excluded's ironic inability to get outside the system of exclusion (*Bodies* 3).

But these texts are also "queer" in the older and broader sense of "odd" or "peculiar," for they are filled with contradictions and inconsistencies occasioned in part, I argue, by the psychic dissidence caused by the combination of "lesbianism" and "realism." For, as I've already indicated, the kind of realism to which these texts belong strives to create the illusion of language that is "transparent" and that facilitates direct communication between author/narrator and reader. This illusion of transparency requires a certain amount of literary conformity, because in order to be "invisible" a literary form must be in some sense thoroughly predictable, not calling attention to itself through nonconformity. Moreover, this intimate relationship between reader and narrator requires a certain amount of identification between the two that must be occasioned by some similarity or sameness, again a conforming and regularizing impulse. These techniques, though, are at odds with the task of narrating what are invariably described on

book jackets and in contemporary reviews as profoundly "strange" stories. So while Maupassant for example warns that the realist writer "must take care to avoid any sequence of happenings that could appear exceptional," the lesbian plot is always already exceptional, particularly in this first decade of modern lesbian narrative (46). The attempt to package strange tales in familiar packages, and in addition the attempt to explain queer identities by way of familiar tropes and theories (of what is feminine, what is just, what is scientific, and so forth), creates frictions and discords in these texts which sometimes cause them to be written off as "bad" literature, but which I contend are some of their most interesting aspects. The chapters which follow tease out some of these frictions and discords to show how each text works within conventional ideological frameworks while at same time pushing against their borders.

In chapter one I argue that in *The Stone Wall,* in which the narrator recounts both her multiple experiences of sexual abuse by men and her consensual sexual relationships with women, the amalgamation of the "survivor" with the "coming out" story (at a time when both were at best nascent forms) calls into question the nature of the natural and normal. Prefiguring radical feminist and lesbian separatist movements decades down the road, Casal presents heterosexual relationships as always already oppressive to women and questions the sanity of women who would prefer this normal state of affairs. However, as she situates her text as part of the burgeoning fields of sex education and parent education, Casal simultaneously subscribes to both the libratory and regulatory aspects of those movements. That is, while both movements aim to disseminate knowledge and indeed "truth" to laypeople, ostensibly increasing their ability to make

informed choices about their sexual and reproductive practices as well as their parenting, both movements are also highly normalizing, telling readers what and what not to do, distinguishing "good" sex and "good" parenting from "bad". Unable to fully disengage from these normalizing discourses, the narrator oscillates between being a liberating agent and a regulating one. So while on the one hand she insists sex education will inform women of their right (and indeed of their physical ability) to have sexual pleasure, she also becomes a diligent sex spy, constantly trying to catch children "in the very act" of sex play in order to "detect the abnormally sexually developed little one; the masturbator, male and female; the so-called invert," and "help them meet their problems in a sane way" (Casal 219). In these ways, Casal's story exemplifies Foucault's ideas about how the incitement to discourse about sex is yet another function of power, another means through which to discipline and control.

In *Lesbian Images* (1975), Jane Rule declares the "heterosexual frame" surrounding the "lesbian love story" in *Either Is Love* to be "offensive to people struggling against the politics of heterosexual relationship" (187). But I argue in chapter two that this narrative "queers" the typical homophobic ending in which the protagonist forsakes lesbianism for her rightful feminine place as part of a heterosexual couple. *Either Is Love's* lesbian story is told in a series of confessional letters to the narrator's then-fiancé who, now dead after their many years of happy marriage, had locked the letters up in a suitcase which the widowed narrator eventually acquires. These letters between Bart (the fiancé/husband) and the narrator, which are supposed to stand as a tribute to their great love, are overwhelmingly preoccupied with the narrator's earlier

lesbian relationship. While the title implies the book will compare the two relationships, the narrator is clearly, as contemporary reviewers noted with dismay, more interested in, and more traumatized by the ending of, her earlier same-sex relationship. Moreover, though the narrator is in many ways invested in traditional gender roles, which is one reason why Rule has such a problem with *Either Is Love*, the narrator rather surprisingly ends up arguing that, since men and women are "naturally" and "inherently" different, particularly in terms of their sexual desire, a lesbian relationship is actually the more natural choice for two truly feminine woman.

In chapter three I consider chronologically the last of my primary texts, *Diana.* Given that Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt,* published in 1952, is often considered radical for its time because it concludes with a "happy ending" for the lesbian couple, *Diana* must surely be the most radical of thirties lesbian realist texts. Unlike *The Price of Salt,* in which the so-called "happy ending" is severely comprised by the fact that Carol must forfeit custody of her child in order to remain with Therese, *Diana,* published thirteen years before Highsmith's novel, ends with an unambiguously exultant lesbian couple facing no foreseeable barriers to happiness. Yet actually *Diana* is in some ways the least "queer" of the four texts I examine. For while the narrator Diana is the least ambivalent about her lesbianism, she is also the protagonist least critical of heteronormativity and most concerned with conforming to expectations of white, middle-class identity. Diana's conundrum is that her position as white and middle-class affords her the privilege of being a lesbian—only the white and middle class are allowed the "individualism" necessary for such an eccentricity—but being a lesbian also threatens her

ability to belong to white, middle-class society. Her solution is to subscribe to a belief in the universal and fundamental isolation of every human being that makes Diana's own secret non-conformity, and her subsequent inability to "really" belong in the community, part of the "normal" human condition. But while this roundabout logic privileges normativity, it also stretches its boundaries, calling into question the normal's status as a given, stable category.

I consider *Pity for Women* in my last chapter because, though chronologically it comes before *Diana,* it differs significantly from the other three texts in that it is written in third person and focuses on the plight of working-class, rather than middle-class, white women. *Pity for Women* is in many ways about the impossibility of lesbian community, or even women's community, within completely imbricated systems of gender, sexual, and economic oppression. A social realist lesbian novel, *Pity for Women* focuses on both erotics and economics, concentrating on the ways that, for working-class women, heterosexual and economic viability are one and the same. The novel presents a comprehensive view of the marginalized and discarded inhabitants of a Christian women's club and focuses on Ann, a frail and wistful girl whose bad experiences with men make her unfit for either love or work when both require her sexual objectification. But while *Pity for Women* presents the middle-class lesbian relationship as a potential solution for the working-class "surplus" woman being ground down by hetero-capitalism, ultimately that solution fails when the characters prove unable to conceive of a self-narrative exempt from the (re)productive (erotic and economic) imperative. Though typical of lesbian literature of the first half of the twentieth century in its dystopian

ending, *Pity for Women* is remarkably "queer" in its presentation of abject characters trapped within a heterosexual matrix that is pernicious and pervasive. That is, Judith and Ann attempt to live a version of the "lesbian separatist" life, but they are unable to create meanings, economies, and communities wholly outside of the systems of language and meaning through which their very subjectivities are constituted. Though the monstrous imagery and hysterical speech resulting from this failure are sometimes read as indications of the author's "anti-lesbian" stance (Bradley 26), I instead read them as evidence of a queer cognition.

**Publication and Reception**

While a detailed bibliography of the publication and reception histories of these narratives is provided in the appendix, I would like to sketch out those histories here before moving on to my own theories about why these books have received such scant academic attention. The earliest of my texts, *The Stone Wall,* was first published by Eyncourt Press in Chicago in 1930, and it was reprinted only once, in 1975, by Arno Press as part of its "Homosexuality" series edited by Jonathan Katz. This series also reprinted *Either Is Love* and *Diana* the same year. I could find no contemporary reviews of *The Stone Wall*; the first mention of it in print appears to be in Marion Zimmer Bradley's 1959 "Astra's Tower Special Leaflet #3," a bibliography of lesbian narrative, where Gene Damon (a pseudonym for Barbara Grier) writes, "I have no information on this specific title" (30); but by the next year Bradley and Damon give *The Stone Wall* high praise in their bibliographic "Checklist 1960," saying, "The writing is highly

competent and professional [. . .]. Unfortunately the book is rare and expensive, but it stands alone as a classic of its kind" (14).[11] Gene Damon and Lee Stuart's 1967 bibliography, *The Lesbian in Literature,* similarly praises the book as one of "those few titles which stand out above all the rest," but the next mention of *The Stone Wall,* in a 1979 *Signs* essay by Blanche Wiesen Cook, dismisses the book as "a dismally written self-portrait in the self-hating Radclyffe Hall tradition" (721). Conversely, the 1998 *Gay and Lesbian Literature* entry on *The Stone Wall* praises the book as "a powerful antidote to the deterministic unhappiness Hall painted [in *The Well*]" (78); and both Lillian Faderman, in *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers* (1991), and Marylynne Diggs, in her essay "Lesbian Confession and Case History" (1999), mention the book briefly but positively.

In comparison to *The Stone Wall, Either is Love* boasts an extensive publication and reception history. First published in 1937 by the respectable Harcourt, Brace, and Company, which also published the first U.S. edition of *Nightwood* that same year, *Either Is Love* was revived numerous times in the fifties and sixties as a cheap pulp paperback and then last published in 1975 by Arno. In 1937 the narrative warranted short reviews in *The Nation* (negative), *The New York Times Book Review* (mixed), and *The New York Herald Tribune Books* (positive). Throughout the fifties and sixties it garnered very positive mentions in a host of lesbian bibliographies, including Jeannette Foster's *Sex Variant Women in Literature* (1956), the "Lesbiana" section of *The Ladder* (May 1957), and various publications by Bradley and Damon. In fact, Jane Rule in her 1975 book *Lesbian Images* is the narrative's sole negative critic (other than the *Nation* reviewer);

Lillian Faderman and Marylynne Diggs both find the book remarkable as an example of "emerging lesbian pride" (Diggs 141).

*Diana* has enjoyed the longest publication history of the four books and is in fact the only one currently in print. Like *Either Is Love, Diana* has journeyed from life as a respectable hardcover, to multiple incarnations as a pulp paperback with salacious cover art, and back, in a sense, to respectability through its revival by academic presses. Published by Dial Press in at least two editions in 1939, *Diana* was republished by Citadel Press in 1944, 1945, 1946, and 1948, and published in French by Editions de Deux-Rives in 1946. It came out as a pulp paperback in the mid fifties, as an Arno reprint in 1975, and finally was republished by the New York University Press, with an introduction by Julie Abraham, in 1995 as part of the "Lesbian Life and Literature" series edited by Karla Jay. Despite its apparent popularity in 1939, *Diana* was never picked up by contemporary reviewers, and in fact it is first mentioned in Foster's *Sex Variant Women in Literature* (1956). Like *Either Is Love,* it is included in Bradley and Damon's bibliographies, Faderman's *Odd Girls,* and Diggs's essay, in which Diggs wrongly argues that in using "the pulp paperback, still a new form of publishing in the late 1930s, Frederics [. . .] presents her confessional case history in a decidedly antiprofessional form" (142). In fact, *Diana* was first published in hardback by a decidedly "professional" house, Dial, which also published work by Plato, Marlowe, George Eliot, and André Gide, in addition to a number of histories and popular mysteries. Although the text, despite being in print, is still unfamiliar to most today, in 1959 Bradley claimed *Diana* was "presumably too well known to need description" (10).

Of all these narratives, *Pity for Women* originally garnered the most attention but was a critical and commercial failure. It was published in 1937 by a major house, Doubleday, but has been out of print since. It was originally reviewed in the *New York Herald Tribune Books, The Boston Evening Transcript,* the *New Republic,* the *New York Times,* and the *Saturday Review of Literature,* but the vast majority of reviewers panned the book, calling it "overwrought," "highstrung and ineffective," and "so nervous and tense as to sound hysterical" (Tompkins; C.H.M.). Only Rose C. Feld, the *New York Herald Tribune* and *Boston Evening Transcript* reviewer, found that "in spite of deficiencies of style and technique," the book had a "unique appeal" and made "a contribution to the field of the modern novel." Foster claims that *Pity for Women* is "[p]erceptibly related in style" to *Nightwood,* "although far inferior in artistry" (317). Bradley in 1959 announces it to be "something like *Diana,* but written by a very bitter anti-lesbian" (26); and Faderman mentions it as an example of "the monstrous lesbian images proliferated during the 1930s" (*Odd Girls* 101).

Taken together, these histories not only bespeak the modern multiplication of discourses concerning sex, but also show how a single text can have multiple functions within the "regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality" (Foucault 11). In other words, in their historical movement from performing ostensibly as scientific case studies in the thirties, to occupying the space of erotica in the sixties, to functioning as historical artifacts aiding in the construction of a gay and lesbian genealogy in the seventies, to becoming objects of queer antihomophobic inquiry in the new millennium, these texts serve as proof of Foucault's "[r]ule of the tactical

polyvalence of discourses" (Foucault 100).[12] In tracing these histories thus, I don't mean to suggest that each text has not served multiple functions within a single historical moment, but the fact that narratives such as *Diana* and *Either Is Love* have been explicitly marketed in very different ways in different decades illustrates the instability of narrative and its ability to function simultaneously as an instrument of power and a point of resistance (Foucault 101). This can be seen, for example, in the movement of *Diana* from its ostensibly regulatory function as a text originally prescribed by Dr. Robinson to aid in the "general knowledge on the etiology and prognosis of homosexuality" (ix), to its ostensibly pleasure-based function as a pulp paperback whose cover depicts one voluptuous woman suggestively helping another voluptuous woman out of the bathtub. (There is no scene corresponding to this illustration in the narrative.) Likewise, Foucault's thoughts about the polyvalence of discourses helps explain why a text like *The Stone Wall* can be seen as holding allegiance to both homophobic and homophilic ideologies.

**Political Usefulness and the Tyranny of Modernism**

Faderman's dismissive attitude toward *Pity for Women* for its "monstrous lesbian images" points toward one possible reason for the lack of critical engagement with, or even knowledge of, these lesbian realist texts on the part of literary critics who focus on women's and lesbian literature. Early attempts to identify a lesbian literary canon, particularly those attempts outside academic institutions, focused on finding both "true-to-life" and "positive" representations of the lesbian. As I have already discussed,

"authenticity" was of supreme value in a lesbian text both in the thirties and throughout the sixties and seventies. Thirties reviewers praised *Either Is Love* for its "candor and earnestness" ("Two Loves") and *Pity for Women* for its "desperate integrity" (Feld). Later lesbian critics validated *The Stone Wall* for being "entirely frank" (Bradley and Damon 14), *Either Is Love* for its "candid story" ("Lesbiana"), and *Diana* for its "honest analysis" (Foster 323). But for pioneers in the attempt to establish a lesbian literary canon, positive representation was an even higher priority, especially given that, for women attempting to combat notions of lesbian identity as immoral and/or pathological, "positive" and "true" representations were apt to be considered one and the same. We can see this clearly in Cook's dismissal of *The Stone Wall* as "a dismally written self-portrait in the self-hating Radclyffe Hall tradition" (721), Rule's dismissal of *Either Is Love* for its "offensive" presentation of heterosexuality (187), and Bradley's estimation of *Pity for Women* as "a very bitter anti-lesbian" novel (26). These judgments quite clearly betray the critics' emphasis on the political usefulness of "positive" representation. For example, Cook's 1979 essay, written during the period of lesbian-feminist repudiation of the butch-femme dynamic so prevalent in fifties and sixties narratives of lesbianism, finds no political use in narratives, like Hall's and Casal's, that admit to a lesbian identification with masculinity. Similarly, Rule's rejection of *Either Is Love* is based on what she sees as its ending in "heterosexual salvation" (188), while Bradley sees *Pity for Women* as "prejudiced" because of its equally negative ending in lesbian insanity (26). None of these critics admit to the historical contingency of definitions of "positive representation."

Interestingly, most recent attempts to reclaim these narratives are equally based on this desire for positive representation, for what Heather Love has called an affirmative approach to history "which seeks to confirm contemporary gay and lesbian identity by searching for moments of pride or resistance in the past" (497). This can be seen clearly, for example, in nineties discussions of *The Stone Wall* that completely ignore the narrator's extremely ambivalent attitudes about women's sexual freedom in an effort to recover the book as wholly against sexual repression (Faderman *Odd Girls* 114) and "the deterministic unhappiness" of Stephen Gordon (MacPike 78). Similarly, *Either Is Love* and *Diana* are lauded for their articulation of "lesbian pride" and a "pro-lesbian stance" (Diggs 141; Faderman, *Odd Girls* 102).[13] Only Julie Abraham, in the introduction to the 1995 edition of *Diana,* sees the text's contradictions and ambivalences as its strengths because they show us much of what circulated about lesbianism in that and subsequent cultural moments, although even Abraham ends her essay emphasizing that whatever the narrative's "limitations," the affirmation that comes with a lesbian happy ending "is what *Diana* still offers" (xxxiii). Nevertheless, the majority of Abraham's introduction is committed to what Love, in an essay about Stephen Gordon's "Spoiled Identity," calls a "curative approach to history" that, in contrast to affirmative history, "seeks out the 'discontinuities' in the past in order to disrupt the stability or taken-for-granted quality of the present" (497). While the affirmative and curative approaches are both interested in putting the narrative examined to political use, the latter expands that notion of use beyond the politics of gay pride and allows recovery work to take place without having to

ignore the existence of shame, ambivalence, and adherence to normative ideology in early lesbian narratives.

However, I contend that this very emphasis on discontinuity, disruption, and instability in queer studies is ironically related to the primary reason that early lesbian realist narratives have remained in critical eclipse. Other books that in the early decades of canon formation were decried for their "negative" portrayals of lesbianism have since achieved primacy in the lesbian literary canon, at least as it is articulated in the academy. The ascendancy of Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* provides a good example. In 1975, Jane Rule proclaimed the female characters in *Nightwood* to be unredeemable and said that it was "really too bad that a book, so often beautiful and insightful, finally becomes pretentious and embarrassing" (187). Similarly, Faderman, writing in 1991 but clearly coming from a lesbian feminist sensibility much like Rule's, cites *Nightwood* as an example of books "written by women who had had same-sex love relationships themselves, but who were, by the 1930s, credulous of the 'truths' that had been societally inculcated in them about the sickness and torment of lesbian love" (*Odd Girls* 102). But as poststructuralist thought (à la Foucault, Derrida, and the "French feminists") gained momentum in feminist, lesbian, and later queer, U.S. criticism and theory, *Nightwood* came to be seen as an exemplary text. Shari Benstock (1990) sees in *Nightwood* a Derridian example of the ability of linguistic structures to "trace and erase the psychosexual contours in a single gesture" (and similarly aligns *Ladies Almanack* with "what in poststructuralist terms is called *jouissance*") (189). Elizabeth Meese (1992) observes Barnes "[c]onstructing herself (and/as) her lesbian subject," inventing "a

grammar, syntax and lexicon of passion, grief and the painful limits of human understanding" (52). Judith Roof (1996) refers to the text as an example of "perverse narrative," "a narrative about narrative dissolution, a narrative that continually short-circuits" and thus is able to disrupt the heterosexual/reproductive imperative that structures Western narrative (*Come As* xxiv). Over the nineties, *Nightwood* became central to the emerging canon of Sapphic modernism, and Sapphic modernism moved closer toward the center of the modernist canon. Barnes was included in Bonnie Kime Scott's groundbreaking anthology *The Gender of Modernism* (1990); in 1993 an entire issue of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* was devoted to her work; and in the 1999 *Cambridge Companion to Modernism,* Marianne Dekoven includes Barnes' work in her list of established "women's modernist writing" that is "widely read, taught, and written about" ("Modernism" 192).

Moreover, claims about the exclusion of *Nightwood* by *lesbian* literary critics are somewhat exaggerated. For example, in her chapter on *Nightwood* in *(Sem)erotics: Theorizing Lesbian: Writing*, Elizabeth Meese castigates U.S. critics of lesbian writing for dismissing the book, citing Faderman and Zimmerman as examples (44). But while Zimmerman in *The Safe Sea of Women* does say that Barnes and Renée Vivian borrow their images of lesbians "from the exotic 'femme damnée,' intoxicated with death and lust," she also says that *Nightwood,* a "modern classic," deserves "a place in literary and lesbian history" (6, 8). Three years later in her essay, "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism," Zimmerman notes that "Barnes' portraits of decadent, tormented lesbians [. . .] in *Nightwood* [. . .] often prove troublesome to lesbian

readers and critics," but she still names Barnes as a focal point in "the establishment of a self-conscious literary tradition" (43). But even well before what Meese rightly calls "the poststructuralist shift [which] altered critical perspectives" to be "much more appreciative of her experimentalism," Barnes was part of the lesbian literary canon (50). In 1956, Foster called *Nightwood* the "most important item" published in 1936 and compared Barnes favorably to Stein and Joyce (316). "The volume *in toto*," says Foster, "is a tragic prose poem of the lost—all those whose sole métier is instinct and emotion, misfit and outcast in a culture whose law is social regimentation" (317). And even early lesbian bibliographers working outside of an academic context and quite focused on the value of "positive" representation nevertheless found value in *Nightwood.* Bradley and Damon's 1960 "Checklist," for example, calls *Nightwood* a "well-known and excellent lesbian novel" (10).

I find particularly perplexing Meese's claim that "Barnes's relatively limited reception" in lesbian criticism can be accounted for "less for political than aesthetic reasons since her writing signals a departure from the romantic/naturalistic/realist norms that dominate literature in the twentieth century" (48). While Meese's essay is about lesbian criticism and lesbian literature, here she seems to be claiming that these norms dominate the study of twentieth-century U.S. literature *in general.* But while romantic and realist forms have more-or-less dominated *popular* literature throughout the century, one would be hard pressed to argue that the twentieth-century literary canon (as determined by literary critics) is dominated by realism when overwhelmingly the literary history told to students of American literature is still the story of a movement from

nineteenth-century realism to twentieth-century modernism and then, of course, postmodernism.[14] As Michael Denning has noted, "The depression is usually marked as an interregnum between modernism and postmodernism, the last hurrah of a lost nineteenth-century realism. [. . .] [I]f the era belonged to the modernists and the future—the American Century after the war—belonged to a still unnamed postmodernism, the moment of 'social realism' was a lamentable, if understandable, detour" (120). Similarly, Alan Wald remarks that the critical tendency has been to view thirties realist literature as "something close to an 'episode' that may have been well-intentioned but is ultimately judged to be an 'artistic mediocrity'" (18). Despite attempts by Wald and Denning, as well critics such as Houston Baker, Ann Ardis, Paul Lauter, Rita Barnard, and George Hutchinson, to question the hegemony of high modernist aesthetics in the establishment of an early-twentieth-century literary canon and to recover texts that fall outside of the modernist tradition, this impulse to locate the origins of our own "postmodern moment" in a privileged set of modernist texts has persisted.[15] In fact, modernism's hold is perhaps nowhere more tenacious than in lesbian and queer literary criticism.

When we look at the number of obstacles facing thirties lesbian realist texts, it is no wonder that they are now virtually unknown and out of print. For if, as I have suggested, thirties realism is generally frowned upon, those who have *not* frowned upon it have tended to collapse "thirties literature" into the so-called "literary Left," as if this were the only kind of literature around in the period.[16] If Meese means by her comment about Barnes's limited reception that "romantic/naturalistic/realist norms" dominate our view of what *thirties* literature is, then she might have a point, but in lesbian literary

history, modernist works from the thirties such as *Nightwood* and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* are seen as simply a continuation (or culmination) of the twenties modernist aesthetic. Thirties lesbian realist narratives, on the other hand, have little connection either to modernism or to the communist and socialist movements which created the literary Left, although they do sometimes refer to the depression and are usually concerned with the issue of women's job opportunities. In addition to being thwarted by the general tendency to leave overtly gay and lesbian writing out of the mainstream literary canon, these works are also hindered by their inability to fit neatly into a realism that is assumed to be by definition "proletarian." But in terms of the lesbian literary canon, the primary obstacle these texts have faced over the last twenty years is the increasing tendency of critics of lesbian literature to associate queer sexuality with experimental aesthetics.

This tendency is so far-reaching that I will here only briefly indicate it primarily in relation to lesbian literary canon formation. One could perhaps say that it was heralded in 1977 by Bertha Harris, whose argument about the "Nature of Lesbian Literature" is best summarized by Biddy Martin in 1987:

> Harris suggested that lesbian writing engaged a desire and an excess that defied the fixity of identity, the boundaries drawn around individual subjects, around all forms of categorization and normalization. Her lobbying efforts for an avant-garde or modernist writing included the infamous and curious claim that *Jaws,* in its celebration of inassimilable monstrosity, was a far more lesbian novel than that far more 'conventional' fiction written in the 1970s by self-declared lesbians. (138)[17]

Harris' impulse is not exclusively "lesbian" but rather indicates the beginning of a shift in feminist criticism generally, a shift most commonly articulated as the "Anglo-

American" versus "French" feminist debates waged throughout the eighties and into the nineties. In *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics,* Felski notes insightfully that these debates in many ways reenact debates "between realism and modernism within Marxist aesthetics in the 1930s" (3), and I would argue that they have also profoundly affected the way lesbian narratives of the late 1920s and 1930s are read. One small strand of this debate can be traced, for example, beginning with Elaine Showalter's 1977 reading of Virginia Woolf's essays as examples of how Woolf's use of modernist techniques such as "repetition, exaggeration, parody, whimsy, and multiple viewpoint" allow her to disavow "any earnest or subversive [and thus any feminist] intention" (282, 284). In 1985, Toril Moi employs Julia Kristeva's contention that experimental writing "is itself 'revolutionary', analogous to sexual and political transformation," to argue against what Moi sees as Showalter's favoring of conservative "bourgeois realism" over Woolf's revolutionary modernism (4, 11). In 1989, Felski voices her agreement with Moi's critique of Anglo-American feminist criticism's reliance "upon a reflectionist theory of literary meaning" that is unable to account for the significance of modernist texts (2), but she also notes that work, based on Kristeva and others, which claims there is something "inherently feminine or feminist in experimental writing as such" "offers an equally unsatisfactory basis for a comprehensive feminist theory of the text" (5).

Although Felski's sage assertion that multiple aesthetic modes could further feminist politics prefigured a more nuanced feminist criticism in which "material" and "poststructuralist" concerns could both be in play, criticism of twenties and thirties lesbian literature has largely remained wedded to a belief that subversive sexual politics

are best expressed through experimental writing.[18] A dominant strand of this theory maintains on the one hand that writers of this period necessarily encoded lesbian subject matter for fear of exposure, lack of publishing opportunities, and so forth, but also that this indirect, elliptical expression of lesbian desire is in fact more revolutionary than more overt representation because it refuses to be co-opted into traditional and phallocentric narrative and syntactical structures. This is Judith Roof's argument in *A Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory*, in which, for example, she compellingly describes the always already heterosexual structure of narrative (as a synthesis of opposites) and finds that Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* circumvents that structure by showing lesbian sexuality as representable only as "continual indirection" or "a failure of language" (75). Somewhat similarly, Terry Castle in her influential book *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture,* maintains that the "literary history of lesbianism [. . .] is first of all a history of derealization" (34). Tracing the use of spectral figures as a way of conveying "that 'recognition through negation' which has taken place with regard to female homosexuality" in Western literature for the last three hundred years, she suggests that "the [apparitional] metaphor has functioned as the necessary psychological and rhetorical means for objectifying—and ultimately embracing—that which otherwise could not be acknowledged" (60). More recently, Joanne Winning in her study of Dorothy Richardson finds in tracing the "encodings and dissimulations of lesbian desire" in Richardson's work a reflection of the poststructuralist and postmodernist "model of fragmented, dissimulating lesbian subjecthood and textuality, located in the fissures and interstices of cultural expression" (8).

Even Bonnie Zimmerman, who remarks that it is "highly debatable that all lesbian writers are modernists, or that all modernists are lesbians" ("What" 47), seems not to be aware that there are there are thirties precursors to the seventies and eighties realist lesbian texts she examines in *The Safe Sea of Women.* But perhaps that is no wonder given the virtually exclusive emphasis on "Sapphic modernism" in relation to early twentieth-century lesbian writing.[19] This emphasis indicates in part, I think, the continuing influence of New Criticism on canon formation, for New Criticism's privileging of formal and linguistic complexity—though not ostensibly tied to socio-political concerns—is echoed in much Sapphic modernist criticism.[20] Regardless, any cursory look at the last fifteen years of criticism will confirm that the overwhelming majority of feminist (not just lesbian) criticism of this period has focused on the Sapphic modernists, and the Sapphic modernists also represent the most widely-known group of lesbian writers in U.S. literary studies. But despite the fact that most scholars would be hard pressed to name one lesbian realist work from the twenties or thirties with the obvious exception of *The Well,* critics of Sapphic modernism continue to characterize themselves as disrupting a critical tradition that, in Julie Abraham's words, "overidentified" the lesbian novel with "literary realism" (*Are Girls* 23).[21] Only recently have a few critics come to question this straw-man argument, as Lisa Walker does in passing when she says, "given the explosion of critical work on lesbian modernist writers such as Stein, Barnes, and Woolf, I find it difficult to accept the contention that the realist narrative constitutes the 'authentic lesbian text' within lesbian literary criticism" (25). It is into this critical conversation that my project hopes to intervene.

Interestingly, lesbian critics sometimes attempt to include the most well-known lesbian realist texts (principally *The Well of Loneliness*) in the canon by suggesting that realist texts are *really* modernist texts masquerading in realism's clothing. Thus Castle maintains that

> [b]y its very nature lesbian fiction has—and can only have—a profoundly attenuated relationship with what we think of, stereotypically, as narrative verisimilitude, plausibility, or 'truth to life.' Precisely because it is motivated by a yearning for that which is, in a cultural sense, implausible [. . .] lesbian fiction characteristically exhibits, even as it masquerades as 'realistic' in surface detail, a strongly fantastical, allegorical, or utopian tendency. (88)

Similarly, Karla Jay in "Lesbian Modernism: (Trans)forming the (C)Anon" (1995), maintains that some works of lesbian modernism wore "the style and other trappings of the traditional novel in order to undermine its very conventions," acting as "a literary transvestite" (79). But such gestures toward broadening the definition of Sapphic modernism not only threaten to render a useful generic term meaningless ("modernism" stands in for anything that subverts anything) but also do nothing to unseat experimental and avant-garde stylistics from their centrality as the exemplary lesbian form.[22]

I do not mean to suggest that the use of conventional realist forms is an easy and seamless operation for lesbian narratives. As I have already indicated, I am interested in how this combination "queers" texts, creates narrative contradictions and discords. But I'm perhaps even more interested in what would happen if, instead of trying to fit lesbian realist texts uncomfortably into the genre of Sapphic modernism where they always exist as the lesser (and usually forgotten) step-children of more formally and linguistically experimental works, we viewed them instead in relation to some of the techniques and effects of realism. What if we, for example, thought of *Either Is Love* as a text

employing the analogical structures of empathy—in a sense a politics of sameness—to privilege the feminine and lesbian over the masculine and heterosexual? Or if we considered how *Diana* attempts to use the autobiography's traditional associations with male bourgeois individualism to create a personal sense of dignity that allows for lesbian identity? It is these kinds of questions that the following chapters attempt to address.

# Chapter 1

## Sex Abuse and Sex Education in *The Stone Wall*

In this chapter, I will discuss how the first explicitly lesbian autobiography to be published in America, Mary Casal's *The Stone Wall: An Autobiography* (1930), engages with a constellation of changes in popular marriage and family ideology in order to present the radical possibility of lesbian relationship as a way out of the dangers and dissatisfactions of compulsory heterosexuality. This harsh critique of heteronormativity is made possible in great part, I will argue, by the text's generic hybridity, particularly its relationship to two barely nascent autobiographical sub-genres: the "survivor" story and the "coming out" story. By presenting "natural" and "normal" heterosexuality as hardly distinguishable from sexual abuse, Casal writes a strong counternarrative to companionate marriage's belief in the reformability of marriage and men, though ultimately her fear of unregulated female sexuality prevents any clear solution to the "problem" of women's sexual desire. The eruption of this fear ultimately compromises the disruptive potential of the text, highlighting the difficulty of eschewing the normalizing effects of confessional discourse.

Though published lesbian narratives proliferated in 1930s America for a variety of reasons, a major social and political factor was surely the so-called "heterosexual revolution" of the 1920s, which became normalized in the thirties. Most importantly, the twenties mark a major turning point in the shift in marriage ideology from a traditional conception of marriage as a family obligation to a wide-spread acceptance of the belief

that "companionate marriage" was crucial to every woman's psychological well being. Writing about women's concerns shifted from an impetus toward collective political action to a focus on the individual woman and the family, what Rapp and Ross call "life-style" (as opposed to "activist") feminism (102). This shift was part of the absorption, diffusion, and dilution of feminist ideology into mainstream American culture after women's direct collective activism secured them the vote in 1920. The change was in many ways defined by the commercialization of feminism, "the reinterpretation of the *meaning* of female freedom by advertisers and commercial interests," as well as by psychologists, social scientists, judges, and journalists, to transform the militant suffragist into the "free" flapper consumer, a woman who asserted her right to give, receive, and embody heterosexual sexual pleasure (Duggan 78-79).[23] The political and popular focus on companionate marriage and women's sexuality in this decade made lesbianism more visible and thus more vulnerable to attack and more in need of defense.[24] This attention made women's sexuality increasingly subject to heteronormative regulation but also opened up a space for the production of overly lesbian narrative.

**Companionate Marriage and Parent Education**

The twenties saw the rise of two new "movements" that became commonplace ideology in the thirties: the call for companionate marriage and the growing emphasis on parent education. A hotly debated topic in the 1920s, "companionate marriage" described a new, improved version of marriage that "implied a union of equals that met both partners' sexual, emotional, and personal needs based upon mutual affection and

sexual attraction, rather than economic need or religious dogma" or reproduction (Kleinberg 243). While obviously liberating in some ways, this new ideology also caused women to become even more focused on marriage as their ultimate (and compulsory) goal as they were encouraged to view marriage and especially (hetero) sex not as a duty but as "fun" (Duggan 79). In fact, the generation that came of age from the late teens through the Depression married younger than the generation before, and the proportion who never married dropped from ten to six percent. Though the divorce rate was also rising, this was probably due to spouses' higher expectations for marriage rather than, as some alarmists indicated, an erosion of the "value" of marriage (Cott 147).

One important tenet of companionate marriage was that the primary function of sex in marriage was not to produce children but rather to satisfy the sexual needs and desires of men *and* women. As Mary Dennett's Voluntary Parenthood League and Margaret Sanger's American Birth Control League launched national campaigns to secure the legal dissemination of birth control information during the twenties and thirties, birth control technology became increasingly available and acceptable. These factors, combined with the economic disincentive to have large families during the Depression, caused the birthrate in America to fall throughout the twenties and thirties. However, these decades are also notable for the increasing amount of public attention focused on childrearing as mothers in particular were encouraged to apply the wisdom of modern science toward parenting (Cott 169). Though the marriage and parent education "revolutions" may seem contradictory impulses at first since companionate marriage de-emphasizes the importance of reproduction, both are in fact part of the widening

influence of the emerging fields of psychology and social science on mainstream popular culture. Specifically, the companionate marriage and parent education movements were both part of a national focus on mental hygiene, which encouraged women to seek professional advice on ways to improve their marriages, perform housework, and provide for the physical as well as emotional well-being of their families.

This phenomenon can be seen clearly in the proliferation of sex education, marriage, and parenting guides throughout the twenties and thirties as mental health issues "captured the interest of a broad segment of Americans" (Faulkner and Pruitt 7). Published in 1930, the same year as *The Stone Wall*, Karl Menninger's *The Human Mind* became the first pop psychology book to become a best seller, though several popular mental hygiene books in the twenties helped pave the way for Menninger's success. Social workers, psychologists, physicians, legal experts and others in an increasing pool of mostly male professionals authored mandates on companionate marriage and sex education in the 1920s, "followed by more technical marriage manuals and popular medical advice" in the 1930s (Simmons 164). Ultimately, as Christina Simmons has noted, they succeeded in articulating "a new sexual ideology which achieved cultural hegemony by the 1930's and which represented a morality more suited to the social needs of the corporate liberal state than its Victorian predecessor" (164). At the same time, the parent education movement flourished during the twenties and thirties and produced *Child Study,* a professional journal, and *Parents',* a popular national magazine, as well as two national organizations, the Federation for Child Study and the National Council on Parent Education (Cott 91). The National Congress of Parents and Teachers Associations

membership "more than quintupled during the twenties, reaching membership of more than a million and a half" (Cott 87), while *Parents'* circulation boomed, "reaching two hundred thousand" even "in the trough of the Depression" (Cott 170).

Certainly many women and families benefited from the more progressive aspects of both the companionate marriage and parent education movements. Many children benefited from mothers' increasing knowledge of health care and nutrition issues. The acknowledgement of women's sexual desire resulted in a battle cry for "orgasms for women" among more radical pop psychologists and writers (Pfister 183), and husbands fell under increasing pressure to attend to their wives' sexual pleasure as much "sexual literature warned men to abandon the stereotypical Victorian sexual aggression in favor of sensitivity, gentleness, and a slower pace" (Simmons 165). Moreover, while the companionate marriage model typically left intact the gendered division of labor (Cott 157), some women enjoyed a modicum of equality in other areas of matrimony as books like Judge Ben Lindsay's *Companionate Marriage* (1927) argued that "[t]he wife was to be included in the budget planning and was to have access to money without asking for it; the husband might help a little with the dishes and housework" (Simmons 165). Lindsay was just one of a swell of professionals who promoted the family as "a specialized site for emotional intimacy, personal and sexual expression, and nurture among husband, wife, and a small number of children" (Cott 156).

While the parent education movement was responsible for a number of real advances in the physical and emotional wellbeing of children, it and companionate marriage also served in many respects to maintain the status quo. In particular, the

"heterosexual revolution" worked in close concert with capitalism as the focus on women's sexuality caused make-up sales to sky-rocket and advertising to increasingly feature images of women as sex objects. Moreover, women were encouraged to purchase everything from new appliances to new clothes in order to be "good" wives and mothers as their roles within the family were scrutinized. And although the "new" ideas about marriage and family resembled reforms envisioned by earlier feminists, as historian Nancy Cott notes, "[w]here Feminists' stand on sexuality in the 1910s had indicted bourgeois marriage, . . . the sexual pattern advanced in social science (and popular culture) of the 1920s confirmed bourgeois marriage as women's destination" (Cott 156). That is, the companionate marriage movement directed women's energy "toward men and marriage" (Simmons 165), while the parent education movement's focus (following Freud) on the mother-child bond "made motherhood a full-time occupation despite smaller families" (Kleinberg 236). As Lisa Duggan notes, this glorification of marriage resulted in "an assault on all alternatives," and professionals and the public alike became increasingly intolerant toward women who sought to avoid marriage (87). "[F]emale-centered sociability" was labeled lesbian and thus deviant (Rapp and Ross 100); in this way companionate marriage in particular undermined feminism and focused negative (even hostile) attention toward lesbians. While companionate marriage "represented the attempt of mainstream marriage ideology to adapt to women's perceived new social and sexual power," it also limited women's power to assume social and sexual identities at odds with heteronormativity (Simmons 165).

**Confessional Autobiography and Sexual Discourse**

*The Stone Wall* is in many ways a critique of the companionate marriage and parent education movements, the same movements that in part create Casal's target audience. In the very few references to it in print, *The Stone Wall* subtitled "an autobiography," is always assumed to be the true account it claims to be. The narrator takes pains to assure her readers that "[t]his book is not fiction. I am writing of my own life; my actual experiences from my earliest recollections to the age of nearly seventy years" (5). If we accept the text's self-classification, then *The Stone Wall* is the first published autobiography in English to focus on the writer's identity as an "invert" and to recount her same-sex sexual relationships. In my examination of lesbian realist texts, I will continually return to the question of what discursive strategies each narrator/author employs to authorize her speech. In both *The Stone Wall: An Autobiography* and *Diana: A Strange Autobiography*, that attempt at authorization begins with the very use of the word "autobiography" in the titles of these texts. As Laura Marcus has noted, there is traditionally both a formal and a hierarchical distinction between "autobiography" and other forms of self writing such as the memoir or the diary: the autobiography is considered a "higher" and more "serious" form because it is supposedly more self-reflective and appropriate for people who have something of historical importance to say (21, 31-2). Furthermore, Philippe Lejeune's widely quoted definition of autobiography illustrates the genre's genealogy in ideologies of eighteenth-century bourgeois individualism and nineteenth-century evolutionary progress: he defines it as a

"retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular the development of his personality" (193).[25] As this definition suggests, criticism has historically presumed the author and subject of this story of individual development to be male. In naming her text an autobiography, Casal not only makes a truth claim about the narrator's existence and her experience, but also asserts that female sexual development is a subject of historical importance. Moreover, she posits both sexual abuse (the survivor story) and homosexual desire (the coming out story) as foundational to the female subject's development, bringing into narrative existence the aspects of women's private lives that are least likely to be told. While all of the texts I examine claim in some way to be telling a "real" story that is never told, they use quite different strategies to authorize that telling. In *The Stone Wall*, the narrator's desire to reveal the truth is tied specifically to the parent education movement, and to sex education in particular. In asserting that her story constitutes a crucial intervention into these discourses, and thus that her experience has a potentially universal application, she attempts to authorize a narrative doubly subject to silencing.

Beginning with her birth in 1864 (which would make her sixty-six at the time of publication), the narrator chronicles her life, focusing primarily on her experiences of sexual abuse at the hands of men and her sexual romances with women. She explicitly positions her autobiography as part of a movement to promote "less secrecy about matters which are at the root of many evils today" (5). Specifically, she claims to present the book "with the sincere hope that it may throw light from a new and different angle on the effort of the parent to understand children"(6), thus placing it clearly within the

context of parent education literature. Just as *Parents' Magazine* was established in 1926 with the charge of "translating the valuable but often technical material of experts into workaday language" (Cott 170), the narrator appeals to the bewildered parent's desire for practical, understandable information: "I have read many works on adolescence and on matters of sex, but nearly always they are filled mainly with theories and couched in such language that it is hard for the lay mind always to grasp the meaning. There will be nothing to follow here that all may not understand" (9). While noting the constant threat to "the truth" by "snooping reformers and self-appointed censors," she also acknowledges that "many are accepting very frank articles now written on sex problems which bear on the conduct of the youth of today" (5).

The narrative seems indeed "frank" as the narrator recounts her particularly brutal experience of the transition from childhood to womanhood, which involves repeated sexual abuse. As a child her "tastes ran naturally to boys' sports" and clothes (9), but once her cousin and her brother discover when she is three or four years old that she lacks a penis, they demand secret sexual "sessions" from her as "the price of [their] companionship" (17). Well before puberty, she's sexually abused for "several years" by Mr. Wiggins, a neighbor and friend of the family (32), and she narrowly escapes abuse by two other men, "[t]he proverbial 'hired man'" and an elderly boarder (23). In another childhood incident, she is raped by her oldest cousin while on a sleigh ride. At fifteen she is raped by a brother-in-law in Boston; then a few years later when she goes to live with her sister's family in order to attend college, she is raped repeatedly by another brother-in-law, Peter. All of these events occur before she is twenty.

In the meantime, though she becomes engaged twice, her "interest in girls persisted" (83). At age twelve, she begins a classic romantic friendship with a girl for several summers at the seashore, and while in college she has a sexual relationship with the university president's daughter.[26] There follow a succession of affairs with married women until the narrator meets her "beloved Juno" at a women's hotel; the two "marry" by reading vows to each other and live in bliss for over five years, but then Juno starts to cheat on the narrator. After years of breaking up and getting back together, the narrator and Juno part for good. The homosexual story line, like the sexual abuse one, is presented as information that "may solve like problems for girls and women in similar situations, and also help them to understand the problems which today confront the youth of our country, that they may understand and help their own children" (133).

As the plot summary above indicates, *The Stone Wall* clearly falls into the genre of confessional autobiography, which Rita Felski has defined as "a type of autobiographical writing which signals its intention to foreground the most personal and intimate details of the author's life," to make "public that which has been private, typically claiming to avoid filtering mechanisms of objectivity and detachment in its pursuit of the truth of subjective experience" (*Beyond Feminist* 87-88). Since Foucault famously asserted that the increasing "incitement to discourse" about sexuality, and the confessional mode in particular, serves more to control sexuality than liberate it, feminist critics have grappled with a desire both to point out the ways in which confession is employed as a form of social control and to insist on its potential to radically intervene in dominant discourse.[27] In an essay on survivor discourse, for example, Linda Martín

Alcoff and Laura Gray-Rosendale ask, "Is [the] proliferation and dissemination of survivor discourse having a subversive effect on patriarchal violence? Or is it being co-opted, taken up and used but in a manner that diminishes its subversive impact?" (199). Similarly, in her essay "Lesbian Confession and Case History," Marylynne Diggs asks, "In what ways do lesbian confessional texts appropriate and resist abnormalization?" (133). As Foucault articulates it, the confessional mode re-establishes the status quo by requiring the speaker to confess to an expert (traditionally a priest, more recently a therapist) who interprets the confession through the dominant, sanctioned discourse. Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale suggest that survivor discourses which collapse the speaker and expert, or that aren't framed by the seemingly dispassionate and objective interpretations of experts, may have a better chance of being transgressive.

I would like to suggest that this theory is useful when considering the discursive strategies at work in *The Stone Wall.* The narrator presents herself as survivor, as expert, and as the one who can interpret the discourse of both positions for the "lay person" (132). As she relates in first person her extensive experience as a victim of sexual assault, she clearly speaks as a survivor. But as one who has been an educator, who has "read many works on adolescence and on matters of sex," and who can relate and interpret the stories of other girls and women (stories they have confessed to her when seeking advice), the narrator also assumes the position of expert (9). As one who claims to be telling "the plain truth of things," she self-consciously declares her text to represent the unfiltered truth of subjective experience, yet her ostensible objective in truth-telling, she says, is "to make you think and acknowledge the sins of your past" (87). In enjoining

*the reader* to acknowledge the sins of *her* past, the narrator blurs the lines between writer-as-confessor and reader-as-interpreter, in a sense turning the tables on the confessor/listener power dynamic. She also subverts the meaning of "sin" in this passage because here "sin" refers not to sexual activity but rather to the reader's silence about it. Of course, as the work of Foucault and others suggests, the elimination of the outside "expert" in confessional autobiography in no way means that the survivor then speaks outside of dominant discourse, for, as Felski notes, "there exists no innocent place outside of the symbolic order" (*Beyond Feminist* 114). This is disturbingly true for *The Stone Wall*, a point on which I will elaborate later in my argument. Regardless, though, of the extent to which this autobiography, and indeed all autobiography, fails to render a subject unmediated through normalizing discourse, in blurring the distinction between expert and survivor, the narrator does claim the power to authorize her own speech.

She also locates herself between two other polarized subject positions, that of a unique individual with an exceptional story to tell, and that of an ordinary woman with whom many girls and women may easily identify. In doing this, she positions her text between what a number of feminists critics of autobiography have identified as "masculine" and "feminine" (or feminist) traditions within the genre: the traditional autobiography of bourgeois individualism which recounts the exceptional, exemplary, and often publicly or historically important life of its male author; and the typically less formal, more relational and communal, more intimate, and more self-effacing women's autobiography.[28] While the narrator clearly sees her life as exceptional in several ways, particularly in light of the *number* of abusive sexual experiences she has had to endure, in

her unusual careers as a traveling saleswoman and business owner, and in the quality of her relationship with Juno, she also claims to be an "ordinary woman," and her exceptionality is based more on her extreme suffering than (as in the traditional autobiography) on her public accomplishments (133). Through most of her story, the narrator tends to present her homosexuality as more exceptional than her experiences of abuse, but even this exceptionality is undercut late in the narrative when she first encounters a lesbian community and exclaims that the realization that she was "not a creature apart" but rather "as 'normal' as any other" came "too late" to prevent years of mental anguish (180). Ultimately, the narrator seems to claim exceptionality for herself not so much for the content of her story, but for her willingness to tell it.

Moreover, she makes the gestures toward female collectivity that Felski identifies as characteristic of feminist-influenced women's confessional autobiography of the late twentieth century. Felski notes that autobiographical writing inspired by the women's movement tends to be more concerned with "delineating the specific problems and experiences which bind women together" than with recording "an unusual but exemplary life," and that "the *representative* aspects of experience" are emphasized as a way of highlighting "the *institutionalized* nature of sexual oppression" (*Beyond Feminist* 94-95, 115, original emphasis). Forty years before the women's movement of the 1970s, the narrator of *The Stone Wall* relentlessly drives home the point that the sexual use and abuse of women by men is common and ordinary both by saying so outright and by repeating stories told to her by other women, stories ranging from child molestation to sexual dissatisfaction in marriage. Furthermore, she presents lesbianism as a possible

solution to the problems inherent to heterosexuality, a stance which connects her, as a precursor, to some of the more radical theories of second wave writers and activists. Although I have yet to find a writer who claims *The Stone Wall* as a influence, there is evidence to suggest that the book was known at least in some lesbian circles during the sixties and seventies. While there seem to have been no reviews of the book during the era of its publication, the text is mentioned a few times during the 1960s in more-or-less underground bibliographies written by and for lesbian readers: in the bibliography of lesbian literature "Checklist 1960," *The Stone Wall* is deemed "probably the earliest such memoir in the literature" (Bradley and Damon 14), and in *The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography*, published by The Daughters of Bilitis in 1967, *The Stone Wall* is granted the highest ranking of three stars, marking it as one of "those few titles which stand out above all the rest" (Damon and Stuart N.pag.). Though it is impossible to conjecture what influence, if any, Casal's narrative had on second wave feminism, and lesbian feminism in particular, *The Stone Wall* nevertheless represents an early example of the strategies Felski identifies as common to feminist confessional discourse, that of rendering women's problems communal rather than private and connecting personal experience to institutionalized oppression (*Beyond Feminist* 115). By linking this confessional autobiography to the increasingly mainstream discourses of parent education and sex education, Casal carves out a discursive space from which to critique heterosexual institutions (especially marriage) and give voice to the multitude of girls and women enduring sexual abuse.

**Child Sexual Abuse**

At the time of the narrator's childhood and adolescence (roughly 1865 to 1885), the issue of child sexual abuse was virtually nonexistent in the public eye. Not until the 1880s did some feminists take up the cause against "the frightful indignities to which even little girls are subject" as part of a national child protection campaign (Jenkins 29). The 1894 textbook *A System of Legal Medicine* included the first American work on the sexual abuse of children, Dr. Charles G. Chaddock's "Sexual Crimes," in which it was suggested that "rape of children is the most frequent form of sexual crime" (Jenkins 29). Between the 1880s and the 1920s, there occurred a growing public panic regarding a variety of "sexual perversions" ranging from homosexuality to child sexual abuse, primarily as a result of some highly-publicized vice squad investigations and spectacular serial rapes and murders. This focus meant that, when child sexual abuse was considered by the public at all, it was almost always focused on the dangers of the molester as degenerate outsider, keeping attention off of more common incidents of incest and acquaintance abuse. And even when the parent education movement was in full swing during the late twenties and early thirties, there was no discussion of the role of sex education in the prevention of abuse. That is, child abuse prevention centered exclusively on eliminating the child molester through identification, incarceration, and sterilization. And although popular magazines such as *Parents'* focused a significant amount of attention on sex education and stressed the importance of parents' being able to talk with their children frankly and honestly about sex, nowhere does the magazine suggest that such open communication might encourage children to recognize incidents

of abuse in their own lives and communicate them to their parents. In fact, *Parents'* does not even address methods of preventing "stranger danger" during this period, and articles focused on protecting children from sex offenders do not begin to appear in popular women's magazines until the 1950s.[29]

Casal is thus remarkable for insisting in 1930 that child abuse is a frequent occurrence in girls' lives. Although a fair amount of evidence in the form of legal proceedings, psychologist's case studies, and the like had been amassed between 1880 and 1930, most people, including so-called experts, appear to have considered such abuse to be infrequent. This occurred primarily because those we would now term victims of child sexual abuse were then more likely to be considered liars or sexual degenerates. Well into the twentieth century, according to historian Philip Jenkins, there continued to be a "powerful tradition in doubting the validity of child testimony" in the courts, in research, and in psychoanalysis; and there was an especially strong belief among numerous authorities that girls, far more than boys, tended to lie about sexual abuses (33-34). "Psychiatric evidence proved," says Jenkins, "that 'one form taken by [girls'] complexes is that of contriving false charges of sexual offenses by men'" (34). Authorities argued that false accusations were "often motivated by revenge," and though Freud's American disciples did not originate the idea that girls lie about being abused, certainly popularizations of Freud's theories of seduction and infantile sexuality contributed to widespread disbelief (Jenkins 34).

In addition, popularizations of Freud's ideas about the unconscious supported long-held suspicions that women "asked" to be raped; that is, women's unconscious

projection of (hetero)sexual desire teased men and led them to sexual violence (Haag 179). Even children were blamed for being sexually degenerate: one New York report cites eleven cases of gonorrhea among small children, four of which were the result of incest, and labels the *children* sex delinquents. In another case reported in 1931, an eleven-year old girl was "brought before a juvenile court for her sex delinquency, which involved repeated intercourse with a sixty-year-old 'boyfriend' who had picked her up in a park" (Jenkins 32).

**The Nature of Sex and Gender**

The first part of *The Stone Wall* focuses primarily on the narrator's early education about the "nature" of sexuality and gender roles. Many proponents of sex education during this period were pointing out that children learn about sex even if their parents are entirely silent on the subject. In fact, they claimed, parents' attitudes about sex are always transmitted to children, so that "we are all giving [sex] . . . education whether we intend to do so or not" (Gruenberg 84). Thus, according to one 1930 article, parents who fail to "make an open-eyed examination of the question of sex education" are either cowardly, negligent, or incompetent (Gruenberg 19). While the narrator provides numerous cautionary tales from her own life and others' about the necessity of providing children with honest information about sex, two incidents in particular are especially important to her own early understanding of gender roles, especially as they relate to heterosexual sex.

The first incident involves her traumatic discovery of the relationship between genitalia and gender assignment. At the age of three or four, she is allowed to wear boys clothes when she plays with her male brothers and cousins outside. Because "trousers and petticoats were the only marks of difference in sex" visible to her at that time, she says, "[w]hen I wore trousers, I had been a real boy, or so it seemed" (17). While playing in the barn one day, she has to stop the game to urinate. The boys insist that she needn't go to the house because she can "pull out something" from "the little hole" in the front of her pants in order to "accomplish the act" (14). When they discover that "there was nothing to pull," the narrator runs home "crushed and broken" in her "fall from the pedestal of equality with the boys" (14-15). She goes to her mother, and "through tears of disgrace and rebellion," tells her that she "was not made right" (15). Her mother promptly spanks her without explanation and sets her to sewing in the house for the rest of the day. "How much better it would have been," muses the narrator, "for our parents to have frankly discussed the sex questions as they were raised, and to have explained the reasons for the difference in anatomy between boys and girls" (16). Instead, her mother's tactics heighten the children's curiosity, and they decide that "it would never do to go to mother with any further tales of such discussions or investigations" (16). The children decide that her "little lip" will eventually grow. "My disgust," she says, "that I had not in the beginning been created a real boy, instead of having to wait for certain parts to develop, began at that time" (17).

This discovery leads to "[s]ecret sessions" with first her older cousin and then with her brother in which she is made to "bear the disgrace of being the alien" and forced

"to acknowledge the superiority of the male because he was so much more perfectly and conveniently made" (17-18). Once all the children lose hope that the narrator will develop a penis, she says, "we had to submit to the fact that I was and always would be different and on a lower level than they" (20). After they are "told not to look when a rooster was on top of a hen," they begin to experiment with "playing hen and rooster," during which the narrator feels "the ever increasing degradation of having to play the part of the inferior and submissive 'hen'!" (21). For her, these are all early lessons in "nature": she discovers that she not a "real" or "natural" boy, and she also discovers that the role of the female animal in nature (and thus the "natural" role of women) is to be "inferior and submissive."

The narrator's second lesson on the nature of girlhood comes from her experience with Mr. Wiggins, a neighbor and friend of the family. While on an errand to the Wiggins' house, she recalls, Mr. Wiggins "caught me and drew me into a dark hallway. I struggled to get away but he held me, loosened my underclothes, and did something which hurt me dreadfully and made me scream with pain. He held his hand over my mouth and frightened me with awful threats. [. . .] In my terror I kept still" (29-30). When her mother finds blood on the narrator's underclothes, she mistakenly believes that her daughter is having her first period even though she "was very young for maturity" (30). Instead of explaining menstruation, though, the narrator's mother tells her only, "It is nothing to worry about, this happens to all little girls when they are about your age" (30). As a 1933 *Parents' Magazine* article explains, this attitude was typical "a generation ago" when "it was customary for parents to allow a young girl to go through

the changes . . . [of puberty], including menstruation, without any explanation" (Clapp 22). The article contrasts this behavior to that of "[t]houghtful modern parents" (i.e. the readers of *Parents'*), who are "unanimous in recognizing that proper preparation is highly essential if adolescence is to be normal and happy" (Clapp 22). The narrator's ideas about explaining to children the biology of reproduction are thus very much in line with "modern" thinking; however, while *Parents'* acknowledges that understanding menstruation is psychically healthy for girls, who may otherwise become morbid, anxious, and resentful about it (Clapp 22), the narrator makes the more important point that even a purely biological understanding of sex and reproduction may significantly affect the way girls perceive their worth and roles in the heterosexual matrix. In addition, accurate sex education may help prevent the sexual exploitation of girls. That is, the incident with her mother provides her strongest proof of the importance of sex education since her mother's reaction causes the narrator to believe that rape is a "natural" part of girlhood: "Can anyone imagine a more dreadful thought than to have been given the impression which I received from my mother—that it was normal and usual that some man should sever that delicate tissue, so frightening a little girl that she dared not cry out in rebellion? Another and a more dreadful reason why I should so rebel at being a girl!" (31). The narrator becomes "a slave to that man for several years" and thinks simply that "it was the role of the female to make the male apparently happy for a few seconds, under the penalty of death or serious social and family complications" (33-34).

Throughout the story, the narrator is overtly concerned with describing the "nature" of men and women as well as her own "dual nature," which she characterizes at

different times as male/female, normal/abused, and normal/inverted (93). While she often uses the term "nature" in the most obvious sense of "the inherent and innate disposition or character of a person" ("Nature"), she also frequently employs its derivative "natural" in multiple, and sometimes contradictory, ways – as a term meaning "biologically determined," "normal," or "usual." In the context of her recurring concern with "nature" and what is "natural," the narrator's confusion about rape and menstruation is particularly striking. "Nature," of course, is typically associated with the feminine in Western culture; but the word "nature" also refers specifically to both menstruation (Joyce uses it that way in *Ulysses.*) and female genitalia ("Nature"). In the narrator's memories of childhood, her genitals and her period both contribute prominently to her sense of the "nature" of being a girl – a "nature" dominated by victimhood. She experiences her female genitals as a lack, and this lack (not being "a real boy") is in her narrative explicitly tied to her initial experiences of sexual abuse: first taking pains to explain that she was equal to the boys in strength, skill, intellect and bravery, she then describes the part she had to play as the degraded, inferior, and submissive female animal simply because of her genital difference (21). Her menstruation story reinforces this connection between sexual abuse and women's physical "nature": the "natural inevitability" of menstruation as something that "happens to all little girls" becomes the "natural inevitability" of rape as something that happens, even the adult narrator suspects, to many, if not most, girls and women. While the idea that rape is the "natural" fate of women may seem essentialist and even misogynistic, her associations between rape and "female nature" point out the ordinary quality of sexual abuse – the fact that it is a

remarkably common experience among women – at a time when its prevalence was usually denied or distorted, even in the context of sex education. Most radically, the narrator portrays a particular kind of abuse that is now thought to be the most common but in her time deemed exceedingly rare: all of her abusers are male relatives, friends, and neighbors—not strangers.[30] Finally, she asserts the commonness of her experience. By recording "the actual experience of one ordinary woman," she says, "I hope may solve like problems for girls and women in similar situations" (133). Although, she says in her preface, "I do not believe every woman has been through all the experiences that I have (I certainly hope not for their sakes), [. . .] I do believe that every woman has had some of the problems that I have had to face" (6). Here again she positions herself between the exceptional (male) subject and the communal (female) subject as way of asserting her authority as both expert (one with a wealth of experience and knowledge) and common woman (one who represents and speaks for all of her kind).

Her argument for the commonness of sexual abuse allows her to critique male and female "nature" as it was conceived in the period and to cast serious doubt on the viability of companionate marriage as a goal for all women. As has been pointed out by Michel Foucault and many others after him, it wasn't until the late nineteenth century that the sexual criminal (a category that could include homosexuals, rapists, and anyone else deemed sexually "abnormal") became a species radically different from the "normal" population (Foucault 43; Jenkins 26). This idea was certainly at the forefront of popular and legal conceptions of the child molester or rapist throughout the twenties and thirties, as is evidenced by the popular image of the molester as a psychopathic stranger as well as

by eugenics theory and statutes which called for the forced sterilization of certain sexual "types," notably rapists and homosexuals (Jenkins 42-3).[31]

At the same time, Freud's universalizing view of the human libido as *a priori* bisexual was coming into public consciousness, although his ideas were often reconceptualized as promoting a minoritizing distinction between the psychologically "sick" and the psychologically "well." However, psychoanalytic theory in general (in its accounts of the libido, the id, and the unconscious) contributed to a growing fear that dangerous and unregulated desires constituted the core of the human psyche. Thus, while the public inevitably viewed the molester as a "sick" person (whether from congenital or environmental causes) outside the community or family, there were also continual and contradictory cultural references during this period to the "primitive" lurking inside every man. According to Joel Pfister, a certain "cultural curiosity about the primitive" had existed since the late nineteenth century, but the importance of the concept of the primitive to heterosexual relationships is nowhere more apparent than in the twenties—for example, in the common twenties cartoon of the caveman, club in hand, dragging his woman by the hair (183). "This standard 'primeval' domination scene," Pfister notes, "contributed to mass-cultural constructions of the erotic in psychology, pop psychology, and sexology texts" (185). Thus although the narrator's representation of the rapist and molester as an "ordinary" man is at odds with the dominant view of the "sexual criminal" as a radically different species, the basis of her idea is implied ubiquitously in the social sciences and in popular culture.

Even the doctrine of companionate marriage implies something dark at the heart of man. Its proponents enjoin ordinary men to learn self-control and gentleness in order to make them more compatible with women's sexual desires, a prescription which implies that men are "naturally" out of control and even sexually violent. Moreover, this prescription points out a primary contradiction in companionate marriage thought: although heterosexuality is every person's "natural" path and constitutes the only way to be truly happy, it also has to be "achieved" (usually with some measure of professional help); and the "natural" incompatibility of men and women is a constant threat to this "natural" union (Duggan 80, 86). Part and parcel with the writing and research done on companionate marriage were attempts to quantify masculinity and femininity in ways that constructed men and women as psychological opposites—sometimes complimentary opposites, but sometimes not (Cott 153-4). As a result, two prevailing views of marriage emerged within the companionate marriage field. One view, the one most popular with women, held that men must check their sexual aggression and tendency to dominate so that women could experience some measure of equality (or at least some sexual satisfaction) in marriage; the tradeoff for men was that they would ultimately be happier with sexually responsive wives who were also life partners and not just servants (Cott 157; Simmons 165). The other line of thinking maintained that men and women's extreme psychological difference made them "naturally" complementary: to wit, women are naturally submissive, men are naturally dominating, and women like for men to dominate them (Pfister 184-5). Both ideas present a similar understanding of the male psyche as controlled by a sexual aggression that must be subjugated (more in the former

case, less in the latter) by the norms of "civilization," without which men would revert back to their violent primitive natures.

The narrator has little faith in civilization's calming influence on mankind and is much more willing than her contemporaries to view rape as an act perpetrated by "normal" heterosexual men. In fact, she tends to represent heterosexual sexual relationships along a continuum of violence and domination. While the text does present a few male characters who aren't sexually violent, they are certainly in the minority. Her first boyfriend is not unduly passionate in his caresses; thus she does not "find it so bad" (63). Also her first fiancé is quite gentle, but after he convinces the narrator to consummate their marriage before the ceremony, she finds that even he doesn't enable her to enjoy sex with men, so she breaks off the engagement (89). In a quite anomalous incident around age fourteen, she feels her "first urge of sex desire" when a young lothario walks her home the long way: "I made no remonstrances to any of his advances," she says, "and found that I not only felt a great thrill but wanted all and even more than he gave me" (65). However, the experience is typical in that she is "not satisfied" (meaning not brought to orgasm) by the tryst, and she asserts that "few women ever are" (65). That is, the incident is highly unusual in that she actually feels sexual desire for this boy, but the story is also the first in a litany of examples in which the female is left "high and dry," as the narrator puts it, at the end of a heterosexual encounter (65).

**(Hetero)Sex and Rape**

In *The Stone Wall*, distinctions between rape and (relatively consensual) heterosexual sex are blurred. This can be seen most clearly when the narrator describes her marriage, which constitutes her most sustained experience with heterosexual sex. At twenty, she marries a thirty-two-year-old man solely to fulfill her desire for children. She describes the honeymoon, during which she does her "duty as a virtuous young girl," as "a nightmare," although she is, she says, as least successful in covering up "the nightmare of my own life," by which she means her multiple rape experiences (95). "The usual disgust," she continues, "accompanied each recurrence of relations which I became more and more convinced had been invented solely for men's convenience and pleasure" (95). In describing both the honeymoon and her past sexual abuse as equally disgusting nightmares, the narrator equates "doing her duty" as a wife with rape. Moreover, both experiences make her feel like a prostitute. When being raped by her brother-in-law, Peter, during her first year of college, she felt that she "was nothing but a low animal, and might well have been a prostitute" (81); and she finally leaves her husband because "the thought of being a legitimatized prostitute" for the rest of her life doesn't appeal to her (112). While it is common for victims of sexual abuse to be reminded of rape experiences during consensual sex, the narrator's experiences with her husband are clearly not just reminders of her abuse but repetitions of it in a different guise. Both are related in her mind to an objectification of women, a wide-spread rejection of women's sexual agency and a denial of women's sexual desire.

The first time Peter forces himself on her, the narrator says, "He protested that he loved my sister better than his life but that he was sexually starved, as she did not care for the usual intercourse" (80). Peter's sense of entitlement here is clear: he has the right (especially in marriage) to have his sexual desires fulfilled. In his mind, the fact that he cannot get this fulfillment from his wife completely justifies raping his sister-in-law. The effect of male sexual agency on women is undeniable. While she tries to avoid opportunities that would allow Peter's abuse, she says, "when it was inevitable, I simply became an unwilling piece of furniture" (81).

The narrator makes it clear that the justification for rape and for a woman's compulsory sexual availability within marriage are the same. Her husband, she remarks,

> had his satisfaction with painful regularity, [. . .] as it 'was necessary for a man to have such relief!' I turn to stone whenever I hear that inane remark, as I do so often! As though a man or a boy needed that outlet for their excessive or normal vitality any more than, or in some cases half as much as, a girl or a woman. Yet society decrees that so it is, and so it is accepted, whether by paying for it in the open mart before marriage or demanding it after marriage. (108)

In her encounters with both Peter and her husband, she is reduced to an inanimate object (though one that still feels pain) and denied sexual agency. The act of rape makes her feel "like a piece of furniture," and the thought of male entitlement over women's bodies turns her "to stone." This is the only reference to "stone" other than in the book's title, which suggests that the title refers to the narrator's response to compulsory heterosexuality, whether that compulsion takes the form of rape or of the expectation of women's sexual availability in marriage. (The notion that forced sex between a husband and wife constitutes rape is a quite recent idea.) In fact, the full title, *The Stone Wall: An*

*Autobiography*, taken literally suggests that the book is the autobiography of a "stone wall," of a woman who has been turned to stone by male brutality, but also a woman who has in some measure built a fortress against that brutality. That is, given the book's two foci—the narrator's heterosexual experiences (virtually indistinguishable from the experience of rape) and her homosexual experiences (examined below)—one could see the title as describing both a negative effect of heterosexual experience and a positive effect of homosexual experience.

All of this suggests that the narrator is unable to imagine a heterosexuality that is not predicated on men's dominance and women's submissiveness. In *Intercourse*, Andrea Dworkin argues that the act of intercourse between men and women is always tainted by a context "in which men have physical, economic, political, and physical power over women" (125). For this reason, Dworkin believes that only after a systemic restructuring of gender relations, an equalizing of power in every aspect of political, social, cultural, and personal life, could the possibility of a heterosexuality devoid of male dominance and female objectification be possible. *The Stone Wall's* narrator implies a similar disbelief in any kind of quick fix for gender inequality in the (hetero)sexual realm. Given her references to the "many works on adolescence and on matters of sex" that she has read (9), it is impossible to imagine that she is unaware of companionate marriage's solution to the problems dogging heterosexual sex; namely, that men learn gentleness, sensitivity, and sexual techniques that will give their wives orgasms.[32] Yet the narrator refuses to present the reform of men as a viable option. In fact, nothing in the text indicates a shred of faith in the ability of men to change.

I would like to suggest that this radical refusal is in part a consequence of *The Stone Wall*'s generic hybridity. Because it is both a survivor story and a coming out story, the text has no structural need to reconcile women with men. Whereas many survivor stories record a healing process after which women survivors are able to reconnect with men in a more-or-less "normal" way, the narrator's story of finding complete love and sexual fulfillment (at least for a time) with Juno allows her to maintain her conviction that "normal" heterosexuality is for women tantamount to sexual abuse. This particular kind of hybridity may also help explain why *The Stone Wall* in many ways presents a more radical critique of heterosexuality than any other lesbian realist text of the 1930s. While Helen Anderson's 1937 *Pity for Women* clearly ties women's sexual subordination to their economic subordination, the novel presents the possibility of the "nice guy" in the character David. Elizabeth Craigin's 1937 *Either Is Love* is clearly steeped in companionate marriage ideology, although it represents quite a twist on the sex-and-marriage manual genre by suggesting that heterosexual men would make better lovers if they acted more like lesbians in bed. Diana Frederics' 1939 *Diana* reveals a sophisticated understanding of the more subtle manifestations of compulsory heterosexuality, of its existence at every level of social and cultural interaction, but fails to indict heterosexual men for the privilege they gain from the heterosexual imperative. Because *The Stone Wall* focuses on heterosexual abuse at least as much as homosexual relationships, because heterosexual abuse is the backdrop for the narrator's homosexual experiences, and because the "stone" of the title seems to refer to the narrator's anger over male sexual privilege, lesbianism in the narrative holds a position of defiance

against male control, not simply an "alternative" sexual orientation. Homosexuality becomes not only a difference but also a resistance.

The seven to nine year time gap between *The Stone Wall* and the other three narratives I examine may help account for Casal's more radical resistance to the idea of companionate marriage. As Cott and others suggest, the "heterosexual revolution" of the 1920s became common ideology in the 1930s, and companionate marriage was the irrefutable goal of "normal" women by the late thirties. While the idea of companionate marriage was still being formed in the twenties, the characteristics of female "nature" (and to a lesser extent male "nature") were still up for debate. In fact, contradictions in definitions of "normal" femininity during the twenties allow Casal to present a normalized definition of homosexuality. That is, Casal's juxtaposition of heterosexual abuse and homosexual relationship in some sense turns definitions of normality upside down.

This happens in a number of ways. First of all, Casal's narrative attaches sexual degeneracy to "normal" (heterosexual) men. At a time when the eugenics movement was going strong and both the rapist and child molester were generally conceived as a type of "degenerate" separate from the "normal" population, Casal's narrator presents average men – neighbors, friends, family – as rapists, unable to control their sexual desires. At the same time, she presents contradictory etiologies of her sexual attraction to women and sexual repulsion from men, but both explanations attempt to normalize her. In explicit statements she's more apt to adopt a minoritizing view that homosexuality is innate (and thus "normal" and "natural") for some, as, for example, when she says, "For years I

fancied that the experience that I had with the boys and men in my early life might have had its influence on certain traits of character which puzzled me for many years, and of which I shall speak later. Now I believe that my nature was normal from the beginning and that the dislike for men as males was inherent" (41). The very next chapter, however, begins with a universalizing view that a woman's negative experiences with men could cause her to "detest" them sexually: "The knowledge I had gained of life in the awful ways which I have described made me detest anything tending towards the sexual in men or boys" (46). And later she says, "I had never felt the desire for a man, probably because of my early and unfortunate experiences" (132). Although this universalizing explanation may at first seem to expel her from the category "normal" (she was "normal" until traumatic experiences of sexual abuse made her "abnormal"), her insistence on the ordinariness of sexual abuse, in conjunction with her claim that all women need sexual "relief" but the majority don't get it from men, normalizes her sexual disinterest in men.[33]

As Eve Sedgwick suggests, this "irreducible incoherence" in homosexual definition has been the understanding of homosexuality typical of most educated Westerners throughout the twentieth century (*Epistemology* 85). However, the narrator's use of these minoritizing and universalizing discourses in the context of the sexual abuse of females puts those discourses in the service of particular aims, namely her exoneration of her own "nature." That is, at a time when girls and women were accused of expressing (consciously or unconsciously) a sexual desire that incited men to sexually abuse them and when even very young girls were assumed to consent to sexual

relationships with men and labeled "degenerate" for doing so, the narrator's innate homosexuality proves that she cannot be held accountable for the abuse. At the same time, her status as a victim of chronic sexual abuse excuses her from participation in heterosexual relationships in a way that innate homosexuality does not. While some would argue that innate homosexuality leaves the homosexual "unchangeable" and without fault, others would (and did) insist that homosexuality, like other innate diseases or birth defects, could still be cured if the afflicted individual were willing. In either case, though, the problem lies solely within the homosexual individual. In the case of homosexuality via sexual abuse, blame is placed on heterosexual men, here on "ordinary" heterosexual men. And if sexual abuse is usual and ordinary, and if even less obviously coercive heterosexual sex (for example, sex as "duty" in marriage) is distasteful to most women, then the narrator begs the question of what "normal" woman would want this kind of "normal" abuse. Though the notion of "learned" homosexuality makes lesbians even more highly susceptible to injunctions to heal and change (through, for example, psychotherapy), even a few male "experts" on sexuality imply that homosexuality among women is a logical choice if men's "ignorance, prejudice, impatience, or lack of insight" keeps women from being fulfilled in heterosexual relationships (Ellis, *Psychology of Sex* 309).

Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale note that in Foucault's analysis of confession, "the explicit goal of the process of confession is always the normalization of the speaking subject" (207). In other words, the confessor's speech is interpreted by the expert so that it will fit into, rather than contradict, dominant cultural codes. But in *The Stone Wall*, the

narrator attempts a different kind of "normalization of the speaking subject." She in a sense turns the tables on definitions of "normal": by insisting that "normal" men are sexual abusers, she normalizes her own sexual disinterest in men and by implication (especially since she argues that women must have *some* satisfying sexual outlet) her same-sex desire. She uses prevailing contradictory notions of "normal" women's sexuality – women's desire to be dominated by men versus their desire to be equal to them – to carve out a space for her own sexual orientation. However, in making these arguments, she also plays into misogynistic ideas about women's sexuality: only innate homosexuality can prove that a woman isn't "asking" to be raped; only extreme abuse at the hands of men could justify a lack of attraction (and by implication availability) to them. It is in these moments that the dangers of the confessional mode become visible. Many lesbian narratives of this period are framed by a male "expert" who acts essentially as a stand-in for the priest or therapist who listens to and interprets the subject's sexual exploits. For example, famed sexologist Havelock Ellis introduces *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), esteemed author and literary critic T.S. Eliot introduces *Nightwood* (1936), and medical doctor Victor Robinson introduces *Diana* (1939). The genre of confessional autobiography came out of and relies for its effect upon the concept of bourgeois individualism, and the lack of explicit external control in the narrator's confession reinforces the reader's acceptance of the story as unmediated by dominant ideology, as authored by an autonomous subject "free" of the influence of dominant discourse. The effect of this technique is to mask the extent to which regulatory regimes have been internalized by the author/narrator and the extent to which dominant ideology

is in fact redeployed by her to discipline other bodies. Ultimately the text shows the narrator to be as unsettled by the notion of women's sexual liberation as the majority of her contemporaries, even though at times she argues fervently for women's right to sexual pleasure.

On the one hand, she presents male heterosexuality as obviously dangerous, as well as a hindrance to the "natural" expression of any other sexuality. For example, both male and female homosexual desires are denied, says the narrator, primarily because of heterosexual men: "man's love for man and woman's love for woman," she says, isn't studied and understood because the "pride of the [heterosexual] male" has kept "this phase of nature under the ban as undesirable" (93). Moreover, female sexuality in particular is stifled in heterosexual relationships, where women are figured as prostitutes, pieces of furniture, blocks of stone, and lowly animals; women's desires are denied, and they become simply a means to the end of male sexual pleasure. As a result, says the narrator, "unsatisfied sex desire" is "an important problem," no less than a "disease" affecting countless women (92). In fact, she claims, "So many women [. . .] are being maintained in our insane asylums today [. . .] because of unsatisfied sexual desire" (132). While she was pregnant, she says, "at times I would go nearly mad, when the strain of that longing for sexual relief could not be relieved. How well I understood in after years why our insane asylums were full of women who were there because of this very reason: sexual passion ungratified" (99).

On the other hand, these defenses of women's sexual desire as something "natural," "normal," and harmful to deny lie in contrast to the many instances in which

the narrator presents uncontrolled female sexuality as dangerous. For example, while she is pregnant (and particularly horny), her lover Gladys spends the night, and they make "strenuous efforts" to bring the narrator to orgasm, though "to no avail" (99). In the morning the narrator goes into a labor that ends in a still birth. She remarks,

> Some will say, 'It was her all her own fault. She had been wickedly breaking the laws of nature.' That may be. Others may know that the laws of nature and the force of sexual desire, ignored by preceding generations bound by the tradition of secrecy, were left to wreak their overwhelming power on the unsuspecting and ignorant children of my day—as they are still doing today. (101)

Later, when she refers to her "ignorance" of "the responsibilities of the parent to the unborn," it becomes clear that she's again invoking the advantages of sex education, but this time because she wants to spread the notion that pregnant women can kill their unborn babies if they give into sexual desire (102). Similarly, the narrator refers several times to the idea that masturbation causes consumption and that sex education should involve teaching children how to resist the excessive sexual thoughts that cause masturbation. She tells one story of a girl who "had no appetite and was growing thin"; after discovering that the girl has sexual "sensations she was able to experience by herself," the narrator assumes that this practice is causing her illness and entreats her to stop (114). Later, when she gets a job working with children at a convalescent home, the narrator becomes a diligent sex spy, constantly on the lookout for sexuality in children: "I was able to detect the abnormally sexually developed little one; the masturbator, male and female; the so-called invert, and I was able to help them meet their problems in a sane way. The reason I was able to do this was that I was able to detect them in the very act" (219). We must admit that this approach is perhaps "sane" in comparison with what

she claims the average parent (interestingly figured as male here) would do if he discovered "any act of the kind" she mentions – "all he would know how to do would be to beat the child" (219). The narrator, in contrast, says, "I would often walk in upon them in the midst of their sexual parties, and after they got over their surprise that they were not to have a beating, I would sit quietly and talk with then, so gaining their confidence. I let them see that they had a problem to solve and that I wanted to work *with* them and not against them" (220). Here she gives another example of a boy dying of consumption; the moment she sees him, she claims, she "knew what was the matter with him and what it was that was breaking down his constitution" (221). Once she catches the boy masturbating with other children, she patiently explains to him "that he was bringing the much dreaded disease upon himself" (221). They make a pact that he will come to her when he's tempted, and she will help "make him forget all those awful feelings which came to him" (222).

In these passages, the role of confession as a tool of power, as a way of regulating and normalizing the sexuality of the confessor, is brought back into the text. The blurring of survivor/expert that Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale recommend as a way of diminishing the normalizing effects of the process of confession is here depicted as a way for the individual survivor/expert to increase her regulatory power over others. Though the narrator explicitly presents herself as a victim of heteronormativity, she also becomes its agent in these passages wherein she attempts to control the potentially "dangerous" sexuality not of men, but of children and mothers. In almost precisely the way that Foucault, in volume one of his *History of Sexuality*, describes the advancement of power

around the sexuality of children, the narrator ruthlessly tracks children's sexual pleasure from its origins to its effects (e.g. consumption) and lays traps in order to elicit confessions (Foucault 42). In fact, considering that her regulation of children occurs, in the text's chronology, after the narrator's own sexual history ends, this regulation could almost be said to replace the sexual pleasure she once found in other women. Foucault suggests that confession, in its ritualistic reenactment of the sexual act itself (the repeating of sexual details, the structure of coaxing the confessor into "laying bare" sexual secrets), constitutes its own "economy of pleasure," and *The Stone Wall* embodies the imperative that Foucault sees as central to confession: the narrator transforms her desire into discourse (Foucault 19-21). That is, the narrator's story of sexual development moves from having her own sexual experiences, to seeking out and listening to the experiences of others, to writing about experiences from the position of one who is no longer sexually active. As the text progresses, the story of the narrator's own sexuality is replaced with the story of her attempts to regulate the sexuality of others both as a teacher and as author of an autobiography that hopes to intervene in the related discourses of parent and sex education.

Whereas earlier she had argued for sex education as a tool for liberating girls from the most violent effects of compulsory heterosexuality, at the end of the text sex education becomes a way for the narrator to assert a normalizing power over children's sexuality. Perhaps most disturbingly, though, her fear of female sexuality in particular can be seen in attempts to prove her innocence in cases of sexual abuse. That is, although she spends much of the book in sympathy with other women who have been victims of

compulsory heterosexuality (whether through child sexual abuse, rape, or compulsory sex in marriage), she also betrays a nagging fear that female sexuality could actually cause such abuses. For example, while she insists that children need sex education because they have perfectly "natural" sexual instincts and curiosities, when it comes to her own childhood sexuality in the context of abuse, she must insist that such sexuality does not exist. Thus when the "proverbial hired man" attempts to fondle her, she says, "From that episode I realize that my natural instincts were not along sexual lines. I have known girls of that age who have told me that it was fun to have someone play with their privates" (23). Writing at a time when there was virtually no notion of an age of sexual consent, the narrator works within an ideology which maintains that in order to be without guilt, girls must be completely free of sexual desire. At another point in the narrative, she wonders whether Mr. Wiggins' threats (that telling would cause the death of both her father and herself) were really enough to elicit her secrecy about his abuse of her:

> Was I trying to hide under an 'alibi'? I know I hated the whole thing, and I believe I am sincere in describing the reactions I experienced at the time, yet I have always heard it said that a girl need never be led astray. I do believe that now, but with so young a child I hardly think such a theory holds good. I certainly was not seduced; I was forced into that situation. (32)

Though ultimately she does make a distinction between "seduction" and forced sex, she seems to make an exception here only because of her extreme youth at the time of the abuse. (She was probably between seven and ten years old.) Again, this exception is not about an age of consent, but rather refers to the idea that such a young child could not have sexual desire and therefore could not be seduced. Furthermore, her belief that "a girl need never be led astray" contradicts her claim to innocence when she is raped by her

brother-in-laws in her teens; only her innate homosexuality redeems her since it proves that she has no heterosexual desire to be potentially led astray. Again, these passages suggest ways in which even ostensibly "unmediated" survivor discourse can re-inscribe ideologies contributing to the survivor's continued subordination and marginalization.

**Dangerous Desire**

Throughout much of *The Stone Wall*, same-sex desire is figured quite differently from heterosexual sexuality, especially in the narrator's account of the early years of her relationship with Juno. While talking to Juno about their possible marriage, the narrator notes that "to most men, and very likely to some women, marriage merely meant a legitimatized permission to cohabit for the relief of sexual desire" (153). Conversely, she continues, "To me it seemed that a union between two women could be of a higher type, and creative of a more secure happiness and good than any other" (153). She takes pains to explain to her reader that, "Our coming together was not for animal satisfaction. There was a real sympathy of ideas and ideals and, as a by-product, as it were, was to come the physical relief of sex desire" (156). And similarly, she explains, "We both felt that, without the deep and true love we felt for each other, there could be no satisfaction in sexual contact. This was a result of, rather than a cause for, our love and happiness" (159).

Ultimately, though, even homosexual female desire proves dangerous in the narrator's estimation. The idea that the main character's primary lesbian relationship constitutes the "highest kind" of love is an almost universal sentiment among lesbian

realist texts of the 1930s, although, as in *The Stone Wall*, this praise is usually tempered by a much dimmer view of sexual relations in the lesbian community as a whole. Thus the narrator's response to her first interaction with lesbian community is almost a convention of early twentieth-century lesbian literature. On the one hand, meeting other "inverts" shows her that she "was not a creature apart" as she "had always felt."[34] On the other hand, she says, "neither Juno nor I could reconcile ourselves to the thought that we were of that class who seems to have little constancy" (180). She appears to base her knowledge of lesbian promiscuity solely upon conversations with two female inverts, Little Ben and Phil; but this is not surprising considering that the stereotyping of lesbians as promiscuous is typical of literature in this period.[35] Though she says that she and Juno sought to learn from other inverts "as much as possible of a love which was, and to me ever will be, of a beautiful type but which has carried a stigma in the minds of many who have never understood it in its perfection" (181), they contradictorily become convinced after going "slumming" in the Bowery that their relationship was "on a much higher plane than those of the real inverts" (185).[36]

But eventually contact with other inverts seems to spread a kind of infection that engulfs the narrator's relationship with Juno. While she continues to insist that relieving sexual desire is healthy—in fact, she insists that she and Juno have sex primarily "for the good of [their] health"—she also again explicitly associates excessive desire with disease, noting, "we had seen evidences of overindulgence on the part of some of those [inverts] with whom we came in contact, in loss of vitality and weakened health, ending in consumption" (185). After five years in a blissful relationship, Juno confesses that she's

been seeing another woman, Mollie, for several months. Though racked with jealousy, the narrator forgives Juno, but when the affair appears to continue, she turns the tables by winning Mollie's love just to make Juno jealous. Eventually they both give Mollie up and spend several more "ideal" years together until they become friends with Jack, a "male invert" (195, 200). Juno and Jack become suddenly engaged, but later Juno tells the narrator that "she and Jack had decided that it was physical contact they desired," so they decide not to bother with marrying (203). For a few years Juno goes back and forth between the narrator and Jack; she then has affairs with a girl called "Irish" and later marries a man who spends all her money. Eventually the narrator essentially washes her hands of Juno, though she says Juno remains the one true love of her life.

Throughout all of her affairs, Juno insists that she loves the narrator "just the same" as always (201), which leads the narrator to conclude that when "the separation is made between love and physical passion, the better for the peace and happiness of mankind" (219). While roughly the first half of the book argues heatedly for the liberation of female sexual desire, the second half (focused on lesbian relationships) suggests that unregulated female desire (the extreme of which, from compulsory heterosexuality's point of view, is lesbianism) is ultimately destructive. In the end, the narrator suggests that "*love* and *desire* be parted definitely" because "[t]hey cannot be *one* when the chief attribute of love is to give of one's self for the joy and happiness of another and desire is solely for the selfish pleasure of physical satisfaction" (131, original emphasis).

This disjoining of love from desire, of in the narrator's logic "giving" from "taking," is ultimately only achieved through the production of the autobiography itself. That is, the narrator suggests no "real-life" relationship model which could achieve this goal, and in fact the only relationship left intact at the end of the narrative is the relationship between the narrator and her reader. Felski suggests that a defining feature of feminist confessional autobiography is the longing for intimacy both in the author's personal relationships as represented in the text and "in the relationship between author and reader established by the text" (*Beyond Feminist* 108). As they document the failure of one relationship after another, these texts create "an ideal intimacy" of writer and reader (110). If the narrator's ideal relationship severs love from desire, this ideal is met only in the author-reader relationship, in which the author/narrator writes to an imagined reader she can never see or touch. In *The Stone Wall,* the narrator gives of herself for the happiness of the reader, or more accurately to save the reader from some of the "sorrow" and "suffering" that haunt her right through the last sentence of her story (Casal 227). However, in being the one who gives and does not take, the narrator ultimately recasts herself in the very position she rebels against throughout the narrative: that of the submissive woman who enables another's joy but eschews the "selfish pleasure of physical satisfaction" for herself (131).

Moreover, the sorrow and suffering the narrator speaks of is related to sex, a result of either sexual abuse or sexual infidelity. For all her talk of the need to educate children about sexuality and the need for women to be able to satisfy their sexual desires, the narrative ends up focusing on the dangers of women's and children's sexuality:

masturbation causes death; desire causes infidelity and suffering; a woman's heterosexual desire can cause her to be raped. The narrative also ends with the narrator old, alone, and presumably without sexual fulfillment. Her relationship with Juno has devolved into occasional letter writing, and her sexual life is similarly transformed into discourse, into the disembodied record of her past desire. This substitution of writing for personal relations is an essential feature of the next narrative I examine, Elisabeth Craigin's *Either Is Love,* and later becomes a central characteristic of feminist and lesbian writing of the late twentieth century (Felski, *Beyond Feminist* 110). Casal's combining of the "survivor" and "coming out" narratives allows her to put forth a scathing damnation of men and to present a character who is able to escape the subordination of women inherent (in the narrator's view) in heterosexual relationships. Despite this, *The Stone Wall* fails to avoid many of the normalizing effects of the confessional mode by internalizing and incorporating key components of the dominant discourse it openly seeks to challenge. Though lesbianism is through much of the narrative held up as a possible alternative to relationships with men, in the end the narrator escapes heterosexual subordination not through having relationships with women, but through avoiding human relationships altogether.

## Chapter 2

## A Queer Form of Trauma: Lesbian Epistolarity in *Either Is Love*

Like *The Stone Wall,* Elisabeth Craigin's *Either Is Love* is a confessional narrative, though this time with more than the external reader as confidant.[37] This self-proclaimed "memoir" features at its center a series of letters confessing the narrator's past lesbian relationship to her fiancé. The heterosexual narrative that frames the lesbian one has been deemed "offensive" by lesbian novelist and critic Jane Rule (187), but I suggest that the heterosexual frame narrative serves to feminize—that is, normalize—the narrator in order to establish a relationship of empathy with her readers that will allow her lesbian narrative, and her rejection of the butch-femme model established by early sexologists, to be understood. Feminist readings of the epistolary genre together with theories of psychological trauma provide a method for reading *Either Is Love* that brings into view the complexity of both its narrative structure and its protagonist's lesbian identity. Craigin's narrative, I argue, consists of a series of traumatic repetitions, each referring back to an original trauma—the narrator's loss of her female lover. The text's heterosexual losses, then, should be read as repetitions—empathy-producing analogies—that allow the narrator to express, in a sense to translate, the primary, unspeakable (because homosexual) loss. In other words, *Either is Love* is organized structurally, generically, and aesthetically around an economy of empathy. While poststructuralist and queer theorists have focused on difference as a strategy for disrupting dominant (heterosexual) ideology, *Either Is Love* relies on analogical constructions—the cognitive

process of finding a sameness in what is different—to produce an empathic relationship between a queer narrator and a presumably straight reader.[38]

Published in 1937, *Either Is Love* concerns an unnamed female narrator who unexpectedly falls in love with another woman, Rachel. Because their love must remain a secret, the two women are forcibly separated for long periods, especially when Rachel's ostensibly single status obligates her to care for a sick friend of the family. The secrecy and separation strain their relationship, and Rachel eventually begins to have romances with other women. Later she finds religion and renounces lesbianism altogether. For years the narrator remains grief-stricken over losing Rachel. Eventually she meets Bart when she is involved in a car accident that kills Bart's wife. Bart and the narrator, bound by their similar losses, fall in love and marry. Years later, in grief again after Bart's death, the narrator decides to publish their early love letters as a tribute to him. Ironically, the bulk of the published narrative consists of her letters to Bart confessing—and extolling—her earlier lesbian relationship.

Hidden, destroyed, rewritten, and recovered lesbian narratives form layers in *Either Is Love.* The first lesbian narrative, told in love letters between Rachel and the narrator, is destroyed by the narrator herself when the relationship ends, in order to protect their secret. However, when she and Bart are separated by the First World War during their courtship, the narrator composes a second lesbian narrative, rewriting the story of her earlier love letters in the form of an epistolary confession to Bart. Bart accepts the narrator's past but hides the incriminating letters in a suitcase at his office. After Bart's death, the narrator finds this suitcase and edits the epistolary confession,

publishing this third lesbian narrative under the guise of a tribute to her late husband.

The structure of this narrative of the fate of lesbian narrative – its three versions of the same narrative, its vacillation between openness and closedness, confession and repression – mirrors uncannily the publication history of *Either Is Love* and other American lesbian realist narratives in the thirties. Marketed and reviewed as a respectable, if minor, literary work in 1937, *Either Is Love* soon fell into oblivion. Republished in the fifties and sixties as a sensational, "tell-all" pulp paperback, probably marketed—like others of its kind—as soft-core pornography for straight men, *Either Is Love* was rediscovered during the heyday of the gay liberation movement and reprinted by Arno Press in 1975.[39] The book is currently out of print. Moreover, its story – the reconstruction of an erased lesbian past – has been erased or rejected in accounts of lesbian and women's literary history. Although lesbian and feminist scholars have been engaged in efforts to recover lesbian texts for many years, *Either Is Love* remains virtually unknown among feminist and queer (not to mention Americanist and modernist) scholars and critics.

**Real Letters, Real Woman**

Craigin attempts to create empathy between lesbian character/writer and the reading public first and foremost through the techniques of realism, especially those associated with the epistolary novel: direct appeals to the text's authenticity as a true record, references to the letters' material features, and the convention of an editor who finds and frames the letters. Such techniques have proved so successful that the

epistolary genre is plagued with controversy surrounding the authorship and authenticity of many of its central works, and *Either Is Love* is no exception.[40] Since its publication, critics have made contradictory assumptions about its veracity. In reviews from 1937, the *Herald Tribune* refers to the book as "Summer Fiction," *Nation* reviewer Paul Love calls it a "memoir," and a *New York Times* reviewer collapses the author and the narrator into one identity.[41] In her landmark history of lesbians in literature, *Sex Variant Women in Literature* (1956), Jeannette Foster claims that "there is little to indicate that [*Either is Love*] is not the discreetly disguised autobiography which it claims to be" (318), while in 1958 the *Mattachine Review* referred to the book as a novel ("Homophilic Bibliography" 24). Late twentieth-century critics are similarly divided: Rule calls the book a novel while Lillian Faderman deems it autobiography (187; *Odd Girls* 115).

Of course, this kind of confusion is chronic throughout lesbian literary history. Even definitions of lesbian literature are fraught with questions of authenticity and biography. Since the 1970s, critics have argued whether lesbian writing is determined by the (self-proclaimed or inferred) sexual identity of the author, the presence of (explicit or implicit) lesbian content in the writing, or both; and critics have sought to determine the "authenticity" of writing with lesbian content by uncovering lesbian content in an author's biography. Since the publication of *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), critics have read lesbian novels as autobiographical reflections of their authors, and fictional lesbians have been used as evidence in nonfictional studies of lesbianism.[42] But regardless of whether *Either Is Love* is based in fiction or fact, the text produces a realist and even autobiographical effect through its use of epistolary conventions.

More specifically, *Either Is Love* presents its narrator as a "real woman," meaning a "feminine" woman with "feminine" desires, in part through its epistolary mode. As Elizabeth Goldsmith remarks in *Writing the Female Voice*, "[S]ince the sixteenth century, when the familiar letter was first thought of as a literary form, male commentators have noted that the epistolary genre seemed particularly suited to the female voice" (vii).[43] This connection results from traditional associations between femininity and that which is private, emotional, subjective, and artless. That is, because they provide the illusion of a private and spontaneous transcription of a character's subjective reactions, letters lie within the prescribed parameters of women's self expression.[44] These associations with femininity allow the narrator to lay claim to a particular kind of lesbian identity, one that male heterosexual readers may tolerate and with which female heterosexual readers may identify.

Ironically, Craigin's investment in establishing empathic understanding through a specifically feminine realism may explain the text's lack of recognition upon its publication, despite the fact that in advertisements Harcourt, Brace grouped *Either Is Love* with books by Howard Fast, William Saroyan, and Virginia Woolf.[45] While thirties reviewers appreciated Craigin's "candor," they also tended to regard her narrative through a masculinist, modernist lens valuing objectivity, intellect, and heterosexual relationships ("Two Loves" 14). Paul Love, writing in the *Nation*, insists that the book contains "grave errors," the gravest of all being that the narrator presents "the account of the passion for Rachel in convincing narrative form" while her account of her marriage is weak. He admits to a preference for "completely objective narrative[s]" (177). The

anonymous *New York Times* reviewer similarly praises the book for its "candor and earnestness," comparing it to *The Well of Loneliness* but criticizing the way it "overshadows thought with an emotion that is too particularized" ("Two Loves" 14).[46] These reviewers miss the point that the epistolary form is uniquely suited to subjective writing, to what Linda Kauffman calls "the voice of true feeling," and that *Either is Love* is not primarily interested in describing heterosexuality (*Special Delivery* xviii). Rather, heterosexuality functions in the text as a source analog to the target analog of homosexuality. That is, heterosexuality constitutes the second (known) term in an analogy to (unknown) homosexuality. Heterosexuality bridges the gap between the narrator's lesbian experience and the heterosexual reader's heterosexual experience, thereby attempting to produce knowledge about homosexuality by encouraging readers to simulate emotions analogically ascribed to the narrator. Empathic understanding is meant precisely to overshadow thought with emotion.[47]

**Cultivating the Feminine**

The narrator's investment in a thoroughly feminine lesbianism becomes most obvious in her overdetermined descriptions of Rachel and of their relationship. Clearly haunted by the specter of the mannish lesbian, the narrator emphatically denies Rachel's "pseudo-masculine" qualities and ruthlessly interrogates their love for signs that it may imitate heterosexuality's attraction of opposites (122): "I was in terror of liking [Rachel] for any tendency to mastership that might be in her. The possibility of the false male was a thing I was in arms against," the narrator insists (67). Throughout her letters to Bart,

the narrator obsessively repeats that Rachel is *not* "a pseudo man-mate," *not* "anything like a man," *not* "pseudo-masculine" (70, 72, 122). The narrator is glad that she is slightly taller than Rachel because "that helped to dispel the possibility of any pseudo-masculine nonsense which [Rachel's] disregard of clothes and feminine interests, her free walk, her chemistry, her 'horsiness,' could easily suggest and which I detested" (73-4). Although Rachel has the unfortunate "masculine" trait of being a pioneer in the field of chemistry, "[I]t was a slow relief to me," the narrator says, "to find that in general it was the little masculine touches in her that I liked least, not most." Furthermore, Rachel is grateful to the narrator for "cultivating the feminine in her" (68). Later, when Rachel gains weight, her "boyish chest" achieves, the narrator says, a "new rounding that went utterly to my head, as I could almost believe it was my coaxing of the feminine in her that was responsible for it. How could there have been any pseudo-masculine there, when I wanted her as feminine as possible?" (122). Thus the narrator argues that their "interfeminine love" actually makes Rachel and herself more feminine and therefore "fundamentally sound" (107, 98).

Without benefit of queer theory's notion, via Judith Butler, that every performance of gender "is a kind of imitation for which there is no original," *Either is Love*'s narrator must insist that her lesbian relationship is not a poor "copy" of heterosexuality in order to assert its equality, or even superiority, to heterosexual relationships (Butler, "Imitation" 21). As a consequence, she conceives a new relationship between gender and sexual orientation. That is, *Either Is Love* attempts to stimulate the (imagined-as-straight) reader's empathic understanding of the lesbian

character in a way that is precisely the opposite of Radclyffe Hall's presentation of Stephen Gordon in *The Well of Loneliness*. In *The Well*, Stephen is presented as a man trapped in an anatomically female body; her same-sex relationships are translated as heterosexual and her gender identity described as "inverted." Jay Prosser, who argues persuasively that *The Well* is a transsexual rather than a lesbian novel, points out that sexual and gender identity are particularly entangled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that both the early sexologists and Freud wrongly figure "sexual inversion as a metaphor for homosexuality" (150). Craigin's narrator rejects this figuration through her emphatic insistence on the femininity of her same-sex relationship.[48] She attempts to construct a new kind of lesbian identity, one within existing paradigms of gender, that weds gender to biological characteristics. In other words, instead of basing the normative value of lesbianism on its heterosexual structure (an attraction of gender opposites), as Hall does, Craigin's narrator argues that her relationship with Rachel is valid because it is thoroughly feminine.[49]

As my discussion of heterosexual analogy presently will make clear, I am not suggesting that the narrator constructs a model of interfeminine love wholly beyond heterosexuality. As Butler and others have noted, gender identity exists within a matrix of gender difference that is "regulated by heterosexist constraints through not, for that reason, fully reducible to them" (*Bodies* 234). In *Either Is Love,* the lesbian narrative's placement within a heterosexual frame narrative highlights the impossibility of articulating same-sex desire entirely outside a heterosexual frame of reference, although being "framed" by heterosexuality, or even being analogous to it, is not the same as being

a copy of it. Because the narrator views her lesbian relationship as an expression of women's natural and essential gender identity, that relationship is far from being a poor imitation of heterosexuality's gender difference. However, the narrator's articulation of a thoroughly feminine sexuality based on sameness is possible only within a structure of difference that opposes masculine to feminine and heterosexual to homosexual.

The narrator best articulates the difference between interfeminine love and heterosexuality when she compares her sexual relationship with Bart to her sexual relationship with Rachel. Bart and the narrator employ conventionally gendered sexual tropes in their letters to one another. During their courtship, for example, Bart chivalrously claims that he wants to "shelter [her] from all the world, including himself" (13). His letters demonstrate his awareness of the power inherent in the protector's role: "To have you in my power, to realize vividly the joy that lies in the full use of that power, to have temptation pounding in my temples and for the instant to refrain—it is an adventure worth while" (14). Typically, this metaphor of protection becomes one of invasion after marriage: "I'm your lover," he writes to her. "I prove it sometimes by invading your body, but I also prove it by invading your mind. [. . .] I can walk into your mind at any time and feel at home there" (33).

Similarly, the narrator describes Bart as protector, invader, and ruler. As she rereads her own letters to Bart discovered in a suitcase after his death, she notes that "[t]he letters a man elicits from a woman are a monument to his powers," and the letters themselves do indeed demonstrate Bart's power in the relationship (20). As his "destined prey," she assures him, "You have made yourself master of me, and anywhere I tried to

escape, there would be bonds holding me" (21). In imagining a time when he will "take" her, she predicts, "I will know at last the joy of being drained, drawn up, absorbed out of myself, as the sun soaks up water from the earth. It will be final, irremediable, [. . .]. I will have no choice" (51). She repeats throughout these letters that she is happily "defenseless" and "in bondage" to him (21-23), writing, for example, of "the sweet fierce faintness when you first took down the other shoulder of my chemise—you so silent, so inexpressive, gradually establishing your empire in me, by one means and another tightening the threads that tied me to you" (36). In short, the narrator is thrilled to be pursued, mastered, bound, conquered, and absorbed by her man. These metaphors, used frequently in women's epistolary literature, help proclaim the writer's femininity despite her masculine position as author and authority of the text. Such a proclamation is especially essential for our narrator, who seeks to argue the femininity of the quintessentially unfeminine female—the lesbian writer. This highly conventional heterosexual rhetoric of opposition (master/servant, bondage/escape, pursuer/prey) stands in sharp contrast to metaphorical descriptions of sexuality between the narrator and Rachel. In the lesbian middle narrative, metaphors of mutuality, complementarity, and expansiveness abound. Described by the narrator as "a coalition," she and Rachel "stand or lie comfortably curved into one another like a pair of teaspoons [. . .]. Each held the other in her bosom, in solution, in mutual completion" (74). Whereas Bart drains and absorbs her, the narrator and Rachel are both "absorbed by outdoors" (figuratively, into Mother Nature's vagina) when, on a walk in the rain, they are "devoured" with their "longing to be naked" together in "a dark, wet, delicious, earthy hollow under a low tree,

hidden all with creepers dripping" (103).

Their "all-embracing," "most sacred," "life-giving" "mutual love" is explicitly symbolized by the image of hands pressed palm to palm in secrecy (121, 142). Seated amidst a crowd, their hands hidden under a rug, the narrator explains:

> Slowly her fingers began to explore my palm. With exquisite delay one by one a finger stretched along and lay flat against my corresponding finger, and ultimately, by degrees, her thumb completed the circuit upon my thumb, and her palm laid itself down upon mine. Hand to hand, all the hand knowing all the hand, a current coursing around the nerve-circle, it was as if we lay quiveringly heart to heart, warmly one, secretly sensual [. . .]. (73)

These mirror images—hand to hand, heart to heart, teaspoon to teaspoon—are appropriate metaphors for an attraction of like to like, implying complete sameness, equality, and mutuality between two feminine women. The narrator has just claimed a traditionally feminine position for herself in relation to Bart (as his prey, his captive, the fertile ground for his empire), and these metaphors of sameness serve to include Rachel—and the relationship between these two women—under the umbrella of femininity. If Rachel is a mirror-image of the narrator, and the narrator is feminine, then Rachel cannot be "pseudo-masculine."

Moreover, the narrator's rhetoric comparing sameness and difference clearly favors sameness. Although the title *Either Is Love* suggests a parity between two relationships, and although the first paragraph of the book claims that the story is a tribute to Bart, the sexual details of the narrative suggest something else. This becomes most obvious when the narrator denigrates Bart's sexual technique in a segment where kissing clearly stands in for fucking. The narrator tells Bart that he is "not skilled in that" and

proposes to "teach" him the right way by describing Rachel's method (46-7). "[Y]ou," she writes to him, "have wanted too much too rapidly. You haven't known what is to be gathered on the way. You have tried to reach the full fruit before even the bud was set, [. . .] and my love has felt the shock to its growth" (47). In contrast, she and Rachel "could let [love] expand and flower as it would" (49). Whereas Bart's kisses are "hard" (48), Rachel's are "diabolically skillful":

> Barely touching the surface she would first let our lips cling just delicately till her message began to flow into me [. . .]. Anticipation would be born in me and mount, and suspense grow and lengthen, and still she would hardly advance. [. . .] Gradual was the growth of her mouth's claim upon mine, a long breathlessly attended enactment, heart in heart and at length mouth in mouth, every moment a communion, miracles unfolding between us, in us [. . .]. (47-48)

These instructions to Bart continue for two-and-a-half pages, both belying the narrator's claims about Bart's seductive power and the narrator's feminine sexual preferences. That is, the narrator's description of kissing techniques presents a cliché of male/female sexual incompatibility: Bart wants it hard and fast, while the narrator wants it soft and slow. Nearly every book about sex and marriage available in 1930s America addresses this issue of incompatibility and, in fact, imagines a typical woman quite similar (in feeling if not experience) to this narrator. The immensely popular *Sex Life in Marriage*, for example, published the same year as *Either Is Love*, rejects the traditional view that women are less sexual than men, maintains that women have a right to sexual pleasure, and notes that husbands in general need to learn "longer self-control" and foreplay technique to better satisfy their wives (Butterfield 142-52). The 1937 edition of *Sane Sex Life and Sane Sex Living* asserts that "women are *much slower* in making ready

for the sexual act than men are" and warns husbands that "*haste makes waste*" (Long 84-7; original emphasis). Similarly, Havelock Ellis's *Psychology of Sex: A Manual for Students* (1933) claims a natural sexual incompatibility between men and women but places the blame squarely on men: "The chief reason women are considered 'frigid' lies less in themselves than in men" (309). And two books first published in the U.S. in 1931 contain similar responses: Jules Guyot in *A Ritual for Married Lovers* agrees with a sixteenth-century source's advice that "[t]he husband lying with his companion and wife must fondle, pleasurably excite, and awaken her emotion, [. . .] for there are no women so quick at this game as are men" (14-15); and Marie Carmichael Stopes claims in *Married Love* that it is "hardly an exaggeration to say that 70 to 80 per cent. of our married women (in the middle classes) are deprived of the full orgasm through the excessive speed of the husband's reactions" (64-5). Finally, in a famous 1931 study of one hundred cases of "frigidity," Robert Dickinson and Lura Beam found that "the typical grievance is that he is too matter of fact, goes straight into intromission without romantic or interesting preliminaries and ejaculates too quickly [. . .]. 'He just goes right to it.' She wants an artistic form [. . .] ." (126).[50] Such evidence suggests that the narrator's dissatisfaction with Bart's technique falls in line with dissatisfactions felt by many heterosexual women. Through the juxtaposition of heterosexual sex with interfeminine sex, the narrator shows that while women express essentially feminine desire in both contexts, because men and women work at cross-purposes sexually, interfeminine love proves more satisfying for feminine women (107). In this way, the narrator identifies herself with the concerns, experiences, and proclivities of heterosexual women. She also

divorces gendered sexual norms from compulsory heterosexuality, further complicating notions of lesbian identity by making lesbian sex seem the most feminine choice for a feminine woman.

On the other hand, our narrator's candidness about what kind of sex she desires is hardly compatible with traditional notions of femininity. In writing and publishing not only a book about herself, but a book about her "variant" sexuality, the narrator risks subverting her claims to femininity: the public sphere, and especially public discourse about sexuality, lies within the purview of masculinity.[51] However, the frame narrative, which establishes the epistolary structure of *Either Is Love*, smoothes over this contradiction. Epistolary narrative is historically a site of feminine sexual transgression because it is public discourse that maintains the illusion of private communication.[52] The reader is positioned as a voyeur who happens upon a private discourse, and thus the female writer appears to maintain a degree of modesty while at the same time confessing her transgressions.

Often the female letter-writer keeps her modesty intact through the convention of a male editor who publishes and introduces the letters, who serves as a mediator between the woman's private world and the reading public. Interestingly, we find a similar kind of mediation by male authority in many non-epistolary lesbian texts of the period: Havelock Ellis introduces *The Well of Loneliness*, T.S. Eliot introduces *Nightwood*, and Victor Robinson introduces *Diana*. Such male mediation serves to situate women's books within male discourse or male literary history, or to excuse or explain the necessity of publication when women are not supposed to "go public," particularly with tales of

nonnormative sexuality. As a thirties lesbian and epistolary narrative, *Either is Love* is thus remarkable for its lack of such explicit male "permission" and control. As her own editor, the narrator herself introduces, concludes, and fills in narrative gaps between letters, maintaining a narrative mastery that threatens to undercut her argument for a feminine lesbianism. Here again the heterosexual frame narrative mediates between the narrator's depiction of lesbianism and the heterosexual reader, translating the lesbian love story through Bart.

The heterosexual frame narrative resides primarily in three sections: the first four chapters, in which the narrator claims to have written an "unshackled account" of her husband's life (3); the seventh chapter, which is Bart's letter responding to what he has read about her lesbian romance thus far; and the last chapter, in which the narrator addresses the external reader and ties together the three traumatic events that structure the entire narrative. In the first four chapters, the narrator sings Bart's praises, extols his modesty, and presents extended excerpts from "love letters" written during their courtship. Slowly, though, these love letters begin to focus on the narrator's first love, and in chapter four the epistolary dialogue switches to a monologue as the narrator presents us with her letters to Bart describing in great detail her relationship with Rachel. Chapter four thus marks a radical recentering of the text away from the heterosexual and toward the lesbian narrative. In this way, the heterosexual frame serves not only to buttress a lesbian claim to femininity but also to push the heterosexual male out of his primary position as lover in female epistolary narrative. Craigin accomplishes this by repositioning Bart not as a character in the main action of the story but as a stand-in for

the external reader, that is, as receiver of and respondent to the lesbian story.

Thirties reviewers of *Either is Love* sensed an unevenness in Craigin's portrayal of her two relationships because Bart serves a primarily epistolary function (as reader of the letters). Even within the short story of their courtship, Bart is presented as a kind of lecherous psychiatrist/priest attempting to extract the secret locked inside his patient/parishioner. In this way, the story of lesbian sexuality is again excused because it is "drawn" from the narrator, given "license," by her husband. Bart writes,

> It may be hard for you, perhaps painful, to satisfy a curiosity so exigent. If you were lying on my breast on a quiet night before the library fire, I think I could draw that knowledge from you without hurting you. [. . .]
>
> [. . . ] But now it is these confessions of yours that have confirmed my possession of you, because you have been giving me this secret chapter in your life, because you have licensed me to probe further into it. (77-78)

In this passage, Bart clearly assumes that the narrator's "confession" gives him mastery over her and over (potentially threatening) lesbian sexuality. In other words, the narrator's "incitement to discourse" about her sexual past consolidates Bart's power over (and possession of) her: he is put in the position of choosing to accept or reject her on the basis of this new knowledge.[53]

However, as Judith Roof suggests, the listener/viewer/reader's illusion of mastery can be enacted in narrative only when it is contrasted with periods of anxiety and chaos (*Lure* 35-7). In the case of *Either is Love,* Bart's eventual sexual mastery over the narrator is continually undercut. As we have seen, Bart's claim of mastery in chapter seven is preceded (in chapter four) by the narrator's exposure of his sexual incompetence, which she corrects by presenting Rachel's mastery of sexual technique as a lesson for

Bart. More importantly, though, his mastery is defeated by the structure and chronology of the narrative itself. Dead before the final narrative is compiled, Bart loses control of this "secret chapter" in his wife's life: his story of heterosexual love is hijacked by the lesbian narrative, and his position as reader of the narrator's confession is usurped by the external reader upon publication.

At the center of the center of *Either is Love*, interrupting the monologic lesbian narrative, lies Bart's epistolary response to the first half of the narrator's story. While this interruption temporarily displaces the lesbian story in favor of the heterosexual male's response to it, I would argue that chapter seven further propels Bart out of his role as lover and into service as a model for the external reader. In chapter one, Bart is set up as a man of "sympathy," "judgment," "reason," and "great understanding" (3-4). Moreover, he is powerful and respected, holding "a high office where he had authority in the lives of thousands" (3). Outside sources—letters to the narrator from others after Bart's death—attest to his wisdom and honor (5-6). Establishing Bart's authority as a man of character, the narrator then borrows this authority to shore up the argument that her interfeminine relationship is one of "conscientiousness" and "moral integrity" (71). Bart as a widower represents orthodoxy; as such, he is put in the position of a priest who not only hears the narrator's "sins," but exonerates her. Furthermore, he goes so far as to extol the narrator's previous relationship. In chapter seven, Bart acknowledges the lesbian relationship as a "supreme experience," full of both "beauty" and "suffering" (78); he explicitly equates the narrator and Rachel's relationship with his own earlier marriage, writing that the narrator too is "widowed, the more like me for that, the more

understanding, better understood" (76). Thus Bart shows (presumably straight) external readers how they are supposed to react to this story—with empathy and compassion. But most importantly, Bart connects heterosexual experience with lesbian experience when he acknowledges that he and the narrator are both widowed. This acknowledgement creates a chain of identification in Bart's status as widower, the narrator's lesbian loss, and the narrator's widowhood; and it allows us to read the entire narrative as a series of repetitions referring back to the story's original traumatic event, the narrator's loss of Rachel. *Either Is Love* is thus structured as a narrative of trauma.

**The Translation of Trauma and the Trauma of Translation**

Cathy Caruth notes that while the precise definition of trauma, or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), remains under dispute, generally the term describes an individual's response to an overwhelming and usually catastrophic event. This response is typically characterized by feelings of belatedness or numbness, the inability to express or assimilate the event, and the uncontrollable repetition, or reexperiencing, of it ("Trauma" 4).[54] *Either Is Love* is structured around three overwhelming events in the narrator's life, each of which causes an act of narrative expression and/or repression: the end of the narrator's relationship with Rachel (first mentioned in chapter four and described in detail in chapters thirteen and fourteen); the car wreck which spares the narrator but kills Bart's wife (chapter fifteen); and Bart's death, presented primarily in the first and last chapters. Although trauma theory is most often applied to the experiences of individuals who have escaped extreme bodily harm or death (survivors of abuse,

accident, war, natural disaster, or genocide), I would like to suggest that both the language and structure of trauma may be useful in describing rather common experiences in the lives of lesbians and gay men.[55] Douglas Crimp has remarked that gay men affected by AIDS experience not only the trauma of a catastrophic illness, but also the "socially produced trauma" of wanting to tell that experience to other people who can't hear or don't want to listen (Caruth and Keenan 257). Following Crimp's suggestion, I will discuss two distinct but, especially in *Either Is Love,* closely related kinds of trauma – one deriving from the experience of the catastrophic event itself, the other from an inability to relate (or translate) that experience, what Crimp calls "the violence of silence and omission" (9).[56]

With its traumatic cycles of catastrophe, expression, and repression, *Either Is Love* conveys a concern with what Caruth describes as "a central problem of listening, of knowing, and of representing that emerges from the actual experience of the crisis" (*Unclaimed Experience* 5). One of the most widely recognized psychological explanations for survivors reexperiencing traumatic events derives from a cognitive model of information processing that proposes that humans seek the meaning of important new information in terms of their existing cognitive models or paradigms.[57] When a traumatic experience occurs, images of the event remain in "active memory" as people continue to process the event and attempt to integrate it into their existing models (Freedy and Donkervoet 14-15). The inability to understand the meaning of traumatic events that cannot be integrated into existing paradigms is often compounded by the feeling that the experience cannot be communicated to others because they also will not

comprehend it. For this reason, "talking through" or telling the story of the event, particularly with others who have had similar experiences (as in group therapy), is often regarded as a successful method for treating trauma.[58] In *Either Is Love,* the trauma of lesbian loss creates an experience that cannot be expressed because, the narrator fears, it is absolutely "unique" and will only be misunderstood by others (98). The narrative's repetitive structure, I argue, results from the narrator's repeated attempts to express the inexpressible through metaphors of bodily trauma and, most importantly, analogies to heterosexuality. That is, analogy becomes a way to translate the narrator's "unique" interfeminine experience in terms of the heterosexual paradigm that frames her own and others' cognitive processes. Furthermore, analogies that compare the repression and destruction of lesbian narrative with bodily trauma point out that the inexpressibility of the narrator's loss is not only the effect of a traumatic experience but also a traumatic experience itself.

**Lesbian Narrative and Bodily Trauma**

Like most love letters, the narrator's epistolary exchanges with Rachel are prompted by the physical absence of the beloved, in this case by a traumatic socially produced separation. Because their relationship is unrecognized (or recognized with hostility) by family, friends, and employers, the narrator and Rachel remain geographically apart through most of their romance. Eventually their exchange of letters becomes their entire relationship: "Forbidden any connection but the one by mail," writes the narrator, "we expanded that one with all the thwarted ardor of our souls. We

made of written correspondence a phenomenon comparable in intensity [. . .] to the physical one we had laid down" (115). These letters become, the narrator says, "life itself" (62); they are "alive," and "once set in motion" they "cannot be arrested without violence" (115-6). Indeed, it is through the trope of burning that the narrator indicates at once both the sexual passion this dynamic lesbian exchange and the violent destruction of its record that will follow: "The transatlantic mailbag can never have contained more incendiary matter than we put into it with all the suggestion that we could kindle at the pencil point" (117). Over and over, the narrator uses the language of bodily trauma to describe her destruction of the letters, which she throws into the furnace for fear that "[a]ny other eye falling upon" them would misconstrue their meaning (59).[59] Burned "in a single *gesture of execution*," they represent "a *body* of testimony" that lies "like a *murdered corpse*" in the narrator's trunk (59, 140-1; emphases mine). By connecting their physical bodies with the body of testimony they write, the narrator makes the death of her relationship with Rachel and the death of its record akin to bodily trauma. Moreover, she underscores the similarity between the end of the relationship and a physical affliction when she remarks that her relatives attribute her despair and exhaustion to ill health: "That I was merely broken-hearted was something that never crossed their minds" (145). A few months later when the narrator undergoes an unspecified operation, she notes "the acute irony that there was for me in all the over-flowing sympathy over it . [. . .] I could more easily have undergone five such operations than the amputation that was going on in my soul. But sympathy was an anesthetic that that other surgical interference never had" (145).

The full force of the lesbian narrative's connection with bodily trauma is reserved until the last chapter of the book, when the narrator describes how she met Bart as a result of a classic traumatic experience. Freud's often-quoted example of trauma in *Moses and Monotheism* involves someone who "gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision" (84). In *Either Is Love*, the "shocking accident" is a car collision that occurs as the narrator and Bart's wife are "taking a trip together out of convenience" (149). The narrator explains, "I [was] by some miracle unhurt, the companion of my trip in ghastly death beside me on the seat"(149-50). Two chapters earlier, the narrator describes her relationship with Rachel as a "wreck," and the sequence of events following the literal wreck cements the analogy between Bart's loss of his wife and the narrator's loss of Rachel (134).

As Freud's classic victim of trauma, the narrator should experience a period of latency following the car accident. Instead, though, she experiences an "emotional flooding" the very night of the wreck, emotions not so much caused by the accident as *triggered* by it: "The powerful terrors loosed in me by the tragedy were altogether those of my own ancient private grief," she admits (150). While she claims that her "agonies of defeated love, the supreme violence of longing for my lost beautiful glory" the night of the wreck were "no kin" to Bart's agony over losing his wife, the two agonies *are* obviously "kin" because the narrator continually equates them, as, for example, when the narrator says that Bart will eventually "assuage my despair, and I his" because "grief calls to grief" (150-1). Homosexuality is structured as analogous to heterosexuality, and the narrator's use of this analogy can be seen as an attempt to express the unknown

(lesbian trauma) through the known (heterosexual trauma). That is, heterosexual (or at least marital) trauma is "known" to the extent that it is marked by specific cultural signifiers: one's grief is shown by one's status as "widowed," "divorced," or "separated." More important, though, *Either Is Love* is organized such that subsequent heterosexual traumas are presented as repetitions of the narrator's original homosexual loss, which places central emphasis on the lesbian trauma. The narrator's experience after the wreck is similar to that of a shell-shocked victim who, after the war is over, experiences a flashback when he hears ordinary loud noises. In other words, the presentation of heterosexual losses as mere repetitions of the narrator's original lesbian loss constitutes a reversal of the common perception that "gay is to straight [. . .] as copy is to original" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 31).

The narrator suggests that the biggest difference between heterosexual and homosexual grief is that one is public, the other private. When they first meet and during their early courtship, the narrator knows Bart's despair while he can't even guess at hers. Eventually, though, their call of "grief to grief" gives the narrator the sympathetic ear she needs. Although she has destroyed the original record of her first trauma because "at that time no sympathetic interpretation seemed ever likely to be possible," the narrator produces for Bart another epistolary account designed explicitly to replace the first one: "If I still had the correspondence [with Rachel]," she writes him, "I would never write a line of this" (59). After marriage, however, this story is literally shut up in Bart's suitcase, where it remains until the dissolution of the heterosexual bond through his death. This death, the next literal death in the story's chronology, again triggers the

narrator's memory of losing Rachel. In addition, Bart's death allows the narrator to discover the suitcase of letters and later to publish them as a "tribute" to her husband (3).

This cycle of narrative production and repression represents a second, socially produced, trauma—the trauma of the closet. In other words, this story of a doomed lesbian relationship is also the story of a doomed narrative, one that is produced only to be closeted. Secrecy lurks in every corner, forcing the lovers apart and causing the creation of the first epistolary narrative as well as its destruction. Secrecy also reduces the lesbian relationship to an exchange of letters, rendering their destruction even more tragic. Ultimately, secrecy links both kinds of trauma: the narrator's inability to share the secret (the narrative of loss) repeats the secrecy that caused the traumatic loss in the first place.

**The Alpha and the Omega: Lesbian (Re)Production**

It is the repetition of this lesbian love story that allows it to break out of its position as a middle narrative framed by a story of heterosexuality. As Judith Roof convincingly argues in *Come As You Are: Sexuality and Narrative* (1996), lesbian sexuality tends to occupy the middle of narrative as an obstacle that must be overcome before the heroic triumph of heterosexuality at the end (xxxiv).[60] At first glance, *Either Is Love* appears to repeat this heteronormative logic: the lesbian relationship is doomed to failure, and the narrator eventually achieves a heterosexual union. But the proliferation of lesbian narrative throughout *Either Is Love* constitutes a reverse discourse that, I argue, severs heterosexuality's exclusive relationship with (re)production.[61]

The narrator is clearly invested in presenting interfeminine love as a "good" story, one that produces something outside of itself; interfeminine love, that is, breeds endless desire, ambition, and creativity. [62] Although she and Rachel "longed for" the "more creative fruition" of "making a child out of their love," their inability to engender a union through parentage necessitates a more inspired creativity:

> To man and woman came their climaxes that subside again. The urgency to union follows a preordained road and fulfillment has finality in it. Woman and woman [. . .] must unite in the realm of the wish and spirit, with in consequence a vastly greater stretch of the capacities. The search for ways of sealing marriage of heart and soul became for us an imaginative play of a very special order. Pressure of need to identify oneself in the other obliges new channels, new means, to be created. The imagination and the mind's ambition are what are continuously fed [. . .]. (104-5)

Partly sexual, this creativity comes out of a desire to devise "more imaginative" ways of "manifesting [their] love" (69). "The field of secondary sex-responses," the narrator says, "is overlooked by man and woman, eagerly pushing on toward something final" (8). Without the obviousness of the penis and the finality of ejaculation and impregnation, lesbian sexuality, the narrator implies, is more open-ended and creative, resulting in "a refinement in the technique of communication only to be experienced when mouth and hand were all there were, not prelude only" (74-5). Thus lesbian sexuality disturbs the (hetero)sexual plot (foreplay, intercourse, ejaculation; courtship, marriage, children) .

In addition, the narrator's interfeminine love fosters a more externally-directed creativity, ambition, and production. She and Rachel are "in that class of young American professional women who do much of the leading, the building, the studying and organizing in our times, and are accustomed to giving little or no heed to the call of self-

gratification" (10). The influence of first-wave feminism can be seen in the narrator's caveat about her rejection of "self-gratification"; early feminists often created "feminine" spaces for themselves in the public realm by arguing that their involvement in universities, professions, or politics were merely extensions of their roles as caretakers from the family to the world at large.[63] Here the narrator masks female leadership, creativity, and ambition as selflessness, thereby placing herself, Rachel, and their relationship within a feminine paradigm. And just as first-wave feminists used the feminizing rhetoric of reproduction and motherhood to legitimize their work in the public sphere, the narrator in *Either is Love* legitimizes her relationship with Rachel by touting its productivity. Though unable to achieve the ultimate in (re)production, child-bearing, the two women achieve other kinds of productivity throughout their relationship. Rachel rises in the ranks of chemistry, laying the foundation for an entire bureau. The narrator writes several books, and her work grows "as by magic" with Rachel's help (123). They both produce volumes of love-letters that are "something of moment" (116). Moreover, the narrator claims, "We helped to build one another. We mutually admired and believed in and encouraged the best in our differing talents" (123). Even though they are "distracted by passion" for each other, being together creates a favorable environment for worldly production (123).

Although the narrator fails to challenge the heteronormative (and capitalist) notion that good partnerships are (re)productive, she does attempt to expand a notion of good relationships beyond literal heterosexuality and female productivity beyond maternity. Thus, while working within what Ann Ardis calls "the cultural myth of

femininity" as a separate, maternal sphere, Craigin, like New Woman novelists before her, "rethink[s] maternity in nonbiological terms" (127). Craigin also expands the separate sphere of femininity to include lesbians. Perhaps most radical, however, is the implication that, held to a heteronormative standard of reproduction, the narrator's relationship with Rachel fares better than her marriage.

Although the women long to "have the appointed ordinance of making a child out of their love" but must dedicate themselves to "other ambitions" instead, the narrator's marriage produces neither a child nor a substitute product (106). The narrator makes it clear that Bart is a progressive man who doesn't mind a wife who has "an absorbing job" (34), but she complains to Bart that his love "doesn't help [her] toward any great endeavors": "From you I seem to want your mercy and kindness, and to settle into your security, whereas all the time that she loved me, I was on the stretch to be worthier of it. She was my very soul's complement. Her love held me to my highest possibilities, and even kept raising them to better heights" (46). With Rachel, the narrator's desires for sex, children, spirituality, and worldly accomplishments expand and flower; with Bart, such desires are nipped in the bud. Bart provides "security," but Rachel engenders a quest for higher possibilities. Because interfeminine love places the narrator out of the dichotomous relationship of male/female, protector/protected, public/private, she becomes free to assert her femininity as well as her ambition, her productivity outside of motherhood, and her position as a lover both inspiring to and inspired by the beloved. Finally, while the narrator produces three books during her time with Rachel, there is no mention of any writing, except letter writing, during her marriage. And although letters

are important products within the text – in fact, letters *are* the text – the letters between Bart and narrator, which escape destruction, are primarily concerned with the early "voluminous record" of interfeminine love (64). Because her correspondence with Bart is a rewriting of the record of her correspondence with Rachel, the crowning product of the narrator's marriage appears to be a lesbian narrative.

Repetitions of femininity and trauma in *Either Is Love* thus form an analogical map connecting heterosexuality and interfeminine love. Whereas such mappings between reader and character (or self and other) may constitute a relatively straightforward cognitive process of empathy (for example, I can empathize with Hamlet because I remember how I felt when someone betrayed me), the narrator inserts a third analog to mediate or translate lesbian knowledge: her relationship with Rachel is like her relationship with Bart (either is love), which is like the heterosexual reader's heterosexual relationships.[64] Many queer theorists question the political desirability of empathy because it is a mode of human connection constructed in relation to sameness and, therefore, capable of perpetuating normativity.[65] In *Either Is Love*, however, the analogical process of empathy (the text's constant comparative repetitions) produces an excess of lesbian narrative that cannot be contained by the heterosexual frame. That is, although the narrator concludes the story as a widow outside of all sexual realms, claiming to be "detached" from the world in her "involuntary nunnery," the plot of narrative production begins with her first letter to Rachel and ends with the writing of a memoir in which lesbian story and memory hijack a widow's "tribute" to her late husband (8, 3). In this sense, it is the repetitive nature of trauma – the production,

repression, and reproduction of the forbidden narrative – that prevents its containment. What appears to be a heterosexual memoir with a lesbian middle turns out to originate from and produce an overflow of lesbian narrative. And to the extent that interfeminine love is constructed as more feminine and more productive than heterosexual love, and its loss more tragic, lesbianism's gender sameness is presented as analogous to heterosexuality's difference, only better.

# Chapter 3

## Eugenic Discourse and Diana's *Strange Autobiography*

In comparison to *Either Is Love,* Diana Frederics' *Diana: A Strange Autobiography* is hardly strange at all. That is, *Diana* is structured as a conventional coming-out story and consists of one quite straightforward narrative rather than a series of framed and embedded ones. Unlike the narrators in *The Stone Wall* and *Either Is Love, Diana's* narrator is named within the text, and this consistency between title, author, and narrator (all are named "Diana") adds credence to the text's self-proclaimed status as autobiography, although Julie Abraham in her introduction to the 1995 edition of *Diana* argues that the mere accumulation of conventions of lesbian fiction in the text suggests that is more fiction than fact: *Diana* is introduced by a medical preface; the protagonist is a white, middle-class woman; the narrative focuses on Diana's "process of 'becoming a lesbian'"; she proves her lesbianism by first demonstrating that she can't enjoy sex with men; her introduction to other lesbians happens in Europe; and so on (xxi-xxv). In seeing this accumulation of conventions as evidence of fictiveness, though, Abraham suggests that autobiography is somehow beyond narrative convention, that it faithfully transcribes material reality. If the narrative employs many conventions, she says, we must conclude either "that all lesbians led identical lives" or that the narrative is fiction "shaped by ideological imperatives" (Introduction xxi), as if the stories of our own lives are not always already shaped by ideology. As someone who has listened to many, many coming out stories (particularly from white, middle-class American college

students), I am frequently struck by their remarkable similarity. People who grow up in the same racial, cultural, and economic milieu will tend not only to experience a similar material reality, but also to narrate that experience through similar narrative structures, figures of speech, and so forth. We remember and talk about our lives through conventions of narrative; it is through these conventions that we construct meaning out of the past. Thus the employment of conventions of lesbian narrative can hardly be seen as evidence of a text's fictive or factual nature.

Part one of Diana's narrative describes her family background and her emerging awareness of her lesbianism in chapters with comically clear titles such as "Am I a Lesbian?". In part two, the chapter titles again provide a plot summary: "I Meet Carl," "I Decide about Carl," "Trail Marriage," "I Begin to Feel Normal Love," "I Am a Lesbian!," and "I Leave Carl." After Diana proves that she is a lesbian by showing us that she cannot enjoy heterosexual sex even with a really nice guy like her boyfriend Carl, part three tells the story of her first sexual encounters with women and her long-term relationship with Jane. Jane's shame and ambivalence about lesbian sex frustrates Diana, who embraces lesbian sex as natural and healthy. Eventually Jane's repression explodes into a hyper-sexuality that causes her to be unfaithful to Diana, and a dizzying series of love triangles ensue: Jane falls in love with Louise; Louise falls in love with Jane and then also Diana; Louise's husband falls in love with Diana but also still wants to save his marriage. Diana eventually washes her hands of all this drama and starts seeing Leslie. The pair struggle with Leslie's coming out to her family, the financial fallout from that, and Jane's attempts to sabotage their relationship. It is the ending of *Diana*

that makes it decidedly "strange" for its time: Diana and Leslie are reunited with the promise of "Fulfillment" (as the last chapter is titled) through a committed lesbian relationship. Although Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt* (1952), as Highsmith herself notes in her afterward to the 1991 edition, "was said to be the first gay book with a happy ending," *Diana* in fact accomplished this feat thirteen years before. It is curious that *Diana*'s happy ending is rarely acknowledged since the tragic endings of pre-Stonewall lesbian texts are often lamented in lesbian criticism, history, and autobiography. (The lesbian heroine typically went straight, killed herself, or ended up alone, miserable, and insane.) Although we can be certain that *Diana* never achieved the popularity of *The Price of Salt*, which sold close to a million copies in 1953 alone, of the realist lesbian narratives I examine in this project, *Diana* appears to be the most well known, is certainly the most republished, and is the only one still in print (Munt 364).[66]

As the straightforward chapter titles suggest, *Diana* is plotted as a conventional autobiography in the sense that it has a particular teleological itinerary, what Sidonie Smith refers to as vertical direction, "delving downward into itself to find the irreducible core, stripping away mask after mask of false selves in search of that hard core at the center, that pure, unique, or true self" (*Subjectivity* 18). In fact, more than any other narrative examined in this project, Diana presents that "hard core" of unique selfhood much as traditional (Western, male) autobiography would, celebrating, as Smith puts it, "the agentive autonomy and disembodiment of the universal subject, valorizing individuality and separateness while erasing personal and communal interdependencies," notwithstanding her romantic "happy ending" (*Subjectivity* 19). In my chapter on *The*

*Stone Wall,* I mention that bourgeois individualism is closely linked to the traditional autobiographical form and discuss the "gendering" of that form as male, but I do not discuss the extent to which both individualism and autobiography are also racialized concepts.[67] Abraham brings up in her introduction to *Diana* a series of questions for future critics to consider, the first of which is "about the role of her race and class position in Diana's commitment to individualism" (xxxii). Given, as I mention in my introduction, that all thirties narratives focusing on the overt depiction of lesbian identity present that identity as white, and that virtually all lesbian main characters of the period are middle or upper class, this question is particularly interesting.

*Diana* is uniquely suited to an examination of race, and to a lesser extent class, in relation to American individualism and lesbian identification, in part because, published in 1939, its plot is situated explicitly in the context of the fall of the stock market and the rise of Hitler. Though both historical events compose the backdrop rather than the main action of the story, the Great Depression is evoked frequently enough in the narrative to emphasize the protection that Diana's middle-class status affords; and the text's references to Germany and Hitler—Diana lives briefly in Germany just as Hitler assumes power—highlight the numerous intersections of race, class, and sexual ideology that revolve around Nazism and its relationship to what Daylanne English in a recent book refers to as "the paradigmatic modern American discourse," the discourse of eugenics (2). I will argue that this discourse, particularly pervasive in the United States between 1900 and 1940, accounts in part for Diana's preference for a psychological rather than a congenital explanation for homosexuality. *Diana* represents a general cultural shift in

thinking about sexuality away from proponents of biological etiology such as Magnus Hirschfeld and toward Sigmund Freud. For Diana, Freud's move away from the idea of homosexuality as *embodied* like (it was then thought) race and toward the idea of homosexuality as a purely psychological phenomenon, as something beyond or outside of the body, is much more appealing in an era when human segregation, sterilization, and eventually extermination were performed in the name of eugenics, the science of creating better "human stock" through breeding.

Furthermore, *Diana* uniquely intimates the ideologies of race and class underpinning American conceptions of individualism and community, and it also suggests how gendered, raced, and classed concepts of individualism can shape the autobiographical form. My reading will show how Diana's belief in psychoanalytic theory allows her to retain her white middle-classness as the "blank slate" upon which the idiosyncratic psychological attribute of lesbianism can be laid, yet her logic is always in danger of unraveling as she is continually threatened with rejection by white middle-class society for her lesbianism. To cite one very concrete example, she resigns from a teaching position—thus briefly becoming one of the masses of Depression-era unemployed—because of "innuendoes" surrounding her "friendship" with Jane (139). At times Diana views her white middle-classness as permanent—her birthright, so obvious and enduring as to require no comment or recognition—but its contingency on heterosexuality destabilizes that permanence. Diana's lesbianism constantly threatens her inclusion in the dominate group even as her race and class status produce the "individualism" which she invokes as that which licenses her sexual autonomy. That is,

in a political and social context which connects personal freedom to an individualism that is de facto the privilege of not just the white and middle-class, but the male and heterosexual, the basis of Diana's "dignity" is always in danger of collapse (Frederics 236).

**Arrested Development vs. Freak from the Womb**

Tension between the idea of lesbianism as a psychological "attribute" and the concept of the lesbian as a fully embodied biological "type" is evident throughout *Diana*, beginning with the author's forward, in which the author/narrator remarks, "I must write this book as if I were a person of importance. And, indeed, I can do that if I think of myself as a type rather than as an individual. As an individual I am without importance except to myself; as a type I am quite important, for I belong to the third sex." Coined by Karl Ulrichs and popularized by Magnus Hirschfeld, "third sex" identifies homosexuals as a "a biologically distinct gender—a human being between male and female" and is based on a belief that masculinity and femininity are not historically contingent categories but rather laws of nature (Plant 30). Diana's use of this somewhat outdated term is curious given that, within the narrative proper, she explicitly rejects the notion of lesbianism as a biologically distinct state; but I would like to suggest that she employs it here for two strategic reasons. First, she is echoing Dr. Victor Robinson's use of the term in his original introduction to *Diana*.[68] Robinson was a well-respected physician and prolific writer on the history of medicine. In 1936 he edited the well-known *Encyclopedia Sexualis,* an encyclopedia of sexology, and he also wrote the introduction

to the 1939 English edition of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, a text which argues that most homosexuality is caused by degenerate heredity. Robinson's authenticating preface justifies the publication of *Diana* on the grounds that it contributes to the accumulation of scientific sexological data. Robinson places *Diana* explicitly in the tradition of the homosexual case study by referring to such studies by Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter. This autobiography, he says, will "add to the understanding of the lesbians in our midst," "for though the existence of a third sex is now widely recognized, general knowledge on the etiology and prognosis of homosexuality is inaccurate and confused" (xxxvii). His belief in lesbianism's *biological* etiology is made clear throughout the introduction: Diana's narrative is "the confession of one who was destined by Nature to gather forbidden fruit in the gardens of deviation"; her lesbianism "is not a question of ethics, but of endocrines." Furthermore, he assures us, "There is no danger that the woman biologically craving the male, will seek that strange light," for only those "borne . . . on the hormonic tides of inversion" stay in the "dark temple" (xxxvii-xxxviii).

Robinson's introduction attests to the number of terms for homosexuality in play during the late thirties: in the space of a page he refers to lesbianism, Sapphism, homosexuality, sexual inversion, and the third sex. Diana's reference to the most biologically grounded of these terms in her foreword implies her agreement with Robinson's theories of lesbianism's etiology, an agreement that again defends the existence of her story. Diana draws on Robinson's medical authority and male privilege to help make up for her lack of both. In addition, her assertion that she is important only

as a "type" is typical not just of lesbian autobiography but of women's autobiography in general. As a number of feminist critics of autobiography have pointed out, traditional (e.g. male-authored) autobiography typically presents the autobiographer as an autonomous and exceptional individual, often recounting the public and professional accomplishments of the subject/writer (Smith and Watson 8-9). In contrast, early women autobiographers often present themselves as important only by virtue of their connection to particular men in their lives (Brownley and Kimmich 1). Even more contemporary women's autobiographies, some critics claim, tend to emphasize the writer's connection to a larger social fabric and rarely present her as an extraordinary individual acting alone (Smith and Watson 9). Diana's presentation of herself here not as an individual but as a "type"—relevant only as part of a group—thus places her very much within the tradition of women's autobiography. On the other hand, her identity as part of a "third sex" sets her apart from the earlier tradition because she cannot define her life by her relationships with men. Moreover, Diana takes pains to position herself explicitly as an autonomous individual throughout the narrative proper and is contemptuous of heterosexual women who are (typically, in her estimation) unable to find meaning beyond their associations with men. While surely there is something feminist about this impulse, I will argue that *Diana,* both in its structure and its ideological underpinning, ultimately aligns itself *against* the inclination toward communal solidarity exhibited in many women's autobiographies, and *with* both the traditional autobiography and white male bourgeois "individualism."

This conflict between Diana's sense of herself as both "type" and "individual" becomes obvious in her forward when, immediately after identifying herself as one who belongs to the "third sex," she contradicts that assertion by implying a Freudian etiology for her sexuality: "my lesbianism is, I believe, the result of long environment peculiarly fitted to foster whatever inclination to homosexuality I had as a child." As Eve Sedgwick has famously pointed out, the coexistence of essentialist and constructionist understandings of homosexuality is a perennial feature of modernity (*Epistemology* 40). Even the sexologists most grounded in congenital theories of homosexuality (Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld) also at times posit that environment affects or even causes sexual orientation. Early twentieth-century authors of lesbian narratives such as Radclyffe Hall, Mary Casal, and Helen Anderson put forward *both* congenital and environmental theories, but Frederics' narrative leans much further toward what Sedgwick would call a "universalizing" (and specifically Freudian) etiology.[69] The forward indicates a shift happening at the time of *Diana*'s publication; while both discourses were still very much in play in the United States, Freudian explanations for homosexuality were gaining some popularity over congenital ones. Upon being convinced of her homosexuality after her trial marriage to Carl, Diana reads everything she can find on homosexuality in English, German, and French, works of both sexology and psychoanalysis. She concludes:

> By considering my own case history I could put no stock in the theory of congenital homosexuality. The psychoanalytic theory, which leads the emotional cycle from autosexuality in childhood through homosexuality in adolescence to heterosexuality in maturity, seemed much more sensible and clear-cut. [. . .] At least I had something to be thankful for—decidedly it was less unpleasant to feel like a case of arrested development

> than it was to admit to being, like a two-headed calf, a freak from the womb. (70-71).

Despite her claim to be "of importance" only as a type, Diana actually associates being a "type" (in the taxonomic sense a "third sex") with being a "freak from the womb." As her narrative eventually makes clear, she speaks not as a "typical" lesbian but an exceptional one, as an autonomous individual part of "universal," white, and bourgeois humanity. I argue that Diana's embracing of Freudian theory is not just a function of Freud's increasing popularity, but rather is part of a strategy to maintain dignity by aligning herself with white bourgeois culture and values. Diana's logic pits Freudian theory and white bourgeois genealogy against congenital theory and "colored" or dysgenic genealogy in order to maintain what Marylynne Digg's identifies as Diana's "lesbian pride" (141).

**Race, Sexuality, and Eugenics**

From the first page of the narrative, we can begin to note the importance of Diana's white bourgeois background to her identity. As several critics have observed, *Diana* begins as a parody of the classic sexology case study, in which the subject's family history is recorded as evidence that the origin of her homosexuality lies in a degenerative genealogy.[70] Here, as in much of *Diana,* racial meanings are obvious though only implied, and whiteness and middle-classness are inextricably and inevitably linked:

> Other than a dipsomaniac grandfather who managed to be a fair poet, and an uncle who made a fortune in mules, my family background is almost entirely without color. While my distant ancestors were among the earliest settlers in America, my immediate family did little else than earn

> money, establish homes and settle into comfortable living that was occasionally even plutocratic.
>
> The skeletons in our family closet are quite ordinary skeletons, neither better nor worse than those of many another average family. (3)

Unlike the typical homosexual case study, which recounts examples of mental illness and disease in order to show a "degenerative" family line, Diana insists that, other than an alcoholic and a mule trader, her ancestors were "ordinary" members of the middle (and occasionally upper) class, one of America's First Families, and "almost entirely without color." Given the overwhelming concern with eugenics and miscegenation during the thirties, I find her choice to disclose "an uncle who made a fortune in mules" particularly interesting given that a mule is the offspring of a donkey and a horse, a dysgenic mixing in the sense that mules are usually sterile, and given that "mule" is the etymological origin of "mulatto." But although Diana admits her family does have some "suggestions of color," these "are neutralized on the family tree alongside general blamelessness so normal as be almost dull" (3). Here mental and moral soundness is expressed though racial metaphor: to be neutral, ordinary, respectable, and even blameless is to be without color – to be white.

The import of Diana's white bourgeois background is also implied when she discusses where she is from, a "part of Kentucky which the South calls midwestern and the Midwest calls south" (3). "Since I must question which sex I belong to," she says, "it would be satisfying to be able to think of myself as positively *something*, as positively midwestern or southern. But I straddle the question of geography even as I do that of gender" (3). This focus on her mixed regional status both elides and points toward the really important "something" to which Diana belongs, the white bourgeoisie. Particularly

in the 1930s, when the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the Midwest united white Midwesterners and Southerners around notions of white supremacy and minimized differences between the regions, Diana's whiteness, not her regional affiliation, becomes her most crucial anchor to normality. This becomes evident in the careful iteration of her white genealogy: "among the earliest settlers," her ancestors have white European credentials: a father "of German descent" and a mother who is "sentimental Irish and practical Scotch" (4). By "Irish" and "Scotch," Diana may very well mean "Scotch-Irish" given that the early settlers of Kentucky were predominately Scotch-Irish and English, followed by the French and Germans. But even if she does indeed refer to an Irish Catholic ancestry, as Matthew Pratt Guterl has noted, in the United States the Irish ceased to be racially marked by 1930 as the emergence of a new race consciousness caused the many "white races" to be collapsed into an "[a]bsolute whiteness" that was opposed to an "absolute blackness" (351).

*Diana* proves to be a fascinating expression of the extraordinarily complex intersections of racial and sexual (as well as class and gender) identities and ideologies at a particularly rich historical moment marked in the U.S. and Europe by not only a Great Depression, but an overwhelming attention to both sexology and eugenic theory. Richard Dyer notes that historically race as been categorized in two broad ways, one genealogical (tracing origin and lineage) and one biological (locating race on/in the body itself) (20). The same is true within sexologists' minoritizing discourses of homosexuality, in which the etiology of deviant sexuality is found either in family history, where the lesbian is seen as the end of a line of family mental illness and

degeneration, or in physical characteristics that were supposed to indicate lesbianism -- narrow hips, large clitorises, or the ability to whistle, for example. Foucault identifies "the medicine of perversions" (sexology) and "the programs of eugenics" as "the two great innovations in the technology of sex of the second half of the nineteenth century" (118). It was not until the early twentieth century, however, that these innovations became deeply entrenched in the discourse of the general populous, when half of U.S. states enacted eugenic forced sterilization statutes, the "sexual revolution" produced an explosion of material aimed at educating the general public about sex, and public discussion of homosexuality became much more prevalent (English 10). Foucault points out that these two innovations "merged together quite well" because "the theory of 'degenerescence' made it possible for them to perpetually refer back to one another": dysgenic genealogy was shown to end in the production of the sexual pervert, while sexual perversion was said to cause "the depletion of one's line of descent" (118). Each was both the cause and effect of the other, resulting in a theory of "perversion-heredity-degenerescence" that deeply influenced psychiatry, jurisprudence, medicine, child-rearing, and many other "agencies of social control" (118-119). In fact, says Foucault, this "technology of sex" took the form of "a state-directed racism" (119).

The structural similarities between racial and sexual oppression were not lost on early 20th-century defenders of homosexuality, who most often compared the persecution of homosexuals to that of black Americans.[71] *The Well of Loneliness*, for instance, features a scene in which a group of white "inverts" are moved by the music of two straight African-American men. Their performance of Negro spirituals shouts "a

challenge to the world on behalf of themselves and of all the afflicted" (363). Though Hall's description is filled with racist stereotypes that distance whites from blacks, white queers and straight blacks are nevertheless united in the "infinite pain" of their outsider status (363). During this period, the connection between non-heterosexual and non-white was not only metaphorical but also geographical since white gay men in particular frequently discovered gay society in black sections of large cities. In New York and elsewhere in the early twentieth century, gay bars and clubs were located within black neighborhoods, and white homosexuals were figured as both white and somehow part of another "race" or "tribe" outside of the white middle class.[72] The theme of going outside white Anglo-Saxon/American culture to find gay culture is in fact a trope of early lesbian narrative, although lesbian culture is almost always found in an ethnic and national other rather than a racial other. It is common, for example, for American and British (white) lesbians to find lesbian community in Paris. This is true not only for fictional lesbians like Stephen Gordon but also for the lesbian writers – Radclyffe Hall, Natalie Barney, Djuna Barnes, Renee Vivian, and others – associated with expatriate lesbian communities in Paris. Diana is no exception; though she "discovers" her lesbianism in America, it is not until she moves to Paris that she encounters lesbians as a group.

Foucault notes that Freudian psychology differed from most late nineteenth-century sexology in that, although it "resumed the project of a medical technology appropriate for dealing with the sexual instinct," "it sought to free it from its ties with heredity, and hence from eugenics and the various racisms" (119). Thus, he continues,

while it is fine for us to "look back from our vantage point" and denounce the normalizing impulse in Freud, psychoanalysis did rupture the perversion-heredity-degenerescence system and "rigorously opposed" its "political and institutional effects" (119). This is why Freudian theory is so crucial to Diana's sense of self, although it hardly frees her from racism. Diana finds that whiteness provides a neutral background for the attribute lesbian, but also that lesbianism threatens to bring too much "color" (difference) into whiteness, tainting her white bourgeois family tree. Freud's conception of homosexuality as a state of "arrested development," though hardly flattering, allows Diana to view herself *not* as a race apart from white, middle-class society, but rather as an immature individual within it. That is, to be thought of as something that "normal" adults used to be, rather than as something wholly foreign, allows Diana to remain within the category "human," e.g. white middle class, ordinary, respectable. Sander Gilman argues in *Freud, Race, and Gender* that Freud's theory of individual human sexual development—through auto-, homo-, and heterosexuality—is extrapolated from Krafft-Ebing's view that "'Civilization' had moved from the most primitively organized system of sexual activity through the stage of Judaism to its height—modern Christianity" (137). In these models the Jew and the homosexual occupy the same atavistic position; in Freud's mind, as in Diana's, this position places both in an inclusionary category that marks both as different but still part of universal human experience (Gilman 9). For Freud, Gilman argues, the claims of psychoanalysis for a universalization of human experience became increasingly important as anti-Semitism grounded in ideas of Jewish racial degeneracy and biological inferiority swept across Europe (6).

I would like to suggest that the effect of this political climate is also apparent in Diana's autobiography, where discussions of German politics, literature, and culture suggest the protagonist's familiarity with the epicenter of eugenics' most horrifying effects. Whereas late twenties and early thirties texts sometimes made analogies between race and sexuality in order to claim an oppressed minority status for homosexuals, this tactic became increasingly dangerous in an era when such biological theories were employed to justify genocide. Because she says she read everything about homosexuality she could find in English, German, and French, earned a master's degree in German, and lived in Berlin during "the tense year of Hitler's ascendancy," Diana implies her familiarity with German (and thus Nazi) thinking about sexual deviancy (81). In response to Magnus Hirschfeld's attempts to repeal Paragraph 175 (the German law criminalizing male homosexuality), the Nazi Party's official paper, the *Nationalist Observer*, described same sex sexual relations in 1929 "as [a] contemptible [aberration] of Syrians, as the most serious of crimes, to be punished by hanging or expulsion" (qtd. in Schoppmann 7). Diana's first exposure to homosexuality occurs when at sixteen she reads a book on sex that includes "a gruesome picture captioned 'Homosexuals burned at the stake in Germany, 1494'" (18). Etched in her memory, the image causes her to see herself for the first time as someone "grotesque, alienated, unclean" and "subject to arrest" (18). She begins to doubt whether her body is normal and rushes to a doctor the next morning for a full examination, after which the doctor pronounces her "perfectly normal and healthy" (19). The juxtaposition of capital punishment with Diana's fears about her body points to the association she makes between homophobic persecution and

theories of congenital homosexuality. Whereas much of current gay rights discourse argues that evidence of "inborn" homosexuality will end gay persecution because homosexuality will no longer be viewed as a moral issue, Diana's historical position at the apex of the eugenics movement makes this argument much less tenable. The 1494 picture suggests that the Nazi regime represents not necessarily a radical change in German attitudes toward homosexuality but rather a different way of implementing this ideology in the form of imprisonment and genocide (Schoppmann 10). Diana's reaction to her body after the seeing the picture reflects this change in implementation, or in what Foucault would call technology.

Though Hitler himself seems to be have been more afraid of homosexuality as a contagious (and thus potentially universal) disease that had to be eradicated so that Germans could continue to reproduce virile offspring (Steakley 108-109), Nazi thought is most often associated with the biologistic arguments that grouped homosexuals with "inferior" races. Heinrich Himmler, head of the Gestapo and the most fanatically anti-gay of the Nazi leaders, tended toward a congenital view of homosexuality similar to Ulrichs and Hirschfeld, except that Himmler equated homosexuality with the "mixing of different races" – both contributed to the degeneration of the Nordic race and had to be eradicated in the name of racial purity (Steakley 111-112). For both Hitler and Himmler, homosexuality was a threat to white racial purity and dominance, and the mass murder of homosexuals (primarily men) was simply part of the implementation of the new science of "race improvement," eugenics.

Though the term eugenics was coined England in the 1880s, it was the U.S. government's implementation of eugenics theory in the 1920s and 1930s (primarily through compulsory sterilization laws) that profoundly influenced the Nazis' race hygiene program in the 1930s and early 1940s. Clearly this American text could hardly avoid the influence of eugenic thinking even without Diana's connection to Germany during Hitler's ascendancy. Even early twentieth-century American presidents used eugenic discourse: Theodore Roosevelt encouraged whites to breed or face "race suicide," and Calvin Coolidge warned that "defective" people were threatening to lead America "back to the jungle."[73] But as Daylanne English points out in *Unnatural Selections,* during the interwar period "notions of ideal breeding became more precise," and not even "all white native-born Americans [. . .] were fit to reproduce" (11). During the twenties, thousands of compulsory sterilizations were performed "on generally rural—and generally white—lower-class Americans, all of whom had been deemed hopelessly feebleminded or irrevocably immoral or chronically poor" (English 15). In 1927, the *Buck v. Bell* Supreme Court decision, which upheld compulsory sterilization of the feebleminded as constitutional, included Oliver Wendell Holmes's famous majority opinion that "[t]three generations of imbeciles are enough" (Novick 352).

Given this context in which race, class, intellect, and moral (including sexual) behavior are linked as signs of a degeneracy that should be eradicated, it is easy to see why Diana would present constructivist explanations for her sexual behavior and why she would be drawn to Freud's universalization of sexual attributes, specifically his efforts to unhinge homosexuality from heredity and biology. As someone who possesses the

"right" race, class, and intellect, she is eager to hold on to the advantages afforded to her despite her sexual identity. The problem for Diana is that her position as white and middle class provides her with the power and privilege to live as a lesbian, particularly the employment required to support herself and Leslie without male assistance, but being a lesbian also threatens her ability to belong to white, middle-class community. If eugenics employs a kind of "one drop rule" by which any one aspect of degeneration is a sign of bodily impurity that merits rejection from the dominate culture, then Diana—unwilling to give up her birthright of race and class privilege—must either reject her homosexuality or reject the notion of homosexuality as congenital.

We can see Diana's reliance on her privilege in her description of her state of mind upon first coming to grips with her homosexuality. The passage is, I think, worth quoting at length:

> I was determined to respect myself for what I was, lesbianism be damned. First I was an individual; second, a lesbian. I was twenty-one: my mind was quick if not profound; I had discriminating tastes, a certain amount of looks and charm, a good background, and a family to which I was devoted. I would be equipped to earn my own living when the time came. Fortunately, Mother hadn't yet felt the depression; I could take my training how and where I wanted. [. . .] No one need know of my emotional inversion. If homosexual love ever came to me I would accept it. [. . .]
>
> Whatever there was of soundness in my attitude came from hard common sense inherited from a mother and a father who had no patience with quibblers and who had wisely taught me the value of vanity. My vanity as an individual was a precious thing. It could not allow for any martyr complex—and I imagined self-pity to be the easy pitfall of the homosexual who is hypersensitive to an antagonistic world. [. . .] Nor did I want to embrace my nature, proudly, as some homosexuals do, as a protest if not as a conviction. That seemed weak to me, a childish defensive evasion. Somewhere between martyrdom and false pride lay a sane middle road. (69-70)

That "sane middle road" is, of course, white middle-class respectability: having a quick mind, discriminating tastes, looks, charm, education, self-respect, a "good background," an *inherited* "hard common sense," and the ability to earn ones own living.[74] Ironically, her pride in her white middle-classness enables her to have the "vanity" and abhorrence of "self-pity" that allow her to accept her homosexuality calmly and gracefully, yet pride in homosexuality itself is "childish" and "false."

**The Problem of Individualism**

Diana's focus on being "an individual" in the passage above places her firmly within a long tradition of American individualism that, as America's "master narrative," presupposes an individual who is white, male, middle or upper class, and heterosexual. It is paradoxically by virtue of this individual's inclusion in the dominant community that his sense of personal freedom and independence from that community is secured. As clearly indicated by the passage quoted above, Diana has a strong sense of individualism that is tied to her belonging to white, middle-class society. At the same time, though, she is acutely aware of her contradictory relationship to individualism as a woman and as a lesbian. Noting her estrangement from young heterosexual women, Diana remarks that their "constant talk of clothes, men, babies, and a home, always gave me an exasperated sense of impotence. Most of them were so conscious of being wives or sweethearts that I could not regard them as individuals, but rather as so many halves to partnerships" (174). But why would straight women's inability to be individuals, clearly viewed with contempt by Diana and placed in opposition to her own individuality and independence,

also make her feel "impotent"? It is because this very inability is also a mark of their privilege; while they don't have individuality, says Frederics, "normal" women have "individual salvation," a "stability" that they are no more conscious of than they are of *"the color of their skin* or anything else they accepted as a birthright" (174, emphasis added). Their middle-classness, the color of their skin, and their heterosexuality allow them some measure of inclusion in the dominant culture, though not full individualism. Heterosexuality affords white, middle-class women not exactly freedom, but certainly a great measure of protection; individualism is swapped for "stability" and security. Yet individualism, which hinges on inclusion in the dominant group, thus hinges on ones status as "normal," a status that Diana, despite her white middle-classness, can never attain. Without the protection of normalcy, Diana's individualism, her ability to be more than the lesser half of a heterosexual partnership, is constantly threatened.

In an passage in which Diana describes her early impressions of lesbians at a women's college, she makes individualism's reliance on social conformity clear. Though she admits it is "unreasonable and unjustified," Diana notes her dislike of what she calls "active lesbians" for "using their abnormality as their claim to uniqueness as individuals," for "making themselves conspicuous," and for "mocking society and themselves at the same time from behind an awkward guise which not only offended society but gave themselves dead away" (72). This sentiment unmistakably signals that it is normality, rather than difference, which provides one with a claim to "individualism" and "uniqueness" in American society, a point famously noted by Alexis de Tocqueville in his 1838 critique of American culture, *Democracy in America.* There Tocqueville

notes a fundamental contradiction of American citizenship: the "equality of conditions" afforded by democracy cause each citizen to feel simultaneously an inflated sense of personal significance and a feeling of helplessness in the face of the "tyranny of the majority." As Patrick Deneen puts it, this notion of equality can cause

> [. . .] each individual to realize that he had no distinct or 'unequal' claim by which to reject the convictions of the majority, thus recommending a hesitancy, even silence, before the perceived majority for fear of [. . .] ostracism. [. . .] *Outward* conformity is the price paid for an inward sense of *private* significance. This silent dignity, pursued wholly in private, gives rise to a condition for which Tocqueville was forced to invent a new world: 'individualism.' (65-66)

As a white, middle-class lesbian, Diana manifests the contradiction inherent in Tocqueville's definition of American individualism. The particular division between public and private crucial to his use of the term helps explain why Diana can maintain a fierce sense of independence, and relatively positive views about lesbian sexuality and relationships, only through the sense of dignity she maintains through silence and outward conformity. For Diana, uniqueness, like any attribute, must be laid onto the blank slate of white, "respectable," middle-class identity or else it is false, like the claim to "uniqueness as individuals" made by lesbians at Diana's college who flaunt their abnormality "in the smart-aleck unconventionality" of "transvestism" (72-73). For Diana, the dignity derived from being "an individual" comes from inclusion in the white, middle-class, and heterosexual community; and she can maintain her public privilege as white and middle-class only by hiding her taintedness, her lesbianism. She accomplishes this by being a Freudian lesbian: "emotional" and psychological (as opposed to congenital and "true") homosexuality is undetectable. Her difference is invisible,

unmarked on or in her body. By passing in public, Diana maintains the material, social, and psychological privileges that allow her to live out her lesbianism in private.

But this private individualism takes its toll, and secrecy does not always allow Diana to remain part of the dominant community. In her relationship with Jane, for example, it turns out that the division between public and private is quite permeable. "[S]ocial intrusion began to tug at our consciousness," says Diana. "Our relationship must be clandestine: there could be no joy in sharing the knowledge with family or friends, no hint of anything more than ordinary affection. We must get used to hypocrisy and camouflage that degraded and humiliated" (95). The need to keep their relationship secret causes the very social isolation and humiliation that the closet is supposed to prevent. When she has to drop her friends because their invitations do not include Jane, Diana feels "humiliated and resentful" (96). "Valiantly," she says, "I told myself that isolation was the only answer to lesbian happiness," so "before many months, we were entirely friendless and independent to the point where we could have dropped out of Parisian existence and nobody [. . .] would have missed us" (96-97). Moreover, this isolation disconnects Diana from time, progress, and "destiny." The homosexual, says Diana,

> can feel no part in the surge of an immense social destiny. [. . .] [W]hether it is called herd instinct by the sociologist, or community spirit by the mayor, or fellowship by the preacher, it is the normal individual's kinship to the world about him. And it is his secondary defense against the terrors of loneliness.
>
> I sensed it flowing all about us, so keenly that it might have been something animate. It was exciting to hear, moving to see – but it belonged to the normal world. Trying to get close enough to feel it coursing over me was as useless as straining to see the invisible. Yet nothing could keep the sound and the sight far enough away from them

> not to matter. They always mattered. And they always hurt. This is the peculiar loneliness of the homosexual. (97)

This "peculiar loneliness" is temporarily assuaged when Diana decides to go by herself to a French "lesbian café." There, she says, "a sensation of almost blood-intimacy came over me and for the first time in my life I had the feeling of being part of a group of fellow human beings" (119). At the café there is no "feeling of separateness," and she is "beyond the pain and pale of moral judgment" (119). Here much of her description of the "tribal similarity" among lesbians is relatively flattering – they are "vivid and intelligent-looking," courageous, "intense," "sensitive," and "spirited" – and suggestive of an alternative road to dignity and pride through lesbian community. But this possibility is quickly dashed when a new acquaintance, Elizabeth, hits on Diana. Instantly, says Diana, "Lesbianism became hateful for its lack of discipline, its prodigality of intimacy and sensuality. [. . .] The illusion of one-ness had gone as quickly as it had come" (125-126). Public lesbian sexuality, the expression of lesbian desire outside the confines of the private home, proves too much for Diana. Lesbian community is accused of being antithetical to white, middle-class respectability: it lacks discipline, it is too sensual, it is "wild" and "a little devil-may-care" (121). Diana ultimately concludes that lesbian community is indeed the "dark temple" – with that metaphor's racist implications of profligate black sexuality – that Dr. Victor Robinson describes. Eschewing Elizabeth's advances, Diana maintains her "vanity as an individual" by proving her lack of similarity to other lesbians (70). Despite the claim in her forward that as a "type" she is "quite important," the autobiography proper reveals that Diana is rather more important for her exceptionalism. Her lesbian identity enables her to observe and

report on the typical behaviors of lesbians, but it is her status as someone who has taken the "middle road" between respectability and marginality, someone who can thus mediate between these two worlds, that makes her important as an autobiographer.

**Diana's Solution: Universal Isolation**

Ironically, it is only when Diana begins to believe in the fundamental isolation of every human being that she can find fulfillment with Leslie. The narrative's penultimate chapter ends with the revelation that allows Diana's return to Leslie in the final chapter. With Jane, Diana says, she had tried to lose herself "in absorption of, and with, another individual, [which] had, in the end, been sickening. In the gradual recognition that a human being is isolated, is unique, is apart and lonely," she say, "I had found my balance and my knowledge of human dignity" (236). In the final chapter, Diana and Leslie have broken up but are still living together. Diana goes to see Leslie at her new job as a singer in a "respectable" beer garden (237). As the men in the audience "whose glances followed [Leslie's] curves" betray a "light of recognition" when Leslie starts to sing, Diana is struck by the "bridge of understanding which reached from audience to performer," and she looks up to find "a Leslie I had never seen" (239). "Perversely," says Diana, "the moment [the audience] had intruded and excluded me, Leslie ceased being a stranger" (239). Diana begins to "tingle with sensations" she "had thought buried" upon seeing Leslie's poise with the audience despite the fact that Leslie is a introvert terrified by public performance: "'I'm glad I can stand close to the piano,' [Leslie] had said. 'It looks natural, I hope, when I put my hand on it. I get so dizzy with

fright'" (240). In witnessing the communal recognition and understanding between Leslie and her audience despite Leslie's secret fear of performance, Diana becomes convinced that one's secrets don't necessarily prevent one's acceptance and even understanding on the part of the dominant culture, figured in this scene as explicitly heterosexual and male.

These two revelations suggest that it is Diana's discovery of a universal isolation akin to her particularly homosexual isolation which serves to rekindle Diana's dignity, to readmit her to the category "human," and which enables her finally to endure the eternal closetedness of lesbian coupledom. In a peculiar twist of logic, Diana remakes difference into sameness: every person is "isolated," "unique," "apart," and "lonely"; each has secrets which ironically are kept, like Leslie's "gallant devices" to cover stage-fright, in order to maintain connection with the dominant community (240). *Diana*'s ending is not simply a lesbian version of the heterosexual heroine's domestic plot, but nor is it based, as the lesbian narratives of later decades were, on ideas of lesbian separatism that celebrate a lack of conformity to dominate culture, or even on a sense of connection or kindred to lesbians as a group. Rather, Diana is able to reconnect with Leslie through their shared secrets, certainly, but also through Leslie's ability to connect to dominate culture despite those secrets. Upon recognizing that radical isolation is "normal" and universal, Diana is able to accept her secret nonconformity *as* conformity. Though Diana suggests that Jane's attempts to break them up represent the great obstacle she and Leslie have overcome, the last lines of the narrative imply that coming to terms with their secret nonconformity has been the couple's real issue: "'Don't you think,' [Leslie] whispered

tremulously, 'there's such a thing as vows meaning more just because they are secret?'" (242).

While *Diana* has been lauded by readers hungry for the lesbian version of the happily-ever-after ending, the narrative is also now ripe for critique by those who see the lesbian novel's focus on love and romance as stereotypically feminine (the traditional realm of the female writer), and the "happy couple" ending as a far from radical variation on the normalizing heterosexual/marriage plot.[75] *Diana*, though, complicates these opposing opinions about the proper plotting of lesbian narrative. For while Diana certainly privileges the romantic couple as the most intimate of human relationships, it is not the kind of relationship that absorbs the self into the other, that figures the female protagonist not as an individual, in Diana's terminology, but as half of a partnership (174). Rather, *Diana* ultimately is written less in the tradition of women's domestic or romantic fiction and is more in line with what Sidonie Smith calls "the West's romance with selfhood," the traditional autobiography and its "universal human subject who is marked individually" (*Subjectivity* 5). At a historical moment when scientific, medical, legal, political, and religious discourses saw failure to conform to white, middle-class standards as a sign of a degeneration which must be gotten rid of in order for the "race" to survive, Diana fully embraces a selfhood that is "isolated" and "unique"—a neutral, implicitly male individualism that is beyond the body and "without color" (236, 3). For a lesbian narrator of 1939 to embrace this position is perhaps radical; to be in the end neither dying nor mad is perhaps radical as well. But in order to claim this subjectivity for herself, Diana must disavow all signs of the embodiment of difference. She must be

colorless and undetectable; she must reject lesbian community; and she must use the privilege she has to hide the privilege she doesn't.

# Chapter 4

## Lesbian Social Realism and the Maternal in *Pity for Women*

Helen Anderson's *Pity for Women* is an appropriate book with which to end this project because, while it is markedly different from the other books I examine, it also connects many of the themes I have touched upon in the three previous chapters, in particular the complex intersection of oppressive gendered, sexual, and economic systems; the difficulties that arise when trying to position individual "lesbian" texts within particular periods and genres; and the lesbian character's trouble with negotiating both community and couple. More than any other lesbian narrative of the thirties, *Pity for Women* provides a gendered history of class and a classed history of gender in its focus on marginalized working-class women.[76] The text is remarkable given that lesbian narratives in this period deal almost exclusively with the middle and upper classes, and that social realist fiction by women is preoccupied with the heterosexual family. A hybrid of (middle-class) lesbian narrative and (heterosexual) women's social realism, *Pity for Women* highlights what these two genres do tend to share: a concern with how women will earn their livings, and a preoccupation with critically examining what we might now refer to as heteronormativity.

*Pity for Women* tells the story of Ann, a single, eighteen-year-old girl who leaves her father's house and comes to the city to work. She moves into a Christian women's club and is struck by the lonely, tragic lives of the poor, single women who live there in

various stages of depression and madness. She is sexually harassed by her boss who also sets her up on a blind date with a chauvinistic, violent man who confirms her fear of the opposite sex. She is happy for a time after the arrival of a new roommate, Elizabeth, with whom she shares a number of highly erotic intimate moments. Though Ann clearly has romantic feelings for Elizabeth, she is unaware even of the existence of homosexuality until Elizabeth tells her the story of another woman who loved Elizabeth "as a lover might" (93). Elizabeth admits that she has never had feelings for men and that she could have continued with this other woman, but she says she broke off the relationship because "it just didn't seem right" (94). She has now firmly committed herself to a single, independent, and celibate life.

After realizing that Ann is falling in love with her, Elizabeth sets her up with David, the only "nice guy" Ann ever encounters, but Ann is unable to reciprocate David's love. Meanwhile, Elizabeth meets Judith Turney, a mysteriously compelling older woman. Judith reveals her homosexuality to Elizabeth, and though Elizabeth is able to resist Judith's almost supernatural draw, she is compelled to submit to Judith's request to be introduced to Ann. After much drama, Ann becomes Judith's lover, and they move in together against Elizabeth's warning to Ann that the homosexual life "is a kind of death" (162). Elizabeth vows never to speak to Ann and Judith again. Though Judith insists that she will create a "magic circle" of care and protection for her, Ann becomes more and more depressed because she has no life or community outside of Judith (165). Judith plans their marriage in order to, she says, provide "something for us both to hold on to," but Ann goes mad during the ceremony (263).[77]

The book jacket copy of the first edition highlights this novel's focus on "the starved lives of lonely girls and women who live in the clubs, hotels and boarding houses for women in any of our large cities." Unlike the other three narratives I have examined, *Pity for Women* is not presented as an autobiography but rather is written in third person, and the first half of the novel is preoccupied not only with Ann Sutley, the main character, but also with the community of women who live in the working-class hotel. Like many social realist writers of her era, Anderson (quoted on the book jacket) says she set out to document the lives of working-class people, in this case women, who are usually unexamined and unrecorded in literature. "I've always been fascinated by the women who could enter a room and whom nobody noticed," she says:

> The woman who is beautiful and professionally helpless [. . .] has her sorrows and her joy, but of the other kind little is known for few are curious. They are the women who work, and dream because they work, and so often nobody looks at them and wonders. I did, and they talked to me. I was so moved by them that I wrote this book.

The brief biography of the author on the first edition's book jacket reads much like the plot of a Josephine Herbst novel: coming from a line of "preachers, farmers, and adventurers," the family's fortunes swung up and down, but Anderson describes her upbringing as "mostly poor," followed by "hunger and illness" in her adult life. In pointing out the precarious class status of the author, the biography helps situate *Pity for Women* in the genre of proletarian literature, officially defined by the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) as "overtly by, for, and about workers" (Rabinowitz 73).[78] However, Anderson also clearly distinguishes herself from the "lonely" and "impractical" women about whom she writes: "*I* was so moved by *them* that I wrote this book"

(emphasis added). She identifies herself in the same blurb as "a sympathetic but objective observer," akin to a journalist in the tradition of documentary reportage. In this way, the book jacket copy situates the author *between* the two class positions of social realist writers, the working class writer who narrates her own class experience, and the leftist intellectual who observes the plight of the working class (sometimes as a "participant observer," sometimes not). As Paula Rabinowitz notes in *Labor and Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America*, proletarian writer Michael Gold set the standard that proletarian writers and their work must be masculine, heterosexual, and working class, a dictum which places writing about working class women in an always already alienated position in relation to the proletarian or social realist genre (20-23). Moreover, Gold's analogy that "worker is to intellectual as male is to female" doubly alienates the middle-class women writers who authored much, if not most, women's social realist fiction, and also articulates class issues through a heterosexual framework (Rabinowitz 52). The precariousness of the female author's "authority" to write about the working class is compounded for Helen Anderson. Anderson's description of herself as an "objective observer" distances her from her working class characters, some of whom have same-sex desire. On the one hand, this distancing protects her from charges of homosexuality, a symptom of bourgeois decadence/disease; on the other hand, it also distances her from her working class subject matter, which threatens to reinscribe her as decadent bourgeois. Her conflicted position is further highlighted on the book jacket by the contrast between her biography of "hunger and illness" and her photo, in which her face is lighted from above and one side in classic

Hollywood starlet fashion.[79] Thus the book jacket underscores the way social realism's generic prescriptions (as defined by Gold and others) require Anderson to simultaneously align herself with her working-class lesbian subject and disavow that alignment. Such incongruities point out some of the difficulties in narrating working-class women's same-sex desire during the thirties.

**Hetero-capitalism and Generic Crisis**

This simultaneous linking and cleaving of author and subject, or rather the author's biographical narrative and the fictional narrative she produces, points toward the (theoretically productive) kinds of fissures typical within texts that attempt to fuse multiple genres and narratives. Rabinowitz argues that women's social realist works are necessarily generic hybrids because only through hybridity can these texts begin to articulate the full experience of working class women. In modernist novels of the 1930s, sexuality tends to function as the major narrative motivation (what Rabinowitz calls the "narrative of desire"), while class conflict is presented in minor narrative episodes in order to situate the narrative historically (79). In classic revolutionary or proletarian novels, the "narrative of history" (of economic and political upheaval) supplants the narrative of desire "as the focus of the novel shifts from the sexual tensions of families and relationships to the class tensions of the workplace" (Rabinowitz 80). Women's social realist novels of the 1930s create a generic crisis by combining the narrative of history and the narrative of desire. Because working class women's lives are so constrained by both economic and domestic concerns, by heterosexuality and

reproduction as well as work and poverty, social realist novels about women must necessarily intertwine these narratives. *Pity for Women* exhibits a generic crisis similar to many other women's social realist narratives, but it compounds that crisis by narrating *same-sex* desire, which necessarily alters both the narrative of desire (exemplified in domestic and romantic fiction) and the narrative of history (exemplified in male-focused proletarian fiction). The effect of lesbian narrative on the plot of desire and the plot of history in *Pity for Women*, I will argue, in fact points out the inseparability of sexual/domestic and economic systems, an inseparability we might indicate by the term "hetero-capitalism," a hybrid word mirroring the defacto fusion of heterosexual and capitalist ideologies in modern Western culture.

The generic crisis in *Pity for Women* is apparent in the basic structure of the novel, which is divided into two sections or "books," one titled "Ann," the other, "Judith." This naming is part of a tradition in the novel; many of the first novels in English (*Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Pamela,* and *Clarissa*, for instance) are named after their main characters, a fact that has been used as evidence of the novel's foundation in individualistic and bourgeois ideologies. On its face, the naming of these two sections of the narrative suggests that Ann and Judith will be the two women the title asks us to have pity for. While this is in some sense true—certainly both Ann and Judith are presented as pitiable and tragic figures—we should recall that Anderson claims on the book jacket to be interested primarily in "the women who could enter a room and whom nobody noticed." In this Anderson clearly doesn't refer to Judith, whom Elizabeth describes as "the sort of person who changes you [. . .] . You look at her, [. . . ] you hear

her voice, and then there doesn't seem to be anyone in the world as important as she is!" (113). The women "whom nobody noticed" are rather the women of the working-class Christian hotel, the community foregrounded in the first half of the novel.

The splitting of the text into "Ann" (Book I), Ann's life before she moves in with Judith, and "Judith" (Book II), Ann's life in Judith's home, represents much more than a temporal shift from one era of Ann's life to the next—the division is also generic. The first section, in its detailed description of multiple characters in a particular women's community, its focus on the working class, and its preoccupation with the position of these women in the heterosexual economy, is in many ways a classic women's social realist text. The second half, in its focus on the demise of a lesbian couple, isolated from any community in an upper middle-class home, reads like a classic lesbian narrative. Simultaneously, though, each section also incorporates the primary ideological concerns of the other. Book One, for example, focuses a great deal on ways that heterosexual, sexist, and homophobic ideologies keep working-class women from establishing collective solidarity. And Book Two, unlike any other narrative until at least the 1970s, tells the lesbian couple's story from the perspective of the working-class femme.

What binds these two books and two genres together, I will argue, is the trope of maternity. In chapter two, I argue that Elisabeth Craigin's *Either Is Love* is structured to fit within a hetero-capitalist ideology which places supreme value on (re)productivity. Similarly, the logic that (even lesbian) individuals and couples must be (re)productive in many ways drives the narrative in *Pity for Women.* In the hetero-capitalist ideology to which much contemporary lesbian narrative still subscribes, a life of meaning is created

through the production of children, careers, or products (such as art and literature, and particularly in the production of books about lesbians). All of these are effected through "labor," and—as many feminists have pointed out—the word labor's association with capitalism and production on one hand, and heterosexuality and reproduction on the other, usefully illustrates the multiple ways in which issues of production and reproduction are intertwined. Both women's social realist novels and lesbian narratives tend to highlight these connections, though in different ways.

Whereas industrial accidents, strikes, and sellout unions are incidents of import for working-class male characters, heterosexual sex – particularly its concomitants and consequences – marks the key occasions of development for working-class female characters (Rabinowitz 115). Heterosexual intercourse, marital rape, prostitution, sexual harassment, domestic violence, illegal abortion, forced sterilization, childbirth, the inability to feed ones hungry children – these, according to Rabinowitz, "become the focal moments that forge consciousness" for women in social realist novels (115). As the list above suggests, this focus more often than not results in a litany of heterosexuality's drawbacks for women. For example, the narrator of Agnes Smedley's *Daughter of Earth* (1929) recounts stories of her father terrorizing her mother and of her own experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault. At one point she proclaims, "Sex meant violence, marriage or prostitution, and marriage meant children, weeping nagging women and complaining men; it meant unhappiness, and all the things that I feared and dreaded and intended to avoid" (181). Mazie, the child main character of Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio* (written 1930s, published 1974), is molested, endures frequent sexual harassment, and

witnesses her father's rape of her mother while her mother is ill from a miscarriage. Similarly, the girl in Meridel LeSueur's *The Girl* (written 1939, published 1977) encounters domestic violence, prostitution, unsafe abortion, forced sterilization, and illness from childbirth.

But though maternity (particularly multiple, successive childbirth) often kills female characters or drives them insane, it also becomes a way for female characters to enter into the narrative of history because motherhood links women together through past and future and often becomes the occasion, in these novels, for female solidarity and collectivity. In both *Yonnondio* and *The Girl*, for example, the mother-daughter relationship constitutes the central dynamic of the story and is also the central medium through which history and knowledge are transmitted (Rabinowitz 129). Lacking a feminist framework, Rabinowitz suggests, women social realist writers "relied on a conventional narrative of feminine desire derived from domestic ideology to deflect the narrative of history away from the purely masculine proletariat" (136). In this way, maternity becomes the trope by which the intersection of class and gender is narrated (Rabinowitz 117).

To what extent, then, does *Pity for Women,* a working-class women's narrative of same-sex desire, necessarily enter into the trope of maternity in order to narrate the intersection of class and gender? Because, as I have suggested, there is already a strong metaphorical link between biological reproductivity and economic productivity in lesbian narratives of the twenties and thirties, as well as a strong tradition of railing against the gender inequalities inherent in heterosexual ideology, it is not surprising that *Pity for*

*Women* shares with other social realist texts a love-hate relationship with maternity. Women's social realist fiction tends to depict heterosexuality-cum-maternity as destructive to women, yet also virtually the only avenue through which female characters gain strength, power, and even subjectivity. In this, *Pity for Women* reads like a classic women's proletarian novel: it begins with an unrelenting portrayal of hetero-capitalism's pernicious effects on single working-class women, yet it ends literally with a dream of maternity that, because unattainable, drives its main character insane.

**Trading on the Margins**

Like most women's social realist fiction, *Pity for Women* (at least in Book One) portrays women existing near the bottom of the labor economy, but unlike the more mainstream genre, it also depicts those living on the margins of the heterosexual economy, so-called "surplus women." England experienced a cultural crisis when deaths from the First World War created two million more women than men. As Helen Fraser, an activist in the British women's movement, succinctly explains in a 1924 *New York Times* article, "England and its 2,000,000 surplus women whom the war cheated out of husbands and also jobs faces a critical period. There are not enough jobs to go around, and all the professions are crowded with men" (Ross). As Fraser makes clear, the crisis at hand is both sexual *and* economic. Interestingly, there seems to have been concern about surplus women in the United States throughout the twenties and thirties as well, even though the U.S. Census indicates that there were slightly *more* men than women in the United States from 1820 (the first date gender statistics are available) through 1950

(*World Almanac*). Nevertheless, the concern is apparent in news stories on the 1930 Census: "Female Ratio Rose in 1930 Population," one headline warns, and another story explains that although males "in the country's population as a whole exceeded females," "there was an excess of females over males at virtually every year of age from 16 to 30," the prime age range for marriage and maternity ("Female Ratio" 16; "Oldest, Youngest" 2). In *Pity for Women,* Ann recalls being told in school that "[n]ow there are five women to every three men in the United States," "[n]ot enough to go around," and though this ratio does not appear to bear any relation to reality, it does help explain the near-hysteria regarding marriage and men that runs throughout the halls of the women's hotel (22).

The term "surplus" is obviously economic, pointing out both the widespread cultural perception of women as commodities (part of a system of supply and demand), as well as the interdependence of heterosexual and capitalist systems since a surplus of women in the marriage market creates a surplus of women in the job market. In addition, the sexuality of these single women is also implicitly "surplus" and thus in danger of being out of the control of heteronormative regimes. This particular fear is apparent in earlier narratives about surplus women such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "A Surplus Woman" (1916) and Sylvia Stevenson's novel *Surplus* (1924), but it is most explicitly articulated as a fear of female homosexuality in *Pity for Women.* If the book jacket copy is any indication, publisher Doubleday's marketing strategy seems to have been to tap into this general fear. The front cover tells us that we are about to read a "profoundly revealing story" about women who are "herded together in any American city," and the inside front flap reveals "what can happen": "a dynamic older woman"

"drag[s]" Ann away "to live enclosed in an environment as strange as any in fiction." In *Surplus*, a novel about a British woman "who refused to marry because her deepest love had been given to another girl" (319), surplus status is explicitly tied to abnormal sexual (and maternal) instincts by a psychotherapist in the story, who explains: "their conscious minds take charge and persuade them that, as there aren't enough men to go around, they had better not waste their time wanting what they can't get. So they go about saying men are contemptible animals, and that having a kiddy is rather a shocking proceeding than otherwise" (131). In *Pity for Women*, interestingly, it is women more often than men who are described as "animals," and in fact the novel repeatedly emphasizes the subhuman status of Ann's fellow women residents through three extended metaphors. The Christian hotel is described alternately as a zoo, asylum, and tomb; and the constant association of these "surplus women" with such images serves to highlight their inferior position outside of "normal," "productive," and "maternal" life.

On her first day in the women's hotel, Ann amuses herself by giving the residents animal names that describe each ones physiology and personality—"Ostrich," "Chicken," "Saint Bernard," "Molty Bird," "Octopus"—and the women are continually referred to by these animal names (5). The women's bestial qualities are clearly associated with their marginal position within the heterosexual economy. Imogene, the "Saint Bernard," for example, has a hanging "dog's face" that she drags through her days as a secretary (10). Though she self-importantly proclaims her job to be "as much satisfaction as one can get out life," Imogene clearly despairs over the fact that she will never marry or, as Ann puts it, "No one would ever want Imogene, and Imogene knew it" (13). During their

first conversation, Imogene asks Ann, "Where you married, ever? Of course not, why did I ask such a thing? Did you ever hope to be? Why, of course you did! Now why did I say that?" Ann looks down at her own ring finger and remembers how she "had always looked at it with a kind of incredulous despair" (11).

Ann quickly recognizes that "there was something strange about all these single women shut in together" (8), and when "Octavia [the Octopus] shouted out one night at dinner that some women's clubs were asylums, Ann knew what she meant" (10). Ann soon discovers that her room used to belong to a woman who "got turned down by her boyfriend and hung herself in the shower room" (18), and later her friend Katherine drinks ammonia when her pregnancy causes her boyfriend to dump her (77). When Imogene finally breaks down, sobbing, "I don't have anybody in the world. Nobody. [. . .] I can't live like this, this way, forever, I can't and I won't!" she triggers Ann's first psychotic episode, signaled in the novel by a point-of-view switch to first person in the form of Ann's stream-of-consciousness internal monologue (98). These and numerous other examples in the novel make clear that it is the "surplus" status of these women that drives them crazy.

In addition to references to the many suicides and abortions that have taken place at the women's club, Book One is awash with images of death that are linked to the women's inability to take proper part in the hetero-capitalist economy. On the second page of the novel, we are told (in the text's typically overwrought and sentimental style) that this club for "unmarried women who have to support themselves" felt "as if someone pressed a chill hand over each mouth and whispered, 'If you are a virgin, be still—and if

you are poor, be wary.' And so the room in the night covered them like a tumulous, shutting from their eyes and their thoughts all radiance, with the breath of silence their nuptials and the yawning bed their spouse" (4). Later, during her first episode of insanity, Ann leaves Imogene and, walking back to her room, thinks, "You dog eyes aching my life out with you, someday . . . open here the door to the tunnel that let you into the tombs of women here" (101).[80] Even Elizabeth, who provides an alternative model for surplus women by consciously choosing a "Spartan," "strong," "independent," and celibate life, is associated with death (32, 34). The morning after Elizabeth arrives, Ann watches her lying "stretched with all the lean dignity of a queen in her grave" (32), and later Ann notices that when hugging her friend "she would feel an inward stiffening and see her look elsewhere, and see that the gay smile lay dead" (39). In deliberately turning away from both heterosexual and homosexual sex, the novel implies, Elizabeth leads an existence so repressed and serene that it is practically lifeless.

But the novel presents heterosexual relationships, a traditional means of escape from the tomblike women's hotel, as fraught with danger, if not death. For example, Ann's sexually-harassing boss sets her up with his friend William, who tells Ann repeatedly that he'll "never give another girl anything until she gives [him] something," thus reducing heterosexual relationships to economic transactions (23). Ann rebuffs his suggestion that "all little girls" like to trade jewelry for sex, and later their only date ends in an aborted sexual assault (26). Later when Katherine sets Ann up on a blind double-date with Wally, he ignores Ann's requests to stop touching her until "he was pressing tighter, and she knew that soon there would be no stopping place. Would it always be

like this, so fearful, with doubt crying out and turning over in her? Couldn't he feel it?" (62-63). Ann ends this assault by flinging her arm and breaking all the glasses on the table next to her; Katherine and her boyfriend, Charles, come in to investigate the noise. Ann is sent home in a taxi only after William and Charles have a good laugh over the absurdity of virgins who get angry when men won't take no for an answer. In these and many other ways, the novel presents virginity as a kind of death but (heterosexual) sex as part of a consumer economy in which women are victimized. This puts single, "surplus" women between the proverbial rock and hard place. In its articulation of women's choices, *Pity for Women* is similar to other social realist writings by women, although social realist texts rarely present celibacy as a possible alternative to participation in the heterosexual economy. In *Daughter of Earth*, for example, the narrator remarks that only women who work and are unmarried are independent and free, but Helen, the only female character who remains single and "independent," ends up a prostitute. The narrator makes clear her opinion of the relationship between heterosexual and economic systems when she says of Helen, "To me her profession seemed as honorable as that of any married woman—she made her living in the same way as they made theirs, except that she made a better living and had more rights over her body and soul" (Smedley 136).

**Lesbian Maternity**

The connection between heterosexuality and capitalism, between reproduction and production, is also frequently articulated in lesbian narratives, although with a difference. In lesbian narratives focused on middle- or upper-class characters, maternal

labor is often replaced with capital labor; productivity substitutes for reproduction. In *Either is Love*, the lesbian couple envies those able to "mak[e] a child out their love" (Craigin 106), but this desire for reproduction—far from destroying the relationship or rendering the narrator mad—is successfully replaced by their professional productivity: their mutual love and support enables one to become a leading chemist and the other to write several books (123). In *The Stone Wall,* the narrator marries a man solely out of her desire to have children and fears that her same-sex desire caused her miscarriage, but once she can no longer conceive, her maternal desire is channeled into maternal-like labor: she becomes a teacher and opens her own business to sell her invention, an educational toy for children. Furthermore, she claims that her narrative's primary purpose is to serve as a guide to parents. In *The Well of Loneliness,* Stephen realizes that her lover Mary "needs all the things" that Stephen is powerless to give, chief among them children, but until the very end of the novel Stephen believes that her writing—and the admiration and acceptance that will follow literary success—will fulfill Mary's needs (425).

Because these characters are educated members of the middle class, or upper class in Stephen's case, they are able to find satisfaction in meaningful work, work that makes them feel useful and, though not reproductive, at least productive. In contrast, the women highlighted in Book One of *Pity for Women* have dead-end, subsistence jobs. Early in the novel, Imogene claims to be "such a busy woman" in her secretarial job at "Hitchcock & Flint" and declares, "I suppose it's as much satisfaction as one can get out of life" (11). But the novel presents these remarks as a feeble bluff, belied by Imogene's sad "dog's

eyes," her obsession with the idea of marriage, and her eventual breakdown (99). Miss Hendricks, a head secretary and Ann's supervisor, is made fun of for being an old maid "married" to the bosses' door (16). Effie, another hotel resident, claims that when Miss Hendricks "comes to work in the morning with those hollow pits in her cheeks you can be sure he's worked her hard the night before! You can't tell me he doesn't know she'd crack her splintery back for him" (16). Her loyalty to her boss is seen as a pathetic substitute for love, sex and marriage, not as a love of productive and meaningful work. Ann also expresses dissatisfaction with her options: "I want something more!," she cries. "I don't want to rot behind a desk in a little town" (52). "I can't stand watching women work and come home, and work and come home, and stare, and that's all" (53). Interestingly, the only female character who seems to derive some satisfaction from her job, although it is a rather stoic and sterile satisfaction, is Elizabeth, who has what she claims is "really a man's job" in an attorney's office (35). But barring the unlikely ability to acquire a "man's job," marriage and motherhood are held up as a woman's only route to meaningful living, even though these options seem equally likely to end in despair.

In Book One, Ann's reactions to traditional marriage and maternity range from longing to contempt. On one hand, she feels along with Imogene and most of the other girls the "incredulous despair" of being a surplus woman, a woman with nothing on her ring finger (11). On the other hand, when Ann imagines Katherine's future as a wife and mother, it's not a pretty picture:

> She would be happy with a man for a while, [. . .] then someday grow bitter, and a double chin would fall from the plump jawbones. It would

> shake loose when she was angry, when lace was not enough to hold her husband's love, when youth was spent. Her hands would wrinkle and puff behind some desperate red shellac. But, before that, they would travel, small and polished, over the sticky red blob of a baby's head, Charles's baby. She would have grown plump and sick and have had a baby, then she would grow plump and wrinkled and suffer another one for him. (69)

Earlier Ann makes clear to Elizabeth that this is not the kind of life she wants to lead: "all the girls [at home] marry so young, and just anybody," she says. "Not that anybody would marry me, but I've found out I'm going to be particular. I want something more" (52). Right before David proposes marriage to Ann, she imagines the conversations married mothers have with each other, conversations mostly centered around which husbands are good "providers" (140-141). "Marry your man and suckle the race," thinks Ann. "Breed. Breed and chatter. Polly want a crack-er-r-r?" (141). The pun "cracker" / "crack her" suggests that this breeding and chattering eventually "cracks" women, breaks them down. Although her contempt for this traditional path is typically undercut by her simultaneous wistful desire to be the kind of girl that someone would marry, the fact is that Ann becomes that girl when David proposes. Because she turns David down, the text proves Ann to be not a surplus woman who chooses homosexuality only because "normal" romantic routes are foreclosed, but rather a woman who feels compelled to choose Judith over any man.

In Book Two, however, this rejection of marriage and motherhood seems to be undone by the figure of Phyllis, Judith's ex-girlfriend, who leaves Judith because she wants a baby. In many ways, Phyllis's story is the story of Stephen's Mary Llewellyn after *The Well of Loneliness* ends. At the end of *The Well*, Stephen drives Mary into the arms of Martin, realizing that that Martin is "a creature endowed with incalculable

bounty, having in this hands all those priceless gifts which she, love's mendicant, could never offer" (430). Similarly, after relating how Phyllis left her for Phillip, Judith explains, "He can give her . . . so many things" (192). In both cases it is clear that a child is chief among the gifts these men are able to bestow. Given that Ann rejects David twice, stays with Judith, and then has a joyous dream of giving birth right before going insane during her "marriage" to Judith, it would seem that Ann's story is a cautionary tale about what would have happened if Mary and Stephen (or Phyllis and Judith) had stayed together. On the surface, Phyllis's story threatens to undo the critique of heterosexuality that the rest of the novel provides, and to reinscribe literal marriage and maternity as the only path to happiness.

As Judith and Ann drive up to visit Phyllis and the new baby for the first time, Judith complains, "Phyllis has a baby, Ann. We have nothing to prove our unity," echoing the desire of the narrator in *Either Is Love* to produce a child from her union with Rachel (197). The novel's portrayal of Philip, warm husband and doting father, and the angelic baby girl, a "chubby stir of movement" with "[b]right lilting curls," indicates a rather idyllic nuclear family, but the correctness of Phyllis's choice is questioned at every turn in this scene. Upon showing them the baby, Phyllis remarks, "Don't you think she looks like you, Judy? Do you know that Phillip says so, too?" (197). And when Phillip and Judith are alone, Phillip confesses that when Phyllis was near death and delirious after the baby was born, she couldn't recognize Phillip and instead cried Judith's name (200). At the same moment, Ann discovers on the mantle a silver statue of Phyllis identical to the stone one in Judith's house. "I like the white one best," Ann tells Phyllis.

"'Yes, I like it, too. This was a mistake,' Phyllis said, startled" (200). While the "mistake" is ostensibly the silver statue, the previous exchange between Judith and Phillip suggests that the "this" might be Phyllis' choice. A moment later Phyllis cautions Ann not to "keep things locked inside": "That's what I did," she says. "They piled up and got so heavy I couldn't go on any more. [. . .] I do love Philip—I don't mean that I don't love him—and I wanted a baby, I wanted a reason for living. The baby gave that to me," but "you can't get over loving her," Phyllis admits (201). Looked at in its entirety, this scene suggests that Judith should have been the "father" of Phyllis's baby (particularly since the baby looks like Judith), that Judith should have been the spouse waiting for the mother to recover from labor. Her relationship with Judith lacked a "reason for living," which in Phyllis's psyche can only be imagined as a baby, but her relationship with Phillip seems to be missing something as well.

It is clear, though, that Ann is following the same path toward destruction that led Phyllis to break up with Judith. Phyllis gives a parting warning to Ann that she will "be bored and lonely and feel out of place" because she "won't know anybody but Judith's friends," who will be jealous of Ann even though not one of them would take Ann's place (201-2). This problem of female friends coming between the couple is a staple of lesbian narrative that is most often attributed within the narratives to an inability to differentiate between lovers and friends in a world that doesn't recognize same-sex romantic relationships.[81] Interestingly, this reasoning also comes back to the trope of maternity since the production of a child is explicitly longed for by some lesbian characters as a literal embodiment, and thus "proof," of sexual union. This problem,

which I will return to later, is a significant force in *Pity for Women;* but the issue of not knowing "anybody but Judith's friends" also gets at another trope of maternity of great importance to this narrative, the figuration of the lesbian relationship as a mother-child dyad.

In her relationship with Judith, Ann is clearly supposed to assume the position of a child whose world is completely circumscribed and fulfilled by Judith's metaphorical position as what Freud termed the "pre-Oedipal mother." Although the little attention Freud pays to female homosexuality is fraught with contradiction and confusion, in "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" (1920) he does in part place the origin of female homosexuality in a pre-Oedipal desire for the mother. In "Psychogenesis" Freud also assures us that "beyond all shadow of doubt" the female object of his patient's desire "was a substitute for—the mother," in that case an unloving mother (20). As Teresa de Lauretis notes in *The Practice of Love*, the "homosexual-maternal metaphor," based in readings of Freud and Lacan, figures largely (and, she argues, dangerously for lesbians) in much feminist writing of the last half of the twentieth century (182). It also, I would argue, figures largely in lesbian narrative of the twenties and thirties.

How much this metaphor occurs as a result of the increasing influence of psychoanalysis, and how much it is a product of the limited ways early twentieth-century American culture could imagine relationships between women, is impossible to say. But the tendency of mothers to be unkind or absent in lesbian narrative is striking: Stephen (*Well of Loneliness*), Leslie (*Diana*), and Mary (*Stone Wall*) could all be said to have

"bad" mothers; while Sally *(Surplus),* Mary (*Well of Loneliness*), Juno (*Stone Wall*) and Ann (*Pity for Women*) all lose their mothers early in life. On the other hand, the history of Western literature is fraught with bad and absent mothers, so the lack of (or lacking) mother figure is perhaps simply characteristic of women's narrative in general. More interesting is the extent to which same-sex relationships are explicitly figured as maternal. For example, in *Diana* the 21-year-old Leslie, says Diana, was intimidated by "my superior experience in years" and "came to look up to me, to revere my opinion, even to emulate my tastes" (177). Right before becoming Leslie's lover, Diana says, "I became conscious of a gentleness with her that was almost maternal" (184). When she first meets Mary, Stephen Gordon, ten years Mary's senior, considers her "immature figure" (Hall 278), and throughout *The Well of Loneliness,* Stephen refers to Mary as "the child" (Hall 286-287). In Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood,* the doctor asks Robin and Jenny, "Love of woman for woman, what insane passion for unmitigated anguish and motherhood brought that into the mind?" (75).

In *Pity for Women*, the infantilization of Ann increases as the novel progresses. At the time of their meeting, Ann is around eighteen and just out of school, while Judith is described as a business woman with grey streaks in her hair (132). She first introduces herself to Ann by saying, "Little girl, my name is Judith" (134). Three years later, the maternal nature of their relationship is starkly apparent. In one attempt to provide Ann with friends (always young women who have crushes on Judith), Judith invites Delilah over and arranges a kind of slumber party for the "girls"; and instead of sleeping as usual with her partner, Judith makes up a bed in the living room for Delilah and Ann to share

(218). Later, when Ann brings home a strange young woman, Nyssa, in an attempt to make her own friends, Judith remarks to them, "I am going to get you children a bite to eat" (237). And as Ann jealously watches Judith and her friend Nadene in the garden, she meekly asks Judith, "May I come out?," and the narration slips into Ann's internal monologue:

> Her voice rose high, and then it quavered in the unbroken darkness. There was no answer. No wonder, they hadn't heard. . . . Can't you speak confidently like a woman? You are twenty-one now, you know. No reason now to speak high like a child afraid of the dark. [. . .] She's her friend. If you aren't careful they will know that you are a jealous child! (242)

Here Ann echoes a wish she has at the beginning of the novel: "I want to be a woman, and sure of myself—somehow" (53). But instead of having, as the narrator of *Either Is Love* describes it, a relationship in which two women "helped to build one another" (Craigin 123), Ann and Judith seem trapped in a vicious cycle: Ann becomes more insane the more she is treated like a child, and Judith treats her more and more like a child as a consequence of her increasing insanity.

Ultimately, Ann's insanity stems, I argue, from three interrelated conflicts, two "plot-based," for lack of a better term, and one generic. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the issues represented by these conflicts are touched upon in all of the other texts I examine, but in *Pity for Women,* they come to a head in and around the trope of maternity. The first conflict centers on Ann's inability to negotiate a happy ending for herself within a hetero-capitalist system. This conflict for the character, which has to do with Ann's refusal to accept any of the identity positions available to her, is mirrored by a generic conflict that culminates in insanity at the novel's end because neither the

narrative of history nor the narrative of desire can achieve any traditional means of closure. The third unresolved conflict has to do with Ann's inability to negotiate between the community and the couple, a problem that again parallels generic differences between social realism and lesbian narrative.

These three conflicts are expressed through two dreams right before Ann's final breakdown. The first dream is confused and repetitive: Ann is looking for Judith along a "[s]trange street." She is given a key to a door. She opens it to find "[t]wo girls there sitting. The little one leaning. 'Oh, I'm sorry, I have the wrong room!' Eyes looking. 'DO YOU BELONG?'" (255). This sequence of events is repeated, and at the end of the dream the sentence "THE EYE OF RUTH IS UPON YOU!" is repeated until Judith wakes Ann up (255, original emphasis). As Ann cries, Judith whispers, "Entreat me not to leave thee . . ." (256). Ann goes back to sleep, and "[b]ending over her, Judith cried while Ann lay dreaming. . . ." (257). The second dream, described in perhaps the novel's most overwrought and ornate prose, begins, "Her breasts, like two breathless animals, were thirsting in the rain" (257). Ann finds herself literally barefoot and pregnant, and the miracle of that elates her (257). She sees the clouds overhead transform into the figure of a woman whose "tears" of rain then fall down onto Ann, presumably to quench her thirsty breasts. Ann then herself becomes "the woman of the sky," floating over the hills (258). She embraces a tree; "[t]hen she pressed her thighs with her hands and laid her cheek against the tree and closed her eyes" (258). After a "thunderous pullulation within her," "the child lay between her knees" (258). She holds the child "between her breasts, where they stood out like happy fruit on either side of her body" (258). Her

breasts overflow with milk that "stream[s] over into the grass and under her" (258). White flowers spring up wherever the milk falls, and the flowers raise her and her child up to the sky. She sobs, draws the child close to her, and feels her own tears on her body. The dream ends thus: "Then, half awake, she knew that the tears came from Judith, Judith, leaning over her and crying. . . . Don't cry, Judith . . . please, don't cry . . . Judith, I have a baby. . . . Smiling she put her hands to her breasts. They were flat and dry" (259).

At first glance, this second dream might appear to express a desire for "natural" and heterosexual maternal bliss, particularly in the close connection made between motherhood and nature: Ann seems to become "Mother Nature" as her body, her milk, engenders vegetation. However, there is no man in this dream. Rather, right before giving birth, Ann merges with and then fully becomes the woman in the sky, a figure aligned with Judith since both are crying over Ann's body. And after the birth, what Ann dreams as the feeling of her own tears becomes the feeling of Judith's tears as she bends over Ann. Far from a fantasy of heterosexual reproduction, this dream—in its merging of female bodies—is a wish for same-sex connection and reproduction, a wish unconsciously expressed by Phyllis in her remark that her daughter looks just like Judith.

Ann's apparent desire for same-sex reproduction in this wish-fulfillment dream is, I think, closely related to her earlier nightmare in which she dreams of looking for Judith only to find repeatedly the "wrong room" in which two girls are sitting, the smaller one leaning on the larger one. This dream occurs shortly after a series of scenes in which Ann expresses her jealousy over Nadene, a close friend of Judith with whom Judith

previously had some sort of romantic relationship. When Ann first meets Nadene, she is shocked by her physical familiarity with Judith; they kiss, sit close to each other, and so forth. Ann wonders, "If it had been a man and a woman, would it have been different?" (243). She watches Nadene "leaning against [her] Judith," and thinks, "Lying against her shoulder just as you have! Just alike! Everybody is just alike!" (235). Ann becomes increasingly concerned that her relationship with Judith seems undifferentiated, and sometimes even lesser than, Judith's relationships with her women friends. As "Judith's girl," her status is in many ways below that of friends with whom Judith seems to have a more equitable and adult connection; yet, as I've mentioned, the maternal trope is one of the few metaphors available through which to articulate a special relationship between two women. The dream of same-sex reproduction, then, is Ann's attempt to imagine a way out of this double-bind of the maternal trope. If she produces a child with Judith, Ann simultaneously shifts her position from child to mother of child (adult woman) *and* clearly differentiates her relationship with Judith from all of Judith's other relationships.

In addition, this second dream gets at a second issue which seems to contribute to Ann's eventual madness: her lack of (re)productivity as the working-class but non-productive member of a lesbian relationship. The chapter containing both dreams begins with Judith listening with dread to Ann "still scrubbing the walls in the kitchen":

> It seemed to Judith now that for the last three months [. . .] she had been conscious of only one thing—how hard Ann worked at nothing. Even when the house was painfully trim after she had praised her for it and pleaded with her to rest, she heard that brush with [its] deadly wetness grating back and forth [. . .] like a pendulum. (246)

Working "at nothing," unnecessary to the function of the house since Judith has plenty of money to provide for both of them and, unlike most heterosexual "kept women," unable to reproduce, Ann is—within hetero-capitalist ideology—"surplus" even within her relationship. To use Paula Rabinowitz's terms, Ann is ultimately unable to enter into either the narrative of history or the narrative of desire because she lacks access to maternity, and it is this narrative impossibility that leads to madness. In the introduction to *Come as You Are*, Judith Roof notes that the seemingly "natural" shape of narrative is in fact a reproduction "of the quintessentially naturalized" processes of human reproduction and capitalist production. "The connection between human heterosexual reproduction and capitalist production," she says, "provides an irresistible merger of family and state, life and livelihood, heterosexual order and profit whose formative presence and naturalized reiterations govern the conceptions, forms, logic, and operation of narrative" (xvii). Equally concerned with the ways ideologies circumscribe narrative, both Roof and Rabinowitz help us see the extent to which *Pity for Women*'s plot is shaped by the very ideology it ostensibly seeks to undermine: the novel ends in chaos and madness because Ann's predicament cannot be reconciled within the hetero-capitalist logic that drives it.

But while Ann's predicament – her inability to fit into a maternal schema as either child or mother, producer or reproducer – is irreconcilable on the level of character and plot, the novel's generic hybridity – its focus on class and couple, work and love – is synthesized in a final maternal trope derived from the Old Testament (and Jewish Tanakh) Book of Ruth. In the last chapter, Judith attempts to unite herself with Ann

through a same-sex marriage ceremony that is interrupted by her realization that Ann has gone insane. The ceremony consists of repeating Ruth 1:16-17, verses which are now commonly recited as vows at lesbian commitment ceremonies and weddings.[82] The Book of Ruth tells the story of Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth. After Naomi's husband and two sons die, she makes plans to go back to her homeland and instructs her daughters-in-law to leave her and return to their own families. The other daughter-in-law obeys, but Ruth says this to Naomi, words repeated as Ann and Judith's vows: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. [. . .] Where thou diest, will I die, and there I will be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Anderson 266).[83] And thus Ruth goes with Naomi.

This part of the Book of Ruth is commonly referenced as The Bible's best example of love between women by scholars both sympathetic to and oblivious of the story's resonance for lesbians. In my reading of *Pity for Women*, however, the whole story is essential, for reasons that should soon be obvious. Naomi tells Ruth to glean ears of corn in the field of Naomi's distant relative Boaz, presumably because, without close male relatives, the two women have no other means of survival. Naomi continually instructs Ruth in how to secure Boaz' favor, and their plan succeeds when Boaz takes Ruth as his wife. Ruth and Boaz have a son, the scripture states,

> And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

> And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi. (Ruth 4: 16-17)

While common sense suggests it is highly unlikely that Naomi actually nursed Ruth's son from her own breast given that Naomi bore her last child decades before, the story implies that the son is given by Ruth to Naomi to replace her dead sons. Jody Hirsh, in an essay about scriptural "role models" for Jewish gays and lesbians, notes that traditional interpretations insist the tale is about Ruth's conversion to Judaism, but that actually the entire story "hinges on the strength of the women's primary commitment to each other" (85). And it does seem clear that Ruth marries Boaz as a way for the women to stay together as well as be provided for.

In the first of Ann's two dreams in the penultimate chapter, someone (Ann? a disembodied voice?) repeats "THE EYE OF RUTH IS UPON YOU!", and Ann wakes up saying, "Judith, The eye of Ruth—" (256). Then Ann begins to cry, and Judith holds her, whispering, "Entreat me not to leave thee . . . " (256). The dream centers around finding Judith, who has presumably "left" Ann; the repeated statement suggests an "eye of Ruth" that reproaches Ann for not being able to save her relationship, for failing to enact the devotion that keeps Ruth and Naomi together. However, there are key differences between Ann's relationship with Judith and Ruth's relationship with Naomi. For one thing, Ruth's love for Naomi is ostensibly chaste; however much the story can be interpreted as a model for lesbian love, there is no obvious sexual desire between women in the narrative, which makes their relationship more culturally acceptable and comprehensible than Ann and Judith's. More importantly, though, Ruth and Naomi's connection is forged out of multiple heterosexual and maternal bonds. In *Between Men,*

Eve Sedgwick argues that in Western culture bonds between men are cemented through the exchange of women, but these "exchanges" also enable bonds between women (*Between Men* 25-6). Naomi and Ruth are bound to each other through their men: Ruth marries first Naomi's son and then her "kinsman" Boaz, thus twice making Naomi her relative. And though the death of Ruth's husband technically releases her from ties to her mother-in-law, the mother-daughter relationship between Ruth and Naomi makes their devotion to each other translatable through a heterosexual paradigm. It is *as if* they are mother and daughter, a distinctive female bond which anyone can comprehend. The story also allows Ruth to be both mother *and* child, thus overcoming Mary Llewellen and Ann Sutley's ultimately unsatisfying roles as un-reproductive children in their own mother-daughter dyads. Clearly figured as Naomi's "daughter," Ruth marries Boaz and becomes a mother herself while remaining familially connected (reconnecting through marriage) to Naomi. Moreover, Ruth is able to take a lover's position vis-à-vis Naomi: she gives her son to Naomi, thus enacting Judith's (and Stephen Gordon's) wish to give a child to her lover. Ironically, because she is much more closely circumscribed by heterosexual demands than Ann—who after all leaves her family of origin, becomes a single working girl, and moves in with a woman who is not her relative—Ruth is able to be literally reproductive while also seeming to maintain her primary connection with another woman.

In repeatedly alluding to the Book of Ruth at the end of the novel, *Pity for Women* echoes the same tropes of maternity that have been in play throughout the narrative: the construction of a permanent relationship between two adult women as a mother-daughter

dyad, along with the idea that the "child" must give up everything of her own for the people, lodging, and God of the "mother"; the idea that producing a child for the beloved constitutes the ultimate present or proof of love; and the focus on "surplus" women who are outside of both the heterosexual (reproductive) and market (productive) economies.[84] In fact, the story of Ruth and Naomi provides a stark example of the connection between reproductive and productive labor: because Ruth and Naomi have lost their relationship to heterosexual reproduction, their husbands and sons, they cannot produce the basic necessities for their survival. Naomi gleans in Boaz's fields both to obtain food for that day and to obtain financial security in the future (by getting Boaz to marry her). In these ways, the Book of Ruth exemplifies the collision of genres (social realist and lesbian, or narrative of history and narrative of desire) and collusion of ideologies (capitalism and heterosexism) that create narrative tension in *Pity for Women.*[85] If the narrative of history is the (masculine) narrative of economic or political upheaval and the narrative of desire is the (feminine) narrative of sexuality and reproduction, then the Book of Ruth is the narrative of the cyclical intertwining of the two: Naomi leaves because of an economic crisis (famine), and returns with Ruth because of a reproductive crisis (the death of her husband and sons); Ruth marries Boaz out of economic crisis (poverty), and the Book of Ruth ends by listing a family line leading to King David. Ruth is key to a patrilineal chain in which "Boaz begat Obed" (Ruth's son), "And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David" (Ruth 4:21-22). Thus we discover that Ruth becomes part the narrative of history (in this case perhaps *the* narrative of Western history, the Old Testament) through the narrative of desire. Ann's madness in the very middle of a recitation of Ruth 1:16-17,

then, harks back to the novel's earlier descriptions of the hotel's "surplus" women: because they are exterior to the patrilineal chain, they are subhuman (animalistic), dead, or insane. Ann's madness is figuratively a female expression of frustration over the heterosexual economy's hold on narrative for two millennia, the span of time between Ruth and Ann. With no narrative of history or desire, there is nowhere else for the plot to go.

Ann's madness can be seen as a rebellious refusal of all solutions presented to her. She might have chosen a life as the infantilized half of a lesbian couple living in isolation; "normal" heterosexual marriage and children with David; the single but "kept" existence of Katherine; or the independent but lonely and celibate life of Elizabeth. She wants, as she says, "something more" (52). But what exactly is that something more? There is evidence to suggest that it is the same thing Judith wants and tries to create with Ann, and the same thing Ann tries to create with Elizabeth at the women's hotel: a "magic circle," as Judith calls it, within a circle of female friends (165). Both women, in other words, desire a world in which they may have both a highly-differentiated relationship with one particular woman, and a place within a women's community marked by mutual love and support, rather than competition and jealousy. At the women's hotel, Ann wants to stay with Elizabeth forever in a special bond, but she also wants to be friends with other girls who are frivolous, but fun (53). Eventually, though, Elizabeth's fierce independence even from Ann, combined with her distain for Ann's other friends, leaves Ann lonely as ever. Moreover, as Elizabeth observes, the hotel residents, like most women, "are so cruel to each other, and always when they should be

most kind!" (72). In desperate competition for the supposedly dwindling population of men, these surplus women feel primarily jealousy or contempt toward each other. Similarly, Judith tries to create a "magic" same-sex relationship surrounded and supported by her circle of female friends, but the inability of everyone involved to sufficiently differentiate friendship from romantic love also results in jealousy and contempt. Judith employs a mother-daughter trope in an attempt to differentiate her love for Ann, but the result forces Ann to become somewhat less-than Judith's friends, whom Judith treats as adult equals.

In an essay entitled "From Isolation to Diversity: Self and Communities in Twentieth-Century Lesbian Novels," Linnea Stenson argues that lesbian novels in English have moved from Hall's negative portrayal of a rather miserable lesbian community in 1927, to the virtual disappearance of lesbian community in novels of the thirties, to a minimal (and still fairly negative) focus on lesbian bar culture in the fifties, and finally to a positive vision of lesbian feminist community in novels of the seventies and eighties. From the thirties through at least the fifties, says Stenson, lesbian novels focus on the lesbian couple generally isolated from others because of the world's hostility toward homosexuals, and it's not until late into the century that the lesbian characters' "communities provide helpful, supportive space for their collective struggle against the homophobic world" (218, 223). Although *Pity for Women* is presumably unknown (or at least not worth mentioning) among lesbian feminist writers—only Lillian Faderman mentions the novel as an example of the "monstrous lesbian images" that "proliferated during the 1930s"—Anderson's narrative can be viewed as a modest precursor to later

lesbian feminist works that would imagine lesbians representing a variety of class positions and would describe the sustaining women's communities that Judith and Ann can only dimly desire (101).

## Conclusion

*Pity for Women* provides an example of how dystopian lesbian narratives can nevertheless intimate utopian ones: although Ann's story ends in madness, it is a madness produced by her daring to dream of "something more" than her allotted role within hetero-capitalism. The trope of maternity is presented not only as an obstacle to Ann's ability to function in the world, but also as an enabling structure through with to re-imagine relationships between women. Ann in her dream of same-sex reproduction and Judith in her interpretation of the Book of Ruth as a story of lesbian commitment show how even the most overdetermined icon, Motherhood, can be reworked to aid in the production of new identities and relationships. This reworking is similar to José Muñoz's concept of "disidentification," a "remaking and rewriting of the dominant script" (23). According to Muñoz,

> Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture. (31)

Although in *Pity for Women* this disidentification with heterosexuality is incomplete because it does not succeed in empowering its characters, it does hint of that possibility in its allusions and dreams. The rest of the work is left for the reader and critic who must perform disidentification through a hermeneutical reading that points out both moments

in which the status quo is left intact and moments in which the material of majority culture has been tweaked or perhaps even transformed to allow for the coming out of an alternative identity construct (Muñoz 25).

This kind of disidentificatory reading is a maneuver that "resists," in Muñoz's words, "an unproductive turn toward good dog/bad dog criticism," a criticism that sees texts through a binary framework as either revolutionary or conformist (9). Historically misread and dismissed as "anti-lesbian" (Bradley 26), *Pity for Women* can be seen rather to point to the difficulties inherent in attempts to fashion a dominant-resistant identity out of the materials of dominant ideology. In fact, each text I have examined highlights the difficulty yet necessity of this project. *The Stone Wall* is both radical and normative in its sexual ideology, mirroring the range of impulses present in the popular progressive discourses through which it tries to disrupt the oppression of women and children. The narrator of *Either Is Love* is able to fashion an oppositional identity, and one that is highly critical of heteronormativity, within fairly traditional schemas of femininity and (re)productivity, yet a comparison between this narrative and *Pity for Women* reveals the extent to which *Either's* narrator is dependent upon her educated, bourgeois, and implicitly white status to transform feminine reproductivity into lesbian productivity. *Diana* underscores the extent to which "revolutionary" happy endings for individual lesbian subjectivities can be forged through messy processes of identification, counteridentification, and cross-identification.[86] Whether despite its conservatism or because of it, *Diana* continues to inspire lesbian readers: one customer reviewer on Amazon.com writes, "That it was written 30 years before I was born gives me courage –

if she emerged from her journey whole, then so can I" (Alix). We can't know whether this anonymous reader gets something out of *Diana* primarily through an identificatory process which buys into Diana's race and class privilege presumably because they mirror the reader's own, or if the reader is performing a disidentification through which race and class are interrogated while she engages in "a *still* valuable yet mediated identification" with Diana's lesbian pride (Muñoz 9).[87]

Well before Muñoz's concept of disidentification, Felski in *The Gender of Modernity* makes a related point when she notes, "A text which may appear subversive and destabilizing from one political perspective becomes the bearer of dominant ideologies when read in the context of another. In this context," she continues, "the anxious pursuit of the authentically transgressive text within recent literary and cultural theory is revealed as a singularly unproductive and uninteresting enterprise" (27). One of the goals of this project has been to disrupt the anxious pursuit of the authentically transgressive aesthetic mode, which in the study of texts from the first half of the twentieth century has largely meant the pursuit of modernist, experimental, and avant-garde work. If, as I argue in my introduction, the impact of lesbian realist texts relies on the reader's identification with a sincere authorial voice; and if, as many queer scholars assert, identificatory sites – sites of subject formation – are key locations of the subject's acceptance, rejection, or reconfiguration of dominant ideology; then these texts would seem to be logical places to examine ways in which the status quo is subverted and stabilized, and ways identities might be formed in that process.

Because these particular narratives speak primarily (though of course not exclusively) to an imagined straight female reader, they rely on a certain amount of recognizable conformity of style, structure, and character in order to maintain the fiction of a transparent, direct, and intimate communication that eases identification. Given this, it is particularly interesting to examine where transgression is possible in these texts and where it is not. To cite just one example, cross-generational sexual relationships are generally permissible in lesbian realist narratives, and may even help make up for homosexuality's non-procreativity by refiguring the mother-child dyad, but the charmed status of monogamy and the couple remain unquestioned.[88] Indeed, in these texts lesbian community is continually sacrificed in homage to this ideal. Thus, despite the tendency of lesbian realist authors/narrators to claim to speak for lesbians as a group, lesbian community always remains explicitly outside of the identificatory relationship between queer narrator and heterosexual reader, a coupled relationship that mirrors the exclusive relationship between lesbian lovers in these stories. In this sense, lesbian community is just as much of a threat to the narrator/reader relationship as it is a threat to the lesbian couples within the text: lesbian community is always attempting to come in as the "other woman" to destroy the pair.

But if thirties lesbian realist texts fall short of transgression from the perspective of a communal lesbian politics, there is still much potential to destabilize dominant ideologies through the straight female reader's identification with these lesbian subjectivities. For example, in 1930s American culture, as Christina Simmons notes, "lesbianism represented women's autonomy in various forms—feminism, careers, refusal

to marry, failure to adjust to marital sexuality. It became a symbol in a cultural context of increased expectation and evaluation of sexual activity for women as well as for men in the new form of companionate marriage" (170). In many ways, companionate marriage discourse and the related discourses of sexology, parent education, sex education, sexual abuse, and so on help open up a space for this identification; and in turn this identification has the potential to transform these often-normalizing discourses into sites of increased possibility for women. It is only through a methodology that situates the literary text in its historical moment that these potential transgressions may be revealed, which is why this project examines each text in relation to particular, historically-specific popular discourses as well as particular narrative forms.

Most interestingly, perhaps, this examination of lesbian realist texts suggests that lesbian identity may not have been as radically on the margins of dominant culture as an exclusive focus on Sapphic modernism might have us believe. Reviewed in thirties mainstream media as lesbian narratives, told in "unencoded" realist forms that are thought too traditional to hold lesbian subjectivity, and banking on the ability of majoritarian readers to identify with a lesbian subjectivity, these stories suggest a different relationship between homosexuality and dominant culture that can only open up when lesbianism is uncoupled from modernism. The purpose of this project is not to argue that formally experimental and avant-garde texts that disrupt or call attention to the process of identification cannot be equally important sites through which to examine resistances and assimilations to dominant ideology. It is the purpose of this project to insist that they are not the only, or even the most productive, of such sites.

# Appendix
# Publication and Critical Histories

## *The Stone Wall* by Mary Casal

### Editions and Reprints

Chicago: Eyncourt, 1930.

New York: Arno, 1975.

### Critical Bibliography[89]

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. "Astra's Tower Special Leaflet #3." 1959.[90]
*A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. 30.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer and Gene Damon. "Checklist 1960." 1960.
*A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. 14.

Cook, Blanche Wiesen. "'Women Alone Stir My Imagination': Lesbianism and the Cultural Tradition." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society.* 4 (1979): 718-739.

Damon, Gene and Lee Stuart. *The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography.* San Francisco: Daughters of Bilitis, 1967. 12.

Diggs, Marylynne. "Lesbian Confession and Case History." *Confessional Politics: Women's Sexual Self-Representations in Life Writing and Popular Media.* Ed. Irene Gammel. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999. 133-147.

Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers.* New York: Columbia UP, 1991. 114.

MacPike, Loralee. "Casal, Mary." *Gay and Lesbian Literature.* Vol. 2. Eds. Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast. Detroit: St. James, 1998. 78-79.

## *Either Is Love* by Elisabeth Craigin

### Editions and Reprints

New York: Harcourt, 1937

New York: Lion, 1952, 1956.

New York: Pyramid, 1960, 1963.

New York, Arno, 1975.

### Critical Bibliography

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. "Astra's Tower Special Leaflet #2." 1958. *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. n. pag.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. "Astra's Tower Special Leaflet #3." 1959. *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. 11.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer and Gene Damon. "Checklist 1960." *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. 17.

Damon, Gene and Lee Stuart. *The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography.* San Francisco: Daughters of Bilitis, 1967. 15.

Diggs, Marylynne. "Lesbian Confession and Case History." *Confessional Politics: Women's Sexual Self-Representations in Life Writing and Popular Media.* Ed. Irene Gammel. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999. 133-147.

Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers.* New York: Columbia UP, 1991. 101-102, 110, 115-116.

Foster, Jeannette H. *Sex Variant Women in Literature.* 1956. Tallahassee: Naiad, 1985. 318-319, 347.

"Homophilic Bibliography." *Mattachine Review.* Aug. 1958: 24.

"Lesbiana." *The Ladder.* May 1957: 11.

Love, Paul. "Four in Midsummer." Rev. of *Either is Love. Nation.* 14 Aug. 1937: 177.

Pruette, Lorine. "Headliners in the Summer Fiction Lists." Rev. of *Either is Love. New York Herald Tribune Books* 22 Aug. 1937: 8.

Rule, Jane. *Lesbian Images.* New York: Crossing, 1975. 187-188.

"Two Loves." Rev. of *Either is Love. New York Times Book Review* 15 Aug. 1937: 14.

Yarbrough, Dona. "A Queer Form of Trauma: Lesbian Epistolarity in *Either Is Love.*" *American Literature.* 75 (2003): 368-393.

## *Diana* by Diana Frederics

### Editions and Reprints[91]

New York: Dial, 1939.

New York: Citadel, 1939,1944, 1945, 1946, 1948.

Allahabad, India: Kitabistan, 1939.

Trans. Jean Gompel. [Paris?]: Editions des Deux-Rives, 1946. [French language]

New York: Berkeley, 1955, 1957, 1958, 1961.

New York: Arno, 1975

New York: New York UP, 1995.

Trans. Zoraida de Torres Burgos. Barcelona, Spain: Egales, 2004. [Spain language]

### Critical Bibliography

Abraham, Julie. Introduction. *Diana: A Strange Autobiography.* Diana Frederics. New York: New York UP, 1995. xvii-xxxv.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. "Astra's Tower Special Leaflet #2." 1958. *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. N. pag.

---. "Astra's Tower Special Leaflet #3." 1959. *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. 10.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer and Gene Damon. "Checklist 1960." 1960. *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. 24.

Damon, Gene and Lee Stuart. *The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography.* San Francisco: Daughters of Bilitis, 1967. 25.

Diggs, Marylynne. "Frederics, Diana." *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage.* Ed. Claude J. Summers. Rev. ed. New York: Routledge, 2002. 269.

---. "Lesbian Confession and Case History." *Confessional Politics: Women's Sexual Self-Representations in Life Writing and Popular Media.* Ed. Irene Gammel. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999. 133-147.

Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers.* New York: Columbia UP, 1991. 101-102, 115.

Foster, Jeannette H. *Sex Variant Women in Literature.* 1956. Tallahassee: Naiad, 1985. 323-4, 347.

"Free from Triviality." Rev. of *Diana. Mattachine Review* Apr. 1956: 47.

"Homophilic Bibliography." *Mattachine Review.* Dec. 1958. 29.

Knopf, Marcy Jane. "Visibly Femme." Review. *Diana: A Strange Autobiography,* by Diana Frederics. *Lesbian Review of Books* 2 (Winter 1995-96): 5-6.

"Other Fiction on the Same Subject." *Vice Versa.* July 1947. 11.

## *Pity for Women* by Helen Anderson

### Editions and Reprints

Garden City: Doubleday, 1937.

### Critical Bibliography

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. "Astra's Tower Special Leaflet #3." 1959. *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. 26.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer and Gene Damon. "Checklist 1960." 1960. *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975. 7.

C.H.M. Rev. of *Pity for Women. The Saturday Review of Literature* 26 June 1937: 21.

Damon, Gene and Lee Stuart. *The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography.* San Francisco: Daughters of Bilitis, 1967. 2.

Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers.* New York: Columbia UP, 1991. 101.

Feld, Rose C. Rev. of *Pity for Women. New York Herald Tribune Books* 13 June 1937: 6. [Also printed in *Boston Evening Transcript* 17 July 1937: 4.]

Foster, Jeannette H. *Sex Variant Women in Literature.* 1956. Tallahassee: Naiad, 1985. 317-318, 349.

"Homophilic Bibliography." *Mattachine Review.* Mar. 1958: 26.

M.B., Rev. of *Pity for Women. New Republic* 15 Sept. 1937: 167.

Tompkins, Lucy. Rev. of *Pity for Women. New York Times* 20 June 1937: 7.

## Notes

[1] See Stimpson, *Where the Meanings Are* (97-110); Jay, "Lesbian Modernism"; and Zimmerman, "What Has Never Been." The relationship between Sapphic modernism and "coding" has been addressed by numerous critics, including Marianne DeKoven in "Gertrude Stein and the Modernist Canon," Elizabeth Meese in *(Sem)Erotics*, Julie Abraham in *Are Girls Necessary?*, Joanne Winning in *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson*, and Lisa Walker in *Looking Like What You Are*.

[2] In *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*, Laura Doan argues, moreover, that critics and historians have wrongly assumed that the British public was behind the prosecution of *The Well* in England. Through her examination of books reviews and articles about *The Well,* Doan shows that prosecution efforts were "frequently ridiculed and subjected to intense criticism in the press, [. . .] an indication that [the] campaign to restore to the nation the virtues and ideals of a past age was out of step with the times" (23).

[3] Moreover, according to Julie Abraham, because "novels remained over the first half of the twentieth century easier to produce and harder to censor than theater or film," "the novel has been *the* genre in which representations of lesbianism have been recognized" (*Are Girls* xiii).

[4] On the other hand, censorship on the grounds of ideological and political "deviance" was increasing as books were seized for being "anticapitalistic" and "unfriendly to democracy" (Tebbel 641).

[5] A number of my students, for example, associate "lesbian" with a badly-dressed and decidedly uncool earlier generation; they identify not as lesbians but as "gays," "dykes," or "queers."

[6] For more on this, see Julie Abraham, *Are Girls* (22-23).

[7] "Sincerity" has long been associated with realism. In his 1895 essay "The Place of Realism in Fiction," for example, George Gissing says, "Realism [. . .] signifies nothing more than artistic sincerity in the portrayal of contemporary life" (qtd. in Herman 61).

[8] See Felski, *Beyond Feminist* (93); Zimmerman, *Safe Sea* (24); Abraham, *Are Girls* (22-23).

[9] For example, in the inaugural essay of the first journal issue devoted to queer theory, Sue-Ellen Case asserts that queer "attacks the dominant notion of the natural" (3); and Michael Warner in his introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet* sees queer as "protesting not just the normal behavior of the social but the *idea* of normal behavior" (xxvii).

[10] For the centrality of heterosexuality in lesbian narrative at the level of formal structure and plot, see Abraham, *Are Girls* (4-20); and Roof, *Come As You Are.*

[11] Interestingly, the 1959 bibliography goes on to say of *The Stone Wall*, "I know a little about the press [Eyncourt]. Judging from some of the male H[omosexuality] titles I have seen from them, this is no doubt pertinent and probably well written" (Bradley 30). It is unclear to which male homosexual titles Damon refers since the Library of Congress Catalogue curiously lists, except for *The Stone Wall,* only titles about typography and printing history as being published by Eyncourt. Zimmerman identifies Gene Damon as a pseudonym for Barbara Grier in "What Has Never Been" (36).

[12] In "Spoiled Identity," Heather Love distinguishes "antihomophobic inquiry" and its focus "on the difficulties of the queer past" from identity-based criticism which practices an "affirmative mode of historiography" and seeks "a positive tradition of gay and lesbian identity" (492).

[13] Interestingly, Rule criticizes Craigin for presenting lesbian love too positively and thus at the expense of realism, saying that her "insistence on the difference between homosexual and heterosexual love is reminiscent of Colette, who could also idealize love between women in a way to make it too rare and too pure against the greater reality of heterosexuality" (188).

[14] Actually, it may be more accurate to say that non-experimental rather than specifically realist forms have dominated best-selling fiction since actually so-called "genre fictions" like mysteries and horror stories have been among the most widely-read books in the last couple of decades.

[15] See Wald, "The 1930s Left"; Denning, *The Cultural Front*; Baker, *Modernism*; Ardis, *New Women*; Lauter, "American Proletarianism"; Barnard, *The Great Depression*; and Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance.*

[16] See, for example, Bill Mullen and Sherry Lee Linkon's introduction to *Radical Revisions.*

[17] In her book *Femininity Played Straight,* Martin wrongly identifies the year of Harris's essay as 1978 (138).

[18] The antirealist bent of current feminist theory is neatly summarized by Felski in the final chapter of *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics.* Her assessment is equally applicable to contemporary queer criticism, though these comments were made before queer theory could be identified as a field: "The development of a feminist antirealist aesthetic has been significantly encouraged by the [. . .] influence of Lacan and Derrida; the function of a feminist art is perceived as primarily negative and subversive, a critical dismantling

of existing ideological and discursive positions. Consequently a 'conservative' realism is counterposed against a 'radical' modernist or avant-garde art, which is perceived to challenge rather than affirm dominant modes of representation" (157).

[19] For example, one of the first anthologies of lesbian literary criticism, Jay and Glasgow's *Lesbian Texts and Contexts,* focuses overwhelmingly on Sapphic modernism with essays on Willa Cather, Sylvia Beach, Djuna Barnes, H.D., and Radclyffe Hall (who is inevitably made into a modernist), as well as Shari Benstock's overview of "Expatriate Sapphic Modernism."

[20] See Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (23-24).

[21] Though, as I indicated earlier, "authenticity" has historically been of primary significance in lesbian criticism, since the late 1970s its importance has been satisfied increasingly by connecting an author's biography (her lesbian desire) to goings on in the modernist text, and not by a privileging of realism as the best expression of authenticity.

[22] See Felski's distinction between "modernism" and "modernity" in *The Gender of Modernity* (24-25).

[23] We have recently been experiencing a similar shift between the so-called second and third waves of feminism. Much of the second wave generation watches with dismay as feminism becomes less political and more individualistic, embodied in the fashionable, consumer-oriented "girl power" movement of the 1990s.

[24] See Faderman, *Odd Girls* (88-92).

[25] There is a large body of feminist writing about individualistic and teleological tendencies in traditional autobiography, and about ways in which women's autobiographies do or do not challenge those traditions. See, for example, Sidonie Smith's *A Poetic of Women's Autobiography* and *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body*, as well as chapter three of Rita Felski's *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*.

[26] The narrator informs us that the president's daughter was able to experience "the climactic relief for her sexual desire" during their "sessions of lovemaking"—the narrator's first encounter with orgasms (83).

[27] See, for example, chapter three of Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*; Biddy Martin, *Femininity Played Straight*, chapter 6, "Lesbian Identity and Autobiographical Difference[s]"; and Alcoff and Gray-Rosendale, "Survivor Discourse."

[28] See, for example, Smith, *Poetics*; and Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*. For a history of feminist criticism articulating a women's

tradition in autobiography, see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's introduction to *Women, Autobiography, Theory.*

[29] As Gayle Rubin, Estelle Freedman, George Chauncey, and others have noted, the 1950s were a particularly virulent period of national "sex panic," a period that typically viewed pedophilia, homosexuality, and communism as interrelated threats to the nation (Chauncey 359; Rubin 25; Freedman 92).

[30] *The Stone Wall* also eschews the class and regional bias of most early work on child sexual abuse, which assumed that the vast majority of cases occurred among the urban poor as a result of "poverty, poor education, and slum housing" (Jenkins 30). Casal's abuse occurs in educated and upwardly-mobile families and primarily in rural or suburban settings.

[31] The U.S. Supreme Court did not strike down compulsory sterilization until 1942 (Jenkins 43).

[32] For an example of this solution, see Havelock Ellis's "The Sexual Life of Women," originally published in 1931.

[33] As clinical psychologist Laura S. Brown notes, the experience of sexual trauma is statistically "normal" for women (110).

[34] "Invert" is the only term Casal uses to describe women with same-sex desire, yet she is clearly not satisfied with it. It is frequently preceded by the qualifying term "so-called," and moreover, she seems to equate the term more with "inversion" of sexual object choice (which began to be called "lesbianism" in this period) than with a complete inversion of gender roles. She frequently describes her own nature as "dual"—both male and female—noting especially that she has a strong mother instinct and is considered quite attractive to men even though she prefers wearing masculine clothes and being the pursuer in romantic relationships.

[35] This convention is particularly interesting considering that in the post-Stonewall era, lesbians are most often stereotyped as asexual and/or super-monogamous, while gay men are assumed to be extremely promiscuous.

[36] It's not clear what Casal means here by "real inverts." Possibly she is referring to the distinction many sexologists made between "active" or "congenital" inverts, who were thought to be more masculine-looking women who were born homosexual, and "passive" inverts, more feminine and more likely bisexual women, to whom active inverts were thought to be attracted. However, Casal herself shares a number of characteristics with "real inverts": for example, she usually (though not always) describes her sexual

disinterest in men as congenital, and she claims to have a "natural" taste for men's activities and clothing.

[37] The term "external reader" is used by Anne Bower "to distinguish the person holding the book from the person within the fiction who holds the letter" (17).

[38] I focus on the heterosexual reader because Craigin clearly does. *Either Is Love* is didactic: its primary aim is to change heterosexuals' attitudes toward what Craigin calls "interfeminine love" (107).

[39] See the Appendix for a full publication and reception history of *Either Is Love*. On both straight male and lesbian audiences for fifties and sixties lesbian pulp, see Christopher Nealon, "Invert-History"; Lee Server, *Over My Dead Body*; and Roberta Yusba, "Twilight Tales."

[40] Critics argue, for example, whether Abelard invented Heloise's letters, or whether *The Letters of a Portuguese Nun* were written by a Portuguese Nun. See Linda S. Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire* (18-19); and Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel* (79).

[41] Pruette 8; Love 177; "Two Loves" 14.

[42] See, for example Nicky Hallett, *Lesbian Lives* (5). Also see Julie Abraham's introduction to *Diana* (xx-xxii).

[43] For an overview of criticism on "epistolary femininity and feminine epistolarity," see Gilroy and Verhoeven, introduction to *Epistolary Histories*. My own thinking about the relationship between femininity and epistolarity has been influenced by Anne Bower, *Epistolary Responses*; Mary A. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*; Elizabeth Goldsmith, *Writing the Female Voice*; Linda S. Kauffman's *Special Delivery*; and Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel*. Little attention has been paid to the relationship between female same-sex desire and letter-writing, but exceptions include Kauffman's discussion of *The Color Purple* in *Special Delivery* (41); and Martha Nell Smith, "Suppressing the Books of Susan and Emily Dickinson" (101-125). What might we discover if posited a body of lesbian epistolarity that would include narratives such as *Either Is Love* and *The Color Purple* (1982), accounts of letter-writing between female lovers in works such as Nancy Garden's novel *Annie on My Mind* (1982) and Alice Dunbar-Nelson's *Give Us Each Day: The Diary of Alice Dunbar-Nelson* (1984), and collections of letters (between Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, or between Emily and Susan Dickinson, for example)?

[44] See Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (192-3); and Kauffman, *Special Delivery* (xix).

[45] See, for example, the advertisement in the August 22, 1937, *New York Herald Tribune Books* (Advertisement 7).

[46] *Either Is Love* receives unqualified praise only from Lorine Pruette, who finds the book "cerebral" and acutely analytical (8).

[47] Allison Barnes and Paul Thagard define the "target analog" as the half of an analogy "which needs to be understood and developed" and the "source analog" as the half which "is intended to further explanation and problem solving" (708, 710). Empathic understanding is distinct from abstract understanding and involves having an emotion that approximates another's emotion. Barnes and Thagard view analogy as the essential component of the empathic process. For more on psychological studies of empathy, see Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development.*

[48] Prosser claims that the sexual inversion theories of Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft-Ebing were passe three decades before *The Well*'s publication in 1928; but Craigin's narrator, in 1937, claims that Ellis was "only beginning to build" a reputation at the time of her relationship with Rachel and that "Kraft-Ebing and the earlier Europeans were nearly unknown" in America (60). Craigin's narrator never mentions Freud, though the book's lack of any explanation or origin for homosexuality could be viewed as a silent repudiation of him.

[49] The narrator of *Diana* employs a similar tactic when she distances herself from "mannish" lesbians who indulge in transvestitism (72), though, as Julie Abraham notes, Diana "seems unable to decide on the relationship between lesbianism and gender transgression" even in the etiology of her own sexuality (Introduction xxii). In *Either Is Love,* the narrator's insistence that she and Rachel are properly gendered qualifies them as human (rather than abject) and allows for their inclusion in the field of discourse. As Butler notes, the woman "is compelled to 'cite' the [gender] norm in order to qualify and remain a viable subject" (*Bodies* 232). In this sense, it doesn't matter whether or not the narrator is protesting too much in her insistence on Rachel's femininity. My point is not that her description of lesbianism as utterly feminine mirrors a reality within or outside the text but that it is a way of constructing lesbianism within dominant prescriptions of gender.

[50] The "Publishers' Foreword" to *Married Love* notes that this British book was for "many years . . . branded by the Federal Customs authorities as obscene and denied entry into this country" (ix). This, taken in conjunction with the fact that between 1929 and 1940 America published more than double the number of "marriage and sexuality" manuals than it had the decade before, suggests perhaps a loosening of strictures against sex education, a crisis in marriage, or both. Ellis suggests that "there has been a revolution quietly going on in the status of woman" but "no corresponding revolution has taken place in the status and activities of men [. . .]. Since we cannot expect, or even

desire, the effects of the feminine revolution to be undone, the present sexual situation is mainly one with which men have to deal. A new husband is required to meet the new wife" (*Psychology of Sex* 343-4).

[51] Mitchell suggests that all women writers must both "be feminine and [. . .] refuse femininity": they describe a feminine world and at the same time reject it by entering the masculine domain of public writing (290). In the case of thirties sex studies and manuals, having a Ph.D. allowed a few women (notably Katherine Davis and Marie Carmichael Stopes) to write about the sexuality of other people, but the majority of women associated with these books were interpreters or translators of men's writings.

[52] For more on epistolary narrative as feminine sexual transgression, see Kauffman, *Special Delivery* (234).

[53] See Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (17-35).

[54] Caruth, like many theorists of trauma, uses the terms *trauma* and *posttraumatic stress disorder* interchangeably. According to the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* the reexperiencing of trauma can be manifest as recurrent "recollections of the event," "recurrent distressing dreams of the event," "acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring," or psychological or physiological "distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event" (428). The narrator of *Either Is Love* exhibits all these symptoms except recurrent dreams. For a history of the study of psychological trauma as well as an account of trauma's symptoms and stages, see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery.* Explorations of trauma within queer studies include Butler, *Gender Trouble* and *The Psychic Life of Power*; Henke, *Shattered Subjects*; Phelan, *Mourning Sex*; Cvetkovich, "Sexual Trauma/Queer Memory"; and Caruth and Keenan, "The AIDS Crisis Is Not Over."

[55] Clinical psychologist Laura S. Brown argues that the American Psychiatric Association's definition of a traumatic event as "an event that is outside the range of human experience" ignores the "constant presence and threat of trauma" that constitutes "a continuing background noise rather than an unusual event" in the lives of women, lesbians and gay men, the poor, and others outside of the dominate group (100-103). A feminist approach to trauma, she suggests, will move psychotherapists to reevaluate the statistically "normal" presence of "long-standing insidious trauma" (110).

[56] One could also talk about *Either Is Love* in relation to mourning and melancholia, especially considering Judith Butler's elaborations on gender, sexuality, and melancholia in *Gender Trouble*, *Bodies That Matter* and *The Psychic Life of Power*. However, I am thinking of mourning/melancholia as a part of the structure of trauma. As Judith Herman notes in *Trauma and Recovery*, "Trauma inevitably brings loss." Some "lose the internal

psychological structures of a self securely attached to others," and "those who lose important people in their lives face a new void in their relationships with friends, family, or community. Traumatic losses rupture the ordinary sequence of generations and defy the ordinary social conventions of bereavement. The telling of the trauma story thus inevitably plunges the survivor into profound grief. Since so many of the losses are invisible or unrecognized, the customary rituals of mourning provide little consolation" (188). In this sense, the inability to complete mourning can itself constitute another trauma.

[57] See Wilson, Smith, and Johnson, "A Comparative Analysis" (147).

[58] Because "traumatic memory" is "wordless and static," Herman insists that as part of recovery, the traumatic event must be described in words and in narrative form, transforming traumatic memory into normal memory, which she defines a "the action of telling a story" (175). See also Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, especially Laub's account of the relationship between telling and surviving in chapter three (75-92); and Henke, introduction to *Shattered Subjects.*

[59] Elsewhere, the letters are referred to as an "incandescent sequence" (62). Similarly, before Willa Cather died in 1947, she destroyed all her personal letters, asked her friends to do the same, and stipulated in her will that quotation from and republication of any surviving letters be forbidden (Lindemann 138). Interestingly, gay sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld published his account of the Nazi's burning of his Institute for Sexology library a year before *Either Is Love* was published. See Haeberle, "Swastika."

[60] Roof points out that this narrative structure is central to Freud's theories of sexuality. A story of sexual development must involve conflict, so Freud tells the story of the individual who must struggle against the forces of sexual aberration on the way to a happy ending of normative heterosexuality (*Come As You Are* xix).

[61] As Peter Brooks notes, repetition in a text subverts the very notion of narrative beginnings and endings (109). Furthermore, in the context of trauma theory, the repetition of traumatic experience through narrative can be seen as an attempt to master the original catastrophic experience; this idea shifts mastery away from the listener (Bart as therapist/priest) and toward the teller (the narrator) (Brooks 100-101).

[62] Here I am again referring to Roof's insistence that Western culture identifies narrative *as narrative* by its "heterosexually friendly" shape, by its structure of opposition and conflict resulting in synthesis and production (*Come as You Are* xxxii).

[63] See Ann Ardis, *New Women* (126-33).

[64] The Hamlet analogy comes from Barnes and Thagard (710).

[65] See, for example, Caruth and Keenan (263-4).

[66] Because there are no published figures for the number of copies of *Diana* sold, I assume that the book never approached anything like "best-seller" status. However, Marion Zimmer Bradley's 1959 bibliography of lesbian literature claims *Diana* "is presumably too well known to need description" (10).

[67] For an excellent discussion of the relationship between the traditional autobiography, gender, individualism, and embodiment, see chapter one of Smith's *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body.*

[68] Robinson's introduction is included in all later publications of *Diana* as well. However, other introductions and forwards have sometimes been added, indicating how such introductory statements frame and reframe texts. The 1995 New York University Press edition includes two contemporary pieces—a forward by Karla Jay and the introduction by Julie Abraham—as a way to reframe the text from a queer and feminist perspective. This attempt to supplant early male "scientific" authority with contemporary academic feminist authority is not unusual for republications of early lesbian texts.

[69] Although, as many critics have noted, even Freud at times presents contradictory notions about the etiology of homosexuality, he is typically "universalizing," as in, for example, his notion of universal bisexuality in infancy or his theory that a negative Oedipus complex causes homosexuality. See Teresa de Lauretis, "Letter" (45).

[70] Diana makes her awareness of this association clear when she later mentions reading "Hirschfield, Freud, Jung, Westermarck, Krafft-Ebing, Gide and Ellis" and then considering her "own case history" (70).

[71] Of course, the use of analogies to racial oppression in gay rights discourse is extremely prevalent, and very controversial, in our present historical moment. Specifically, the same-sex marriage movement frequently refers to the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in order to argue that domestic partner benefits in lieu of legal marriage amount to a "separate but equal" status that has already been rendered unconstitutional.

[72] See chapter five of Kevin Mumford's *Interzones* for more on white homosexuality and black spaces during the 1920s in Chicago and New York. To site just one literary example, the 1931 novel *Strange Brother* features a white gay character who is guided through Harlem's gay underworld by a straight black man.

[73] See Roosevelt, "On American Motherhood"; and Coolidge, "Inaugural Address."

[74] For more on the attributes of whiteness, see "The Matter of Whiteness," chapter one of Richard Dyer's *White.*

[75] For examples of arguments critical of the lesbian romance plot, see Abraham, *Are Girls Necessary* and Roof, *Come As You Are.*

[76] I borrow this idea from Paula Rabinowitz, who argues that leftist women's fiction in the thirties allows us to read class and gender "as mutually sustaining discursive systems dependent upon re-presenting each through the other" (4).

[77] Judith's connection to magic, the supernatural, and even the devil is a fascinating topic, but not one which I have time to consider in this chapter.

[78] Although many critics differentiate between the two terms, I sometimes use "proletarian" and "social realist" interchangeably in this chapter, though I prefer the latter term because it tends to be more inclusive. I am not interested so much in fine distinctions between these categories but rather in the larger genre of depression-era narratives concerned in full or in part with the plight of the poor and working class.

[79] Of the authors I examine in this project, Anderson appears to be the only one whose photograph is included on the book jacket. She is also the only author writing in third person and thus not explicitly tainted by homosexuality through the use of first-person narration. Interestingly, Gale Wilhelm's books, which were like Anderson's written in third person, *do* include a photograph of the author.

[80] Interesting, the narrator of *The Stone Wall* refers to the Christian women's hotel in which she meets her lover Juno as a "whited sepulcher," the "whole atmosphere" of which she "naturally hated" (146).

[81] This issue comes up, for example, in *Either Is Love* when Rachel's friend Elaine disrupts Rachel and the narrator's relationship; and in *Diana* when Jane insists that she can love both Diana and Louise.

[82] The use of Ruth 1:16-17 in lesbian weddings and commitment ceremonies is noted, for example, in *The Essential Guide to Lesbian and Gay Weddings* by Tess Ayers and Paul Brown (127), and in Rebecca Alpert's essay "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation of the Book of Ruth," in *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story* (91). In her introduction to *Ceremonies of the Heart: Celebrating Lesbian Unions*, Becky Butler notes that Ruth 1:16 has been incorporated into many heterosexual marriage ceremonies as well (12-13).

[83] The verses as quoted in *Pity for Women* are virtually identical to the King James version of Ruth 1: 16-17. All subsequent quotations from the Book of Ruth are from the King James version.

[84] Both narratives also share some motifs of fertility myths, which connect human reproductive cycles with seasonal and plant cycles: Naomi leaves her hometown because of a famine, and she returns with Ruth because she has heard that the famine is over or, as the scripture says, "that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread" (Ruth 1:6). Ruth meets Boaz in the fields, and he proposes to her on the threshing floor, afterwards giving her six measures of barley (Ruth 3:2-17). From this exchange, Ruth reaps the "fruit" of a male heir. Similarly, Ann's dream links maternity to vegetative fertility when, for example, her breasts, standing out like "happy fruit," produce milk that falls to the ground and causes flowers to grow (258).

[85] Interestingly, the Book of Ruth's genre classification has been the subject of considerable scholarship, with different critics suggesting that it is a comedy, a parable, a folktale, an oral tale or oral poetry, or one of the first short stories (Larkin 36-42).

[86] The introduction to Muñoz's *Disidentifications* (1-34) provides a useful overview of different theories of identification, counteridentification, and cross-identification. Though it is undoubtedly an oversimplification, for the sake of clarity and brevity we might equate identification with assimilation and Diana's uncritical acceptance of her whiteness and middle-classness, counteridentification with anti-assimilation and Diana's (albeit private) rejection of female heterosexuality, and cross-identification with Diana's cooptation of male individualism.

[87] As an example of disidentification, Muñoz imagines a queer and feminist woman of color who reads Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* and is able to make use of Fanon's anticolonial discourse while at the same interrogating his homophobia and misogyny (9).

[88] *The Stone Wall* could possibly be viewed as an exception to this case since the narrator concludes that "*love* and *desire* be parted definitely," but her chief reason for this separation stems from her conception of female sexuality as dangerous and destructive (131).

[89] Includes reviews, bibliographic entries, and scholarly writing.

[90] Indicates original publication date.

[91] In addition to these full text versions of *Diana,* an excerpt from the narrative has been published as "The Café in Paris" in Castle, Terry, ed. *The Literature of Lesbianism: A Historical Anthology from Ariosto to Stonewall.* New York: Columbia UP, 2003.

Works Cited

Abraham, Julie. *Are Girls Necessary?: Lesbian Writing and Modern History.* New York: Routledge,1996.

---. Introduction. *Diana: A Strange Autobiography.* By Diana Frederics. New York: New York UP, 1995. xvii-xxxviii.

Advertisement. *New York Herald Tribune Books.* 22 Aug. 1937: 7.

Alcoff, Linda Martín and Laura Gray-Rosendale. "Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?" *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 198-225.

Alix. "Compelling and realistic." Review of *Diana: A Strange Autobiography,* by Diana Frederics. 19 Mar. 1998. Amazon.com Customer Reviews. 17 Jan. 2005. <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/o8114726356/qid=1105981503/sr=1-2/ref=sr_1_2/102-8877572-2405715?v=glance&s=books>.

Alpert, Rebecca. "Finding Our Past: A Lesbian Interpretation of the Book of Ruth." *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story.* Ed. Judith A. Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer. New York: Ballantine, 1994. 91-96.

American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.* 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1994.

Anderson, Helen. *Pity for Women.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1937.

Ardis, Ann L. *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990.

Ayers, Tess and Paul Brown. *The Essential Guide to Lesbian and Gay Weddings.* Los Angeles: Alyson, 1999.

Baker, Houston A. *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987.

Barnard, Rita. *The Great Depression and the Culture of Abundance: Kenneth Fearing, Nathanael West, and Mass Culture in the 1930s.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1995.

Barnes, Allison and Paul Thagard. "Empathy and Analogy." *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review* 36 (1997): 705-720. 20 Feb. 2001 <http://cogsci.uwaterloo.ca/Articles/Pages/Empathy.html>.

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood.* New York: New Directions, 1961.

Barthes, Roland. "The Reality Effect." *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader.* Ed. Tzvetan Todorov. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982. 11-17.

Belsey, Catherine. *Critical Practice.* 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2002.

Benstock, Shari. "Expatriate Sapphic Modernism: Entering Literary History." *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions.* Ed. Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow. New York: New York UP, 1990. 183-203.

Bower, Anne. *Epistolary Responses: The Letter in 20th-Century American Fiction and Criticism.* Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1997.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer. "Astra's Tower Special Leaflet #3." 1959. *A Gay Bibliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975.

Bradley, Marion Zimmer and Gene Damon, eds. "Checklist 1960." 1960. *A Gay Biblliography: Eight Bibliographies on Lesbian and Male Homosexuality.* New York: Arno, 1975.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative.* New York: Knopf, 1984.

Brown, Laura S. "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory.* Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins U P, 1995. 100-112.

Brownley, Martine Watson, and Allison B. Kimmich. *Women and Autobiography.* Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 1999.

Butler, Becky. Introduction. *Ceremonies of the Heart: Celebrating Lesbian Unions.* Ed. Butler. Seattle: Seal, 1997. vii-xi.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York: Routledge, 1993.

---. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge, 1990.

---. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." *Inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories.* Ed. Diana Fuss. New York: Routledge, 1991. 13-31.

---. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997.

Butterfield, Oliver M. *Sex Life in Marriage.* New York: Emerson, 1964.

C.H.M. Rev. of *Pity for Women*, by Helen Anderson. *The Saturday Review of Literature* 26 Jun. 1937: 21.

Caruth, Cathy. "Trauma and Experience: Introduction." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins U P, 1995. 3-12.

---. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.

Caruth, Cathy, and Thomas Keenan. "'The AIDS Crisis Is Not Over': A Conversation with Gregg Bordowitz, Douglas Crimp, and Laura Pinsky." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins U P, 1995. 256-271.

Casal, Mary. *The Stone Wall: An Autobiography*. New York: Arno, 1975.

Case, Sue-Ellen. "Tracking the Vampire." *Differences* 3.2 (1991): 1-20.

Castle, Terry. *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*. New York: Columbia UP, 1993.

Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic, 1994.

Clapp, Emily V. "When Your Daughter Approaches the Teens." *Parents' Magazine*. Dec. 1933: 22+.

Cook, Blanche Wiesen. "'Women Alone Stir My Imagination': Lesbianism and the Cultural Tradition." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 4 (1979): 718-739.

Coolidge, Calvin. "Inaugural Address, Wednesday, March 4, 1925." *Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States.* Jan. 2001. Bartleby.com. 8 Jan. 2005 <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres47.html>.

Cott, Nancy F. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1987.

Craigin, Elisabeth. *Either Is Love.* New York: Arno, 1975.

Crimp, Douglas. "Mourning and Militancy." *October.* 51 (1989): 3-18.

Cvetkovich, Ann. "Sexual Trauma/Queer Memory: Incest, Lesbianism, and Therapeutic Culture." *GLQ.* 2 (1995): 351-77.

Damon, Gene and Lee Stuart. *The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography.* San Francisco: Daughters of Bilitis, 1967.

DeKoven, Marianne. "Gertrude Stein and the Modernist Canon." *Gertrude Stein and the Making of Literature.* Ed. Shirley Neuman and Ira B. Nadel. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1988. 8-20.

---. "Modernism and Gender." *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism.* Ed. Michael Levenson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. 174-193.

De Lauretis, Teresa. "Letter to an Unknown Woman." *That Obscure Subject of Desire: Freud's Female Homosexual Revisited.* Eds. Ronnie C. Lesser and Erica Schoenberg. New York: Routledge, 1999. 37-53.

---. *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire.* Bloominton: Indiana UP, 1994.

Deneen, Patrick J. "*Lonesome No More!:* Individualism and the Rise of Democratic Despotism." *Hedgehog Review.* 4.1 (2002): 57-73.

Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century.* London: Verso, 1996.

Dickinson, Robert Latou and Lura Beam. *A Thousand Marriages: A Medical Study of Sex Adjustment.* Baltimore: Williams, 1931.

Diggs, Marylynne. "Lesbian Confession and Case History." *Confessional Politics: Women's Sexual Self-Representations in Life Writing and Popular Media.* Ed. Irene Gammel. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999. 133-147.

Doan, Laura. *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture.* New York: Columbia UP, 2001.

Duggan, Lisa. "The Social Enforcement of Heterosexuality and Lesbian Resistance in the 1920s." *Class, Race and Sex: The Dynamics of Control.* Ed. Amy Swerdlow and Hanna Lessinger. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983. 75-92.

Dworkin, Andrea. *Intercourse.* New York: Free Press, 1997.

Dyer, Richard. *White.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Ellis, Havelock. "Commentary." *The Well of Loneliness.* Radclyffe Hall. New York: Doubleday, 1990. N. pag.

---. *Psychology of Sex: A Manual for Students.* New York: Ray Long, 1933.

---. "Sexual Inversion." Ellis, Havelock. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex.* Vol. 1. New York: Random, 1942. 2 vols.

---. "The Sexual Life of Women." *Sex and Marriage: Eros in Contemporary Life*. Ed. John Gawsworth. Westport: Greenwood, 1977. 99-105.

English, Daylanne K. *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance.* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004.

Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America.* New York: Columbia UP, 1991.

Faulkner, Howard J. and Virginia D. Pruitt. Introduction. *Dear Dr. Menninger: Women's Voices from the Thirties*. Ed. Faulkner and Pruitt. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1997. 1-14.

Favret, Mary A. *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters*. Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge UP, 1993.

Feld, Rose C. "Minds Astray in Recent Leading Fiction." Rev. of *Pity for Women,* by Helen Anderson. *New York Herald Tribune Books* 13 Jun. 1937: 6.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalyis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Felski, Rita. *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989.

---. *The Gender of Modernity.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

"Female Ratio Rose in 1930 Population." *New York Times*. 19 Aug. 1931: 16. 6 Sept. 2004 <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=000000118224982&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1094501881&clientId=28972>.

Foster, Jeannette H. *Sex Variant Women in Literature*. Tallahassee: Naiad, 1985.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction.* Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage (Random House), 1990.

Frederics, Diana. *Diana: A Strange Autobiography.* New York: New York UP, 1995.

Freedman, Estelle. " 'Uncontrolled Desires': The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960." *The Journal of American History.* 74 (1987): 83-106.

Freedy, John R. and John C. Donkervoet. "Traumatic Stress: An Overview of the Field." *Traumatic Stress: From Theory to Practice.* Ed. John R. Freedy and Stevan E. Hobfoll. New York: Plenum, 1995. 14-15.

Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism.* Trans. Katherine Jones. New York: Random House, 1967.

---. "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman." 1920. Trans. Barbara Low and R. Gabler. *That Obscure Subject of Desire: Freud's Female Homosexual Revisted.* Ed. Ronnie C. Lesser and Erica Schoenberg. New York: Routledge, 1999. 13-33.

Gilman, Sander L. *Freud, Race, and Gender.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993.

Gilroy, Amanda and W. M. Verhoeven. Introduction. *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture.* Ed. Gilroy and Verhoeven. Charlottesville, VA: U of Virginia Press, 2000. 1-25.

Goldsmith, Elizabeth C. Introduction. *Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature.* Ed. Goldsmith. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1989. vii-xiii.

Gruenberg, Benjamin C. "Sex Education." *The Delineator.* Feb. 1930: 19+.

Guterl, Matthew Pratt. "The New Race Consciousness: Race, Nation, and Empire in American Culture, 1910-1925." *Journal of World History* 10 (1999): 307-352.

Guyot, Jules. *A Ritual for Married Lovers*. Trans. Gertrude Minturn Pinchot. Baltimore: Waverly, 1931.

Haag, Pamela S. "In Search of 'The Real Thing': Ideologies of Love, Modern Romance, and Women's Sexual Subjectivity in the United States, 1920-1940." 161-191. *American Sexual Politics: Sex, Gender, and Race since the Civil War.* Ed. John C. Fout and Maura Shaw Tantillo. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.

Haeberle, Erwin J. "Swastika, Pink Triangle, and Yellow Star: The Destruction of Sexology and the Persecution of Homosexuals in Nazi Germany." *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past.* Ed. Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. New York: New American Library, 1989. 365-79.

Hall, Radclyffe. *The Well of Loneliness*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Hallett, Nicky. *Lesbian Lives: Identity and Auto/Biography in the Twentieth Century.* London: Pluto, 1999.

Halperin, David M. *How to Do the History of Homosexuality.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002.

Harris, Bertha. "What We Mean To Say: Notes Toward Defining the Nature of Lesbian Literature." *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics.* 3 (Fall 1977): 5-8.

Henke, Suzette A. *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing.* New York: St. Martin's, 1998.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery.* New York: HarperCollins, 1997.

Herman, Luc. *Concepts of Realism.* Columbia, SC: Camden, 1996.

Highsmith, Patricia. *Afterward. The Price of Salt.* by Patricia Highsmith. Tallahassee, FL: Naiad, 1991. N. pag.

Hirsh, Jody. "In Search of Role Models." *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian, Gay, and Jewish.* Eds. Christie Balka and Andy Rose. Boston: Beacon, 1989. 83-91.

Hoffman, Martin L. *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice.* New York: Cambridge UP, 2000.

"Homophilic Bibliography, Part IX." *Mattachine Review.* 4 (August 1958): 23-4.

Hutchinson, George. *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1995.

Inness, Sherrie A. "The Novel: Lesbian." *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage.* Ed. Claude J. Summers. New York: Henry Holt, 1995. 523-7.

Jay, Karla. "Lesbian Modernism: (Trans)Forming the (C)Anon." *Professions of Desire: Lesbian and Gay Studies in Literature.* Ed. George Haggerty and Bonnie Zimmerman. New York: MLA, 1995. 72-83.

Jay, Karla and Joanne Glasgow, eds. *Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions.* New York: New York UP, 1990.

Jenkins, Philip. *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1998.

Kauffman, Linda S. *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986.

---. *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction.* Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.

Kleinberg, S. J. *Women in the United States, 1830-1945.* New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1999.

Larkin, Katrina J.A. *Ruth and Esther.* Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic, 1996.

Lauter, Paul. "American Proletarianism." *The Columbia History of the American Novel.* Ed. Emory Elliot. New York: Columbia U P, 1991. 331-56.

Legman, G. "The Language of Homosexuality: An American Glossary." *Sex Variants: A Study of Homosexual Patterns* by George W. Henry. Vol. 2. New York: Harper, 1941. 1149-1179.

Lejeune, Philippe. "The Autobiographical Contract." *French Literary Theory Today.* Ed. Tzvetan Todorov. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982. 192-222.

"Lesbiana." *The Ladder.* May 1957: 11.

Lindemann, Marilee. "Cather, Willa." *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage.* Rev. ed. Ed. Claude J. Summers. New York: Routledge, 2002. 136-138.

Lionnet, Françoise. *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-portraiture.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989.

Long, H.W. *Sane Sex Life and Sane Sex Living.* New York: Eugenics Publishing, 1937.

Love, Heather. "'Spoiled Identity: Stephen Gordon's Loneliness and the Difficulties of Queer History." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies.* 7 (2001): 487-519.

Love, Paul. "Four in Midsummer." Rev. of *Either is Love*, by Elisabeth Craigin. *Nation*. 14 Aug. 1937: 177.

MacPike, Loralee. "Casal, Mary." *Gay and Lesbian Literature*. Vol. 2. Eds. Tom Pendergast and Sara Pendergast. Detroit: St. James, 1998. 78-79.

Malinowski, Sharon and Christa Brelin. Introduction. *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Companion*. Detroit: Visible Ink, 1995. xvii-xx.

Marcus, Laura. *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994.

Martin, Biddy. *Femininity Played Straight: The Significance of Being Lesbian*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Maupassant, Guy de. "Maupassant on Realism as 'Illusionism.'" *Realism*. Ed. Lilian Furst. London: Longman, 1992. 45-47.

Meese, Elizabeth A. *(Sem)erotics: Theorizing Lesbian: Writing*. New York: New York UP, 1992.

Mitchell, Juliet. *Women: The Longest Revolution*. New York: Pantheon, 1984.

Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. 1985. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Mullen, Bill and Sherry Lee Linkon. "Introduction: Rereading 1930s Culture." *Radical Revisions: Rereading 1930s Culture*. Ed. Mullen and Linkon. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1996. 1-12.

Mumford, Kevin J. *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century*. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.

Munt, Sally R. "Patricia Highsmith." *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage.* Ed. Claude J. Summers. New York: Holt, 1995. 363-4.

Muñoz, José Estaban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999.

"Nature." *Oxford English Dictionary.* 3rd ed. 14 Oct. 2004 <http://dictionary.oed.com/>.

Nealon, Christopher. "Invert-History: The Ambivalence of Lesbian Pulp Fiction." *New Literary History* 31 (2000): 745-764.

Novick, Sheldon M. *Honorable Justice: The Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1989.

"Oldest, Youngest in Nation Decline." *New York Times.* 11 July 1932: 2. 6 Sept. 2004 <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=000000100833398&SrchMode=1&sid=4&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=109449063 0&clientId=28972>.

Perry, Ruth. *Women, Letters, and the Novel.* New York: AMS, 1980.

Pfister, Joel. "Glamorizing the Psychological: The Politics of the Performances of Modern Psychological Identities." *Inventing the Psychological: Toward a Cultural History of Emotional Life in America.* Ed. Joel Pfister and Nancy Schnog. New Haven: Yale UP, 1997. 167-213.

Phelan, Peggy. *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories.* London: Routledge, 1997.

Plant, Richard. *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals.* New York: Holt, 1986.

Prosser, Jay. *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*. New York: Columbia UP, 1998.

Pruette, Lorine. "Headliners in the Summer Fiction Lists." Rev. of *Either is Love*, by Elisabeth Craigin. *New York Herald Tribune Books* 22 Aug. 1937: 8.

Rabinowitz, Paula. *Labor and Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1991.

Rapp, Rayna and Ellen Ross. "The Twenties' Backlash: Compulsory Herterosexuality, the Consumer Family, and the Waning of Feminism." *Class, Race and Sex: The Dynamics of Control*. Ed. Amy Swerdlow and Hanna Lessinger. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983. 93-107.

Robinson, Victor. Introduction. *Diana: A Strange Autobiography*. By Diana Frederics. New York: New York UP, 1995. xxxvii-xxxviii.

Roof, Judith. *Come As You Are: Sexuality and Narrative*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.

---. *A Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory*. New York: Columbia U P, 1991.

Roosevelt, Theodore. "On American Motherhood." *The World's Famous Orations*. Ed. William Jennings Bryan. March 2003. Bartleby.com. 8 Jan. 2005 <http://www.bartleby.com/268/10/29.html>.

Ross, Betty. "Many Englishwomen Must Remain Single." *New York Times.* 18 May 1924: XX20. 6 Sept. 2004 <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=000000101597499&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1094490118&clientId=28972>.

Rubin, Gayle S. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader.* Eds. Henry Abelove, Michéle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin. New York: Routledge, 1993. 3-44.

Rule, Jane. *Lesbian Images.* Freedom, CA: Crossing, 1975.

Ruth, Book of. *The Holy Bible, King James version.* [1611.] 6 Sept. 2004 <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/kjv.browse.html>.

Schoppmann, Claudia. *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians During the Third Reich.* Trans. Allison Brown. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire.* New York: Columbia UP, 1985.

---. *Epistemology of the Closet.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1990.

Server, Lee. *Over My Dead Body: The Sensational Age of the American Paperback, 1945-1955.* San Francisco: Chronicle, 1994.

Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own: British Novelists from Brontë to Lessing.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977.

Simmons, Christina. "Companionate Marriage and the Lesbian Threat." *Women and Power in American History: Volume II from 1870.* 2nd ed. Eds. Katherine Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002. 162-173.

Smedley, Agnes. *Daughter of Earth.* 1929. Old Westbury: Feminist Press, 1976.

Smith, Martha Nell. "Suppressing the Books of Susan in Emily Dickinson." *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture.* Ed. Gilroy and Verhoeven. Charlottesville, VA: U of Virginia P, 2000. 101-25.

Smith, Sidonie. *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

---. *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993.

Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. "Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices." *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader.* Ed. Smith and Watson. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1998.

Steakley, James D. *The Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany.* Salem, NH: Ayer, 1993.

Stenson, Linnea A. "From Isolation to Diversity: Self and Communities in Twentieth-Century Lesbian Novels." *Sexual Practice, Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism.* Ed. Susan J. Wolfe and Julia Penelope. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993. 208-225.

Stevenson, Sylvia. *Surplus.* 1924. Tallahassee: Naiad, 1986.

Stimpson, Catharine R. *Where the Meanings Are.* New York: Methuen, 1988.

Stopes, Marie Carmichael. *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties.* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931.

Tebbel, John. *A History of Book Publishing in the United States.* Vol. 3. New York: Bowker, 1978.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. "Chapter II: Of the Principal Source of Belief Among Democratic Nations." *Democracy in America.* Vol. 2. Rev. ed. Trans. Henry Reeve. New York, 1899. Electronic Text Center. 2000. U of Virginia. 9 Jan. 2005 <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/TocDem2.html>.

Tompkins, Lucy. "Unhappy Lives." Rev. of *Pity for Women*, by Helen Anderson. *New York Times* 20 Jun. 1937: 7.

"Two Loves." Rev. of *Either is Love. New York Times Book Review* 15 Aug. 1937: 14.

Wald, Alan M. "The 1930s Left in U.S. Literature Reconsidered." *Radical Revisions: Rereading 1930s Culture.* Eds. Bill Mullen and Sherry Lee Linkon. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1996. 13-28.

Walker, Lisa. *Looking Like What You Are: Sexual Style, Race, and Lesbian Identity.* New York: New York UP, 2001.

Warner, Michael. Introduction. *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory.* Ed. Michael Warner. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994. vii-xxxi.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1957.

Wilson, John P., W. Ken Smith, and Suzanne K. Johnson. "A Comparative Analysis of PTSD among Various Survivor Groups." *Trauma and Its Wake.* Ed. Charles R. Figley. New York: Brunner, 1985. 142-172.

Wilton, Tamsin. *Lesbian Studies: Setting an Agenda.* London: Routledge, 1995.

Winning, Joanne. *The Pilgrimage of Dorothy Richardson.* Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2000.

*World Almanac Reference Database.* Facts on File. 6 Sept. 2004 <http://www.2facts.com>.

Yusba, Roberta. "Twilight Tales: Lesbian Pulps, 1950-1960." *On Our Backs* 2.1 (Summer 1985): 30-1, 43.

Zimmerman, Bonnie. *The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969-1989.* Boston: Beacon, 1990.

---. "What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Criticism." *Sexual Practice / Textual Theory: Lesbian Cultural Criticism.* Ed. Susan J. Wolfe and Julia Penelope. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993. 33-54.